

THE NEW ROLES OF OUTSIDE SUPPORTERS IN LAUNCHING LOCAL REVITALIZATION ACTIVITIES IN DEPOPULATED AREAS —PRACTICES OF A FOOD PROCESSING ENTERPRISE ESTABLISHMENT IN SHITARU VILLAGE, TSUSHIMA ISLAND—

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1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Recently, depopulation and aging in islands and mountainous regions are becoming more serious issues and the vitality of those local societies is decreasing, so that many outside supporters are conducting a lot of activities for local revitalization there. According to previous studies about the roles of outside supporters, it is necessary that the local residents should recognize local issues and have common targets, and then they should take actions for local revitalization by themselves. Accordingly, it has been considered that the expected roles of outside supporters are to cultivate residents' awareness toward local issues and encourage their initiatives through workshops and so on. However, those studies are, in many cases, just covering specific areas having human and local resources by which residents can take action. On the other hand, areas with issues of serious depopulation and aging often do not have enough human resources so that it might be impossible for residents to launch revitalization activities. In order to launch local revitalization activities in these areas, it would be necessary to reconsider the new roles of outside supporters.

The objectives of this study are to clarify the new roles through conducting local revitalization activities. For that, the author as an outside supporter engaged in practical activities for regional revitalization. In addition, this study suggests necessary conditions needed for local revitalization especially in the areas with issues of serious depopulation and aging.

2. STUDY AREA AND METHODS

This study was conducted through practical activities with local residents to launch a food processing enterprise in Shitaru village, Kamiagata-machi, Tsushima City. I conducted the selection of local revitalization activities based on the context and situation of the region, marketing research, advertisement and application for requisite qualifications. Required data was corrected through interviews for local residents, participatory observation, workshops in the processes and so on.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Taking the local resources and the judicial restrictions into account, it was assessed that the food processing enterprise was appropriate for the study area. In the practice of this activity, it was identified that there were i) lack of motivation to start activities, ii) lack of success image of activities, iii) reluctance to be leaders or people who can manage practical tasks, as problems of residents' consciousness. To overcome those challenges, approaches such as (1) building good relationship of mutual trust, (2) recognition of the local issues, (3) sharing a mental picture of success, (4) having experiences of small achievements and (5) launching local revitalization activities, were conducted and each effect of those approaches was recognized. The food processing enterprise could be established by playing the roles of the leader and managing the practical tasks by the author. Consequently, the residents started to find pleasure and worth doing, and they are getting to have a sense of ownership gradually.

From these results, it was clarified that once the local revitalization activities launched, residents' initiatives could be encouraged in the activities, and the local revitalization activities would be continuous depending on the context of the regions. It would imply that the outside supporters are required to remove the obstacle of residents' consciousness, launch the activities initiatively, and involve the residents in these activities. In addition, through the starting-up food processing enterprise, it was also revealed that the complexity of administrative procedures and regulation of food hygiene law had been obstacles for regional revitalizing activities, and then from this viewpoint this study suggested idea for the improvement.