

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, BY LOCAL RESIDENTS, FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

-The case studies in hilly and mountainous areas in Shimane and Tottori prefectures-

Yuko Nobuhara

Key Words: Mountainous area, Village community, Community development, Local/ Regional resources

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVE

Communities in hilly and mountainous areas in Japan have been facing challenges such as depopulation, aging, and lack of next generation. Various actions for community development were taken to solve these issues by local or central governments. Many cases, however, aimed to activate local communities for the purpose of increasing fixed domicile residents. Hence, these did not necessarily match local people awareness concerning the issues. This study aimed at reviewing various public projects to consider community development for local residents.

2. CASE STUDIES

(1) Community revitalization project at Shimane prefecture

The objective of the project is “to make the new social system of local management, which does not depend on existing systems of communities, by participation of various concerned people”. Local activities is planned by local manager*¹ and some key persons (Figure 1). The author has conducted the participatory observation in 4

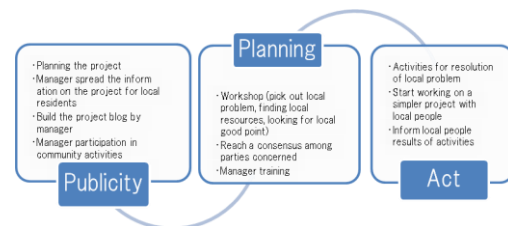


Figure 1 Activities flow of local projects

out of the 9 selected study areas. It became obvious that actual progresses of each local project highly depended on local managers although the project stressed the importance of local residents' independence. In order to achieve desirable community management, it would be important to make good use of the deeply relationship, regional organization, and existing systems for new planning.

(2) Project of using local resources *Kanna-nagashi**² (at Nogaya district, Iinan Town in Shimane)

This project was proposed by residents' association and aimed at promoting the topophilia to local residents. It was expected that local residents shared the value of the historical resource which had been not recognized. Finally, local residents told “What is most important is that we become to be proud of our district through the project. We do not expect the revitalization, even though we know that our real community is shrinking”.

(3) Research for problem awareness of local community in Daisen Town (Interview survey to farmers)

Daisen Town have been struggling with the issue of lack of heirs due to depopulation and aging. This study surveyed local resident's understanding toward the local problems. Although most residents were critical of actions, one farmer has played active roles to solve the problems altruistically. What he acted for the community was on a voluntary basis for next generation. The survey revealed that the spirit of mutual cooperation is essential to spontaneous actions.

3. CONCLUSION

As a result, it was assumed that local planning should be conducted by local residents based on indigenous systems. It is recommended to reconsider local planning which makes residents to be proud of their hometown and meaningful life. Also residents would be required to gain mutual help and develop their autonomy by themselves.

1) Local manager plays a central role in the local project as lubricant between the parties.

2) *Kanna-nagashi* : An unique technique for iron manufacturing in the old days in mountainous region of Chugoku about 150 years ago