A Case Study of Growth of Community Revitalization Movement in Chizu, Tottori Prefecture, Japan

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Abstract　*Kaso* is the deterioration of community infrastructure resulting from the migration of young people from rural areas to urban centers. It occurred in Japan during the period of rapid economic growth after World War II. Due to the conservative nature of remaining rural residents, community revitalization is often difficult. This paper uses the theory of social norms to analyze a case of successful community revitalization resulting from community empowerment.

Social Background of Kaso Problem

Before describing and discussing what happened in the 17 years since 1984 in Chizu Town, Tottori Prefecture, Japan, a typical *Kaso* area, the social and economic background of the issue of *Kaso* in Japan will be briefly introduced. *Kaso* is a Japanese term meaning a phenomenon in which the population of a rural area decreases mainly due to the movement of young people from rural to urban areas and, in parallel with this movement, human and social power to maintain community infrastructure deteriorates.

Kaso was originally brought about by rapid economic growth starting in the late 1950s and proceeding even more drastically in 1960s. The growth was so rapid that the gross national product (GNP) doubled between 1960 and 1967. There were several factors that contributed to this, but, no doubt, one of them was the concentration of high quality young laborers in major industrial areas. While this rapid migration lead to overpopulation in urban areas, many rural areas suffered from depopulation, creating the problem of *Kaso*.

Importantly, *Kaso* in the 1960s proceeded while Japanese society was still in the process of overcoming economic poverty. In other words, *Kaso* in the 1960s was still a problem in a poor society, although the economic situation was improving in urban areas. The government's policy for *Kaso* at that time, therefore, aimed at providing *Kaso* areas with financial support to satisfy minimum needs for social infrastructure. In this sense, *Kaso* was an economic problem.

But, in the 1970s, Japanese society reached the stage of so-called "affluent society." "Affluent society" was defined by J. K. Galbreith as a society in which the anxiety about hunger and the coldness of tomorrow is no longer a major concern for the vast majority of people[1]. Such a society was realized in the 1950s in the US for the first time in the world, followed by several European countries in the 1960s. Following Western countries, Japan entered the stage of affluence in the mid-1970s.

"Affluent society" was first realized in urban areas and then in rural areas. By the late 1970s, many rural areas had reached a point where they enjoyed material richness as a result of economic growth. In spite of this, young people in rural

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areas never stopped leaving their home villages, although the outflux was not so rapid as in the 1960s. Why? Why did they give up living with their families and relatives and move to large cities?

A major reason was the conservative values and insularity that rural areas had traditionally maintained. People in rural communities tended to hesitate to introduce anything new or innovative while only sticking to their traditions. They also tended to hesitate accepting people who came from outside of their small community. In addition, in many mountainous areas, a very limited number of people dominated almost all-important decision-making in a community. Many young people could not bear these constraints and so left their home villages. Thus, the nature of *Kaso* was drastically changed from mainly an economic problem in the 1960s to socio-psychological problems from the 1970s onwards[2].

Revitalization Movement in Chizu

In the 1980s, residents in some rural communities began to challenge the conservative, insular nature and to try to revitalize their communities so that something new and good for the communities could be attempted. The ways of challenge were diverse. Some communities tried to use natural resources to attract tourists. Some focused on artistic activities through which residents themselves could share new enjoyment with each other and also could develop an exchange program with artists living and working in large cities. Some communities tried to develop new products

by combining their own traditional manufacturing skills with new technologies.

In this paper, revitalization movement that has been carried out since 1984 in Chizu Town, Tottori Prefecture, Japan will be introduced and then examined from the sociological viewpoint focusing on the changes of social norms. The revitalization movement in Chizu has a 35-year history, but due to page-limit constraints, for now we will focus on the first half. The 17-year history is divided into two parts, 1984-94 and 1994-2001, while the first part, which is discussed below, is further divided into two stages.

(1) Three projects and the establishment of CCPT (1984-89)

The movement was originally triggered by two people who have consistently taken leadership since they happened to meet each other in 1984. They developed a social norm that would soon evolve into a group of about 30 residents. The social norm was characterized by the strong resistance to the traditional conservative insularity and the ambitious challenge to create something new[3].

In 1984-94, the movement was promoted by a small group consisting of the two leaders and 30 peers. They named the group 'Chizu Creative Project Team' or CCPT for short. CCPT started the movement by utilizing cedar trees and giving them additional value that had never been attained until then. The mountains in Chizu are covered by cedar trees that had been cultivated for a hundred years. They were a major economic resource until
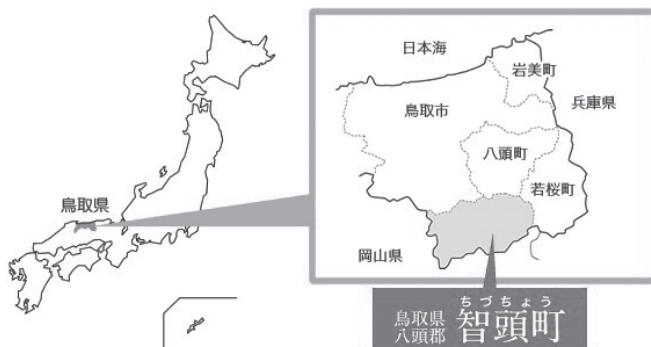
the early 1960s when cheaper lumber began to be imported from foreign countries.

CCPT implemented three projects consecutively in 1984-89. First, CCPT developed various woodcrafts by using small lumber that was obtained from the thinning of the cedar trees. Such lumber had never been practically utilized before then. Second, CCPT held a competition in which many architects from all over Japan submitted housing designs that could take advantage of the cedar produced in Chizu. A new brand, Chizu Cedar, was born by the success of the competition, although cedar trees in Chizu had previously been put to market using a different brand from another well-known site. Third, CCPT developed the know-how to build log-houses from cedar trees and to construct recreational areas by building several log-houses in a village deep in the mountains. Soon after the construction, the area began to attract many visitors who wanted to enjoy spending holidays in beautiful nature.

Through the three projects above, CCPT challenged conservative values and insularity by developing new cedar products and creating a place that attracted many visitors from across Japan. Almost all cedar trees except the ones owned by the national government were from the private property of a limited number of wealthy individuals. These individuals who owned their own mountains, and thus, the cedar trees, had a big voice in decision-making. It was difficult for the majority of residents who did not have their own mountains to propose a new way of utilizing cedar trees effectively. Both the people who controlled decision-making and their ordinary resident followers had maintained the conservative nature of their community in which any kinds of new challenge to tradition was rejected. The attempt to create new products from cedar by CCPT, whose members did not own their own mountains, broke the rigid constraints of conservative traditions.

In addition, the recreation area that was constructed by CCPT attracted many visitors and

thus provided residents in Chizu with opportunities to communicate with people from other parts of Japan. Such communication helped the residents to become less insular and more open-minded toward the outside world.

(2) The maturing of CCPT through interaction with outsiders (1989-94)

The period 1989-94 seems relatively quiet when compared with the previous 5 years in which visible outputs like woodcrafts, the new brand Chizu Cedar, and a recreation area were produced. CCPT's activities were, however, sophisticated and strengthened even more through the intensive interaction with two types of outsiders in this period. The interaction contributed to breaking the exclusiveness that had been dominant in Chizu.

The first type of outsiders was foreigners and foreign cultures. CCPT started an exchange program in which children in Chizu played with foreign college students from a nearby university, and also a couple of high school students, college students, and ordinary residents of Chizu would visit foreign countries each year. The second type of outsiders was researchers who belonged to universities in large cities along with professional consultants who specialized in regional planning. CCPT frequently held study meetings to which such professionals were invited.

Before finishing the description of what happened in the first ten years, it should be noted that the activities by CCPT during the time frame period were not a simple success story. Each of these activities was criticized directly or indirectly as crazy by many residents. The aggression of residents tended to be directed toward young CCPT members and even lives and children of CCPT members.

(3) Evolution into the local government (1994-2006): Sunflower System[4]

During the ten years, CCPT achieved and accumulated many actual results that could not be ignored or denied by anyone. Many people

began to feel a sense of respect for CCPT to the extent that it was no longer easy for the Chizu local government to refuse what CCPT proposed for the betterment of their town. CCPT's policies and ideas began to evolve into the decision-making processes of the local government and produced two new social systems, the Sunflower System and the Zero-to-One Movement.

Ten years passed since the movement started, and CCPT members were convinced that the town office must be changed to revitalize their community further. One of the two leaders worked for the post office, while another member of CCPT was the chief of the Department of General Affairs, Chizu town office. They played a central role in changing the town office. They organized a project team consisting of young staff of both the post office and the town office to discuss new possible public services that could be provided through the collaboration of the two public organizations.

The Sunflower System resulted from one of the proposals in these discussions. It was a service provided by mail deliverers for older adults who was lived alone. The mail carrier would visit any elderly person who put a yellow flag on their mailbox to show they wanted to ask the mail carrier to do something such as paper work at the town office, buying something at a cooperative store, or picking up medication from a hospital. After returning to the central post office, the mail carrier went to the town office, cooperative store, hospital, etc., on behalf of the elderly person, and he brought a document issued by the town office, the goods purchased at the cooperative store, or the medicine given at the hospital to the elderly person next day. Public transportation was limited to only a few buses every day, and the difficulty of making it into town was even greater during the harsh winters when snow often lay more than one meter deep.

The name "Sunflower System" came from both the expectation that the mail carrier's service would be appreciated by the elderly person with a smile like a sunflower and the image of a postman going around on a predetermined course every day like a sunflower making a daily revolution following the sun. The Sunflower System quickly attracted much attention from various parties all over Japan not only in post offices but also in social welfare and local government offices. The Japanese Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications encouraged post offices in rural mountainous areas to introduce the system into their towns or villages. It was reported by the ministry that the system was being used in more than 250 areas by 2001.

(4) Evolution into a smallest unit of community (1996-2001): Zero-to-One Movement

The Zero-to-One Movement was another project that grew from the evolution of CCPT's spirit into the town office. The goal of the movement was to introduce participatory democracy, with the support of the town office, into the smallest unit of community, which consisted of 15-50 households. The smallest unit of community will be referred to as a village for the rest of this paper. Traditionally, major decision-making had been dominated by a limited number of wealthy elites in many villages as mentioned earlier. Every villager had been obliged to commit to the implementation of village projects once a decision was made in a meeting in which only a single representative of each household, usually the house owner, could participate; young people and women were barred. The Zero-to-One Movement sought to replace this traditional way of decision-making with the way of participatory democracy in which anyone who wanted to participate could participate. Such an attempt was quite new. It was like a leap from nothing to a first existence, or "from zero to one," as in the name of the movement.

To start the Zero-to-One Movement, all residents in a village were required to consent to involvement in the movement and to offer 5,000 yen, about US$ 50, each year. Also, they

were required to establish a council in which representative members should be elected by a general assembly in which any resident had the right to attend. As a general guideline, the movement was to be promoted by three major goals: (1) active management of a village; (2) self-governance by residents; and (3) exchange/communication with the outside. Following these guidelines, residents were involved in a ten-year movement in which they developed both long-term and short-term plans to improve their own village and collaborated with each other to implement them.

The town office recognized the council as a formal representative body of residents. The office provided each council with financial support of 500,000 yen, about US$ 5,000, for each of the first two years. Also, technical support by regional planning professionals was made available by the town office when residents requested. Fifteen among a total of 89 villages in Chizu have been involved in the movement up to 2001.

Unilateral Transfer of Social Norm: A Theoretical Consideration
(1) Social norm[註1]

The 17-year history of the revitalization movement will be socio-psychologically discussed from the viewpoint of social norms. First of all, a social norm is defined as the operation that distinguishes a valid action from invalid one. It is important, however, that a set of valid actions is always an infinite set in a mathematical sense. You cannot list up all possible valid actions exhaustively when you sit down at a table on which many delicious foods are arranged, for example. But, you can easily detect the violation of the social norm like when a guest sitting beside you suddenly jumps up onto the table and begins to walk on his hands. At this point of time, you can be aware that you have already followed a social norm that has excluded such an action

from a set of valid actions. Thus, generally, a social norm functions only in a negative way, or in a latent way. In other words, a social norm is something like an invisible horizon that surrounds and determines your world in which you take a valid action.

When a social norm is defined like the above, the transfer of a social norm from one party to another should be quite different from the transfer of a physical thing or a specific action. When you transfer your book to me by receiving money from me, the book you give me and the money I give you can be put on a common scale of value. Both the book and the money might be put on the same or nearly same position if it is an equal exchange or they might be put on two remote positions if it is an unequal exchange. But, what is important here is the fact that there exists a common scale on which the two things can be put. In this sense, the exchange, equal or unequal, of the book and the money is carried out within the same world surrounded by a single horizon.

In contrast, the transfer of a social norm is the transfer of an invisible horizon. Here, neither the party who gives its own social norm nor the party who receives it can have a sense of exchange, or a sense of giving and receiving, in an ordinary sense. Instead, the former party must give their own social norm as if they threw it away regardless of whether or not the latter party would show any interest in adopting it. At the same time, the latter must adopt it if they want without any appreciation for the former. By definition, if the former expects appreciation from the latter or if the latter appreciates the former, it is not a transition of a social norm, an invisible horizon, but just an exchange within the same horizon. Therefore, the transfer of a social norm is a combination of unilateral giving on one party and unilaterally receiving on the other that occurs without any sense of appreciation in either direction.

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[1] The social norm theory referenced to in this paper is from the theory by Osawa(1990/1992)[5]
However simplified technical terms are used by Sugiman（2006）[6]

Situations of both the giver and the receiver of a social norm are changed when both the unilateral giving and the unilateral receiving are accomplished and, thus, the unilateral transfer of a social norm has been attained. It is because a social norm, or a horizon, that only the giver already followed in the past has expanded its space of operation to include the receiver. The social norm now indicates valid actions for the receiver, too. From the standpoint of the giver, their original social norm has reached a point where it is applicable even to those who were living under a different social norm. It is not difficult to imagine that this convinces the giver that their effort was in a proper direction and is worth while being continued further. From the standpoint of the receiver, not a few actions in their daily life should be redefined and reorganized by the new social norm, or should be relocated in the new horizon. Their action begins to bear different meaning even if it is the same action as before from the perspective of the outsiders.

(2) Unilateral transfer of a social norm in Chizu

When we are reminded of the 17-year history of CCPT, we can say that their activities were the succession of the unilateral transfer of their social norm to ordinary residents in Chizu. Each of their three projects in 1994-98 was conducted among aggressive criticism and cold ignorance. However, CCPT gave woodcrafts, a new brand of Chizu Cedar, and a recreation area to the residents without any expectation of being appreciated or even any expectation of being received. It looks like they did the projects because they trusted they should.

Fortunately, the products of their efforts were received by ordinary residents without any appreciation. You can see several photos of the products in a formal brochure that was published by the town office to introduce Chizu town, but you cannot find the name of CCPT anywhere in it. You might assume the products were brought about by the efforts of the town office, which wasn't is one word, it should be on the same line collaborating with CCPT at that time.

The recreation area that was developed by CCPT through their construction of several log-houses is now run by residents living around there. The residents were negative about the construction and did not offer any help actively at that time. But, after they received the area for nothing, they gradually became committed to the management of the area and even became proud of it. They look happy to have many guests who visited the area, but they are not aware that the area was created and given to them as a part of CCPT's challenge. It is sure, however, that they cannot maintain the same level of insularity as they had in the past while communicating with so many outsiders.

The succession of the unilateral transfer of social norm finally reached into of the town office. The social norm that was originally developed by CCPT, especially the two leaders of CCPT, began to change definitions of what the town office should do for residents. Also, the social norm infiltrated even another governmental body, a post office, and changed a social norm regarding what a mail carrier should do for residents. The Sunflower System was given birth through such changes of social norms. It is interesting, however, that only a few members in the town office and the post office know how the system was invented and introduced to their town.

The Zero-to-One Movement can be regarded as the infiltration of CCPT's social norm into villages through the town office. As mentioned earlier, the movement aims at three goals, namely, active management of the community, self-governance by residents, and exchange/communication with the outside. The goals are nothing other than what CCPT itself pursued to challenge the conservativeness and insularity from the beginning of their 17- year history. In this sense, it might be that the Zero-to-One Movement is the CCPT-ization of the smallest unit of community. Again,

it is difficult to meet a person who knows who was involved or what the struggle was like with the head of the town office to start the Zero-to-One Movement even if he/she was deeply involved in the movement.

Expansion of the Zero-to-One movement to a larger unit of community

The Zero-to-One movement was introduced in 14 villages out of 89 in Chizu town. But, the impact of the introduction of the movement went beyond just those 14 villages. According to a survey in 2000, the vast majority of resident (70 %) in the villages that were not directly committed to the movement acknowledged the expression Zero-to-One movement, (Kawahara&Sugiman,2003). A village is the smallest unit of community but holds interest in what is going on in other villages nearby. It is safe to say the phrase "the Zero-to-One movement" became a common term among people in Chizu, which prepared the next step of the movement, that is, expansion of the movement to a larger unit of community called a district.

A district consists of about ten villages in Chizu. Until World War II, and immediately after the war, a district was a formal governmental unit. Each district has its own governmental office, meeting of representatives of residents, an elementary school, and so on. In addition, a traditional festival, an athletic meeting or other such events, have been maintained in each district. When a village declined due to sharp decrease of population, its district starts to the play the role of the substantially smaller, unit of community[7] .

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