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Interscale and Interlevel Problems of Research on Social Capital in Rural Japan

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Interscale and Interlevel Problems of Research on Social Capital in Rural Japan

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ABSTRACT

In Japan, most of the studies of "Social Capital" (SC) are from a viewpoint of macro scale such as national, and also mainly by a top-down way. Therefore, the accumulation of studies in micro scale (bottom-up way), such as a village or a community, is an urgent and vital task for researchers. Diversity of the scale of study is very important, but such approach lacks and is weak there in fact.

On the one hand, many studies of SC are from a macro viewpoint mentioned as above, and on the other hand, researches of social ties in modern and contemporary Japanese rural sociology and rural studies had shown huge amounts of research results on rural villages from a micro view. But since the high economic growth in this country we have been seen urbanization, depopulation, or rapid aging in Japanese rural villages, and they have been diversified, so the framework of simplified rural-urban dichotomy became old-fashioned to analyze them. Especially in disadvantaged rural depopulated regions, however, we need revision of social ties or SC in order to sustain functions for daily life.

On the basis of such situation, the author examines important elements

on considering SC with some regional examples of positivistic study.

In a region, SC consists of social ties and their networks. The forms of combination of the ties are varied, often crossing over several kinds of scales and levels. Actually in such a structure of something complex, complicated network or "Social Scape" is formed, with "bonding" and "bridging" being connected each other complicatedly.

Key words: social capital, inter-scale, inter-level, rural Japan,

1. Introduction

In Japan, studies on rural community have something older, not so new history with fruitful contents. They have focused upon social ties, social relations, social groups, family types, community types and power structure in rural areas just long before Robert Putnam (2000) famously made much of "Social Capital" (SC) in his book. The impact of the concept SC from the book has really penetrated into social scientists with macro perspectives, like scholars of economics and public finance (here "macro" have means both on level and scale).

In fact there is very weak relation between the excellent results of rural studies and SC studies in Japanese way of macro standpoint. And it is a matter of critical that there is a very weak link, or, just a missing link between social capital study and that of rural community. In this paper, the author tries to refer to social capital and its problems in the case of rural community

2. A Missing Link of Social Capital Study in Japan

2-1. SC Studies from a Macro Perspective

There are some examples of SC study from a standpoint of macro or top

down way. The National Cabinet Office "Research of Social Capital" (2005) says "For example, the possibility that social capital contributed to, in national aspects of living, such as the restraint of the unemployment rate or the maintenance of the birth rate was suggested." But in fact many rural areas with stronger social ties are suffering from unemployment and a shortage of marriage partners, especially in depopulated rural mountain areas. So such a thinking way is that of neoliberalian one which makes much of macro scale, measurability, efficiency, top-down, disregarding/ignoring regional differences. And not only bureaucrats but also some scholars, especially economists take part in the neoliberalian ways of thinking of SC in a position to sit back. The other one case mainly treated SC in prefectural scale, so the results are too general to understand local situations (Yamauchi and Ibuki, 2005). We can also say that such studies are strongly conscious of central management functions to rule local areas from their higher seats. They showed only an outline, not more than it.

2-2. Rural Studies in Japan; Two Main Examples by Suzuki and Fukutake

On the contrary, the most of rural intensive studies in Japan have been from a local or micro perspectives, and they have concentrated huge amount of fruits of rural community research. Particularly rural sociology and rural social geography have not a little accumulation of the fruitage. Just before the W.W.II, many rural sociologists had developed intensive researches of rural communities in Japan. At that time "social ties" were one of their important fields to be studied. Some cases showed models of social ties in rural community. The most famous concept of rural community is "*Shizenson* (natural village)" made by Eitaro Suzuki (1894-1966).

He defined the *Shizenson* as below.

"A rural community is social unification of people on the foundation of shared-territorial-bonding combination, which produces direct combination by other various social ties, and of people who have a system of the systematic contents of social consciousness which are specifically owned by them and which covers their social life at large. If it considers that a shared-territorial-bonding society is of only combination based on proximity in an area, it is clear that the rural community in

such a meaning will be something more than a shared-territorial-bonding society. There combination by many of other social ties also exists, and social consciousness which is peculiar only to them adds restraints in all the directions of their social life of mutual acquaintance in principle. I denote such a social unification for a rural community and probably it may be called a *Shizenson* (natural village)." (Suzuki, 1940, p.36)。

The concept of a "natural village" is opposite to that of an administrative village. After Suzuki, a rural community is (made of) a "spirit." And he listed "inner cohesion and exterior exclusiveness" as one of the important factors of traditional rural community after Georg Simmel, a German sociologist.

Just around 1889 in the latter half part of the Meiji era (1868-1911) the national government executed a municipality merger policy. So after the merger, it became a big problem for rural sociologists to examine how rural social ties went on after it. Then Suzuki inspected which scale-level social ties in rural community were remained more strongly among three levels; (1) new village with a wider boundary after the merger, (2) former rural village at the Yedo era (1603-1868; the reign of Tokugawa Shogunate) when members in a village had to pay their land taxes on joint and collective liability and their daily life depended on mutual aids and mutual oversights on the system of five-household neighborhood unit at full length during the Yedo era, and (3) smaller unit or areas than the former (1) and (2) levels. He discovered that in many cases the social ties in rural communities were stronger in the (2) level, but there were also several exceptions.

His concept of *Shizenson* or his inspection on the three scale-levels of social ties has been partly criticized but his findings had a very important meaning to think of rurality in a generalized social scientific way.

In his rural studies he found some functions for vital factors. He made much of functions of rural family and those of social groups in a rural community. At first, he nominates seven important functions of family in rural community (**Table 1**).

The family in rural community was at the basement of fundamental SC in modern rural community. Not only its blood heritage, but also daily common living in a household always reproduces the tight and dense relationships in a family.

And also he emphasized the weight of several social groups in a rural community (**Table 2**). In the most cases the members of each group are the same, so multilayered structure of the groups naturally strengthens the relationships among the members reproductively.

Table 1 Seven important functions of family in rural community

<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) function of sexual desire sufficiency and reproduction(2) function as a production and consumption group(3) function of taking care of old people and children(4) function of educational institution(5) function of a religious community (<i>Sangha</i>)(6) function of association of entertainment and intelligence,(7) function of a subject of tradable rank or the other subject of social rights and obligations.

Source: modified by the author after Eitaro Suzuki (1940)

Table 2 Ten important groups in rural community

<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) administrative regional group(2) group of parishioners of a local Shinto shrine(3) group of supporters of a local Buddhist temple(4) group of religious or fraternal associations(5) neighborhood(6) economic group(7) public governmental group(8) consanguineous group(9) group of common interests(10) class group
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Source: modified by the author after Eitaro Suzuki (1940)

Suzuki highlighted the multiplex nature of the family and the social groups of rural community. There he saw a social unity containing of a heap of social groups and accumulation of social relations of individuals through family. In that meaning, SC of rural community in the modern era had developed, reproduced and strengthened by these complicated and involved functions and activities. As for SC in each group, there were rules,

membership, facility and property.

And also his famous book about the social ties in rural community, and the social functions of rural families ("*The Principles of Japanese Rural Sociology*", which became a Bible for rural study in Japan, was published in 1940, just before Bronisław Kasper Malinowski published "*The Scientific Theory of Culture*" (Univ. of North Carolina Press) in 1944, which became famous for its treating "functionalism." So we can see the Eitaro Suzuki's work was really a work of forerunner.

Just after the W.W.II, Tadashi Fukutake (1917-1989), a rural sociologist, had developed some theories about types of rural association (Fukutake, 1959, pp.30-35). Roughly speaking, he thought up two types of rural association as below.

The one type of rural association is that of clan, or of consanguineous group (*Dozoku* or *Dozoku-dan*). The association has a vertical or hierarchical structure. The other is that of religious or fraternal group (*Ko* or *Ko-gumi*). It has horizontal or rather equal relationships among its community members. He said that we could see the former type in the north-eastern part or mountainous areas in Japan. On the contrary the latter type was to be seen mostly in the south-western part or rural areas in flatlands in Japan, where modernization and modern capitalism had proceeded much earlier than in the areas of the former type (**Table 3**).

Table 3 Two types of social associations in rural areas in Japan

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP	DISTRIBUTION
<i>Dozoku</i>	clan, consanguineous	vertical, hierarchical	north-eastern Japan, mountainous areas
<i>Ko</i>	religious, fraternal	horizontal, equal	south-western Japan, flatland areas

Source: modified by the author after Fukutake (1959)

Fukutake's dichotomy of social association in rural areas has been criticized because of its stereotyped convenient model. But in fact a degree of combination of *Dozoku* and *Ko* is essential to each Japanese rural community.

Then several types of *SC* can be seen in several degrees of the combination. For example *Dozoku* group makes much of family and relative relationships, but reversely *Ko* group counts religious or fraternal relationships or events very much, so in each situation they find or establish social trust as their *SC*.

2-3. Missing Links in a Scheme

As mentioned above, there is a missing link between *SC* studies and rural studies in Japan. But in another phase, fundamentally a missing link problem is a very important and critical issue in sociology. In the discipline, a missing link between individual action/agency and a universal set of society is one of the most important research topics, although it is rather a problem of "level" than of "scale." To fill the missing blank, Parsons (1951) established the AGIL Scheme and Giddens (1993) showed the Structuration Theory, but the former was to be of preestablished harmony and the latter an explanatory diagram, even though they are pioneering works. So they only found this issue of missing link to be an important, critical and also difficult one to explain.

Consequently speaking, regional phenomena develops through several kinds of space-scale (local, regional, national, global etc.) and social phenomena goes through several socio-levels (Adaptation, Goal Attainment, Integration and Latency; or Economic, Political, Social and Cultural) but they have tight relationships each other. In the meaning, it is significant for us to see *SC* in a scheme of both horizontal scales and vertical levels, but it is very hard task.

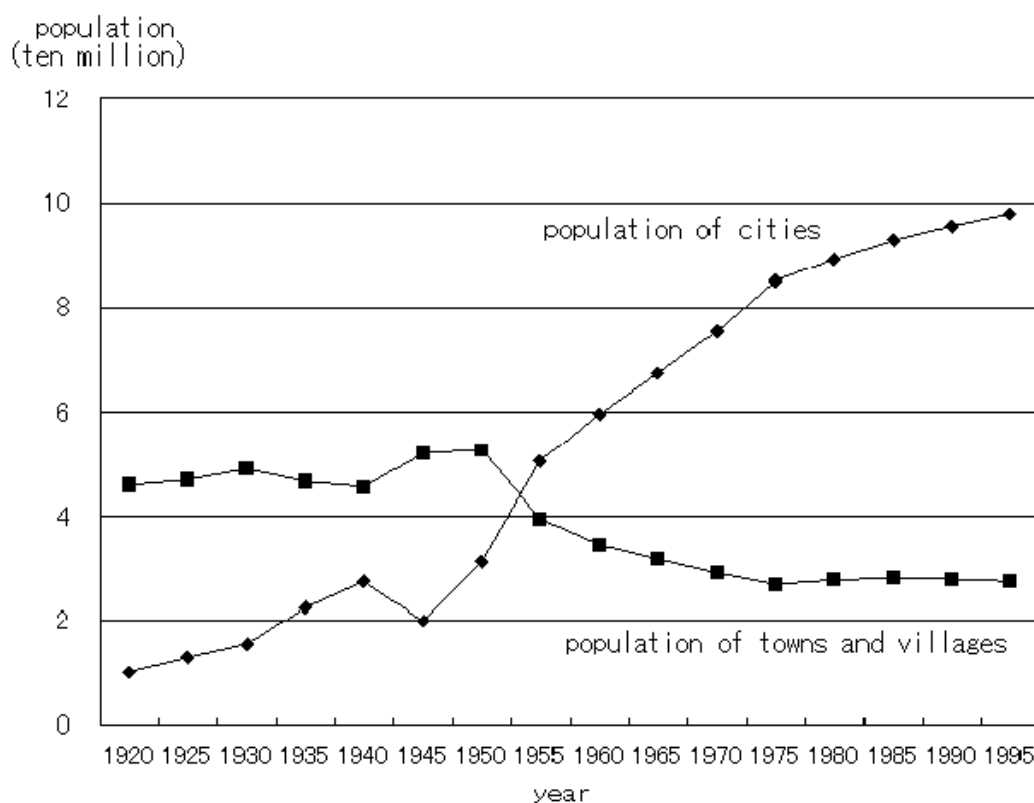
(3) Some Examples of *SC* in Rural Japan

3-1. The Outline

In fact, founding upon the rural study about *SC*, we can see complicated social network or "Social Scape" (Urry, 2000) crossing over such diverse levels and scales. And here the author offers some just significant examples and materials to think about *SC* from a standpoint of rural study, being conscious of seeing social network or Social Scape in complicated involution of various and different elements.

At first we must know that Japanese rural areas have wider variation of types nowadays, so dichotomy of simple scheme of "rural-urban" is almost out of date partly.

In many rural areas they have experienced drastic transformation. Some rural areas have become depopulated, and rapid aging has been going on there. Others have grown and have belonged to urbanized areas. So the situation of rural communities has become multifarious inside Japan during the high economic growth (**Figure 1**).



* in 1945 "Population Survey", others "National Census"

Figure 1 Population change in Japan (urban-rural)

Some rural areas were integrated into big city areas or became satellite cities, then there rural population changed into urban one. And some other rural areas, especially marginal areas have experienced depopulation and have lost the population (**Figure 2**). As Fukutake once showed difference of rural social association between the north-eastern and the south-western part of Japan, also we can see difference of depopulation; In the

north-eastern Japan depopulation is somehow milder than in the south-western part. In south-western Japan severer depopulation had observed; dramatic decrease in both of population and households, because of severer physical features, decline of agriculture/forestry and so on.

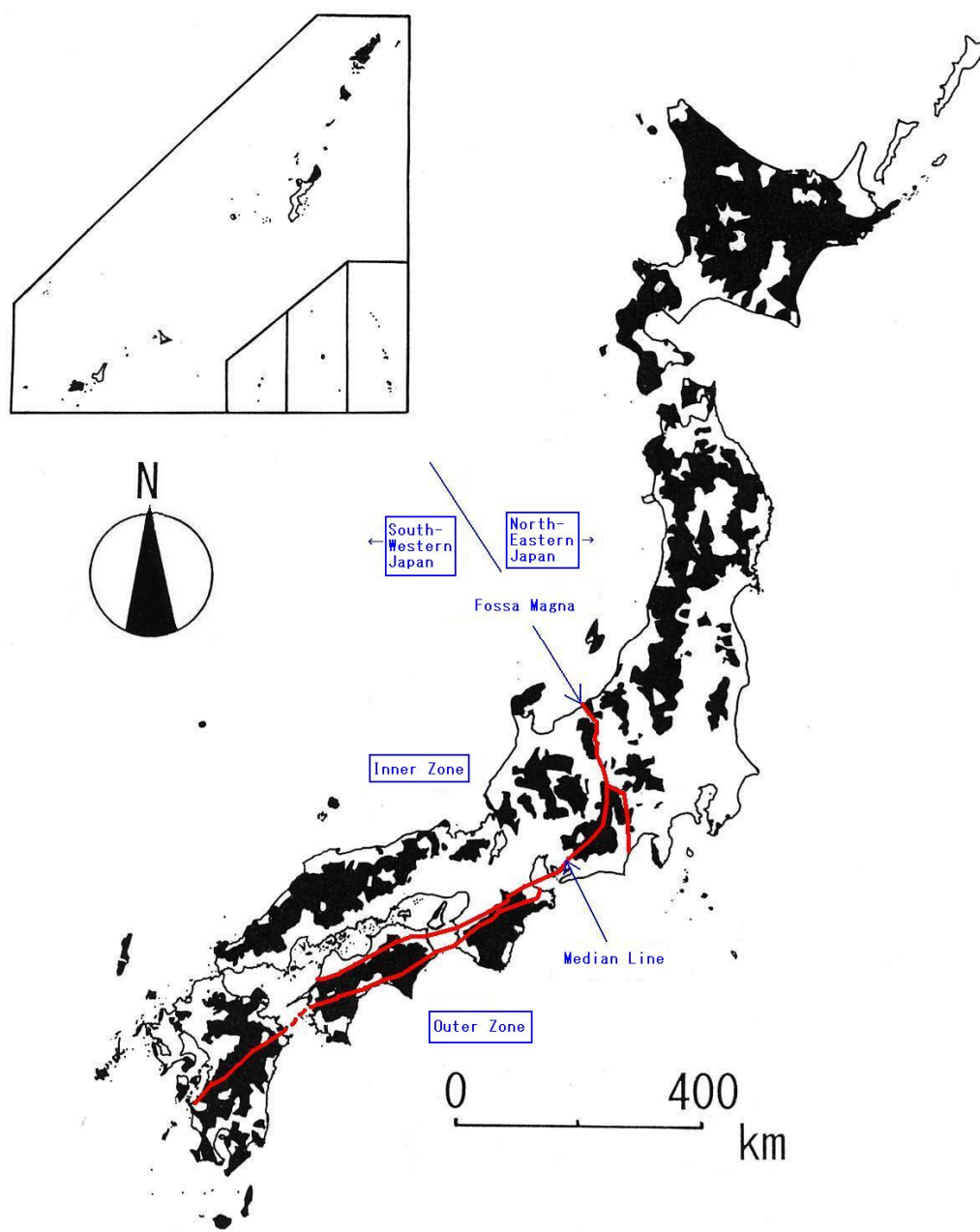


Figure 2 Depopulated areas in Japan (2000)

Data: Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

So in the south-western Japan we can see severer marginal rural areas or settlements. **Figure 3** shows ratio of distant rural agricultural settlements from DID (Densely Inhabited District; an area which has high population density, more than 4000/km² and have a population of 5000 and more). In the south-western part, there are prefectures which include high ratio of rural agricultural settlements being remote accessibility to urban utility. This situation give us some imagination that in the south-western part rural depopulated areas need more activation upon SC but in such areas SC itself is also decaying with depopulation and rapid aging.

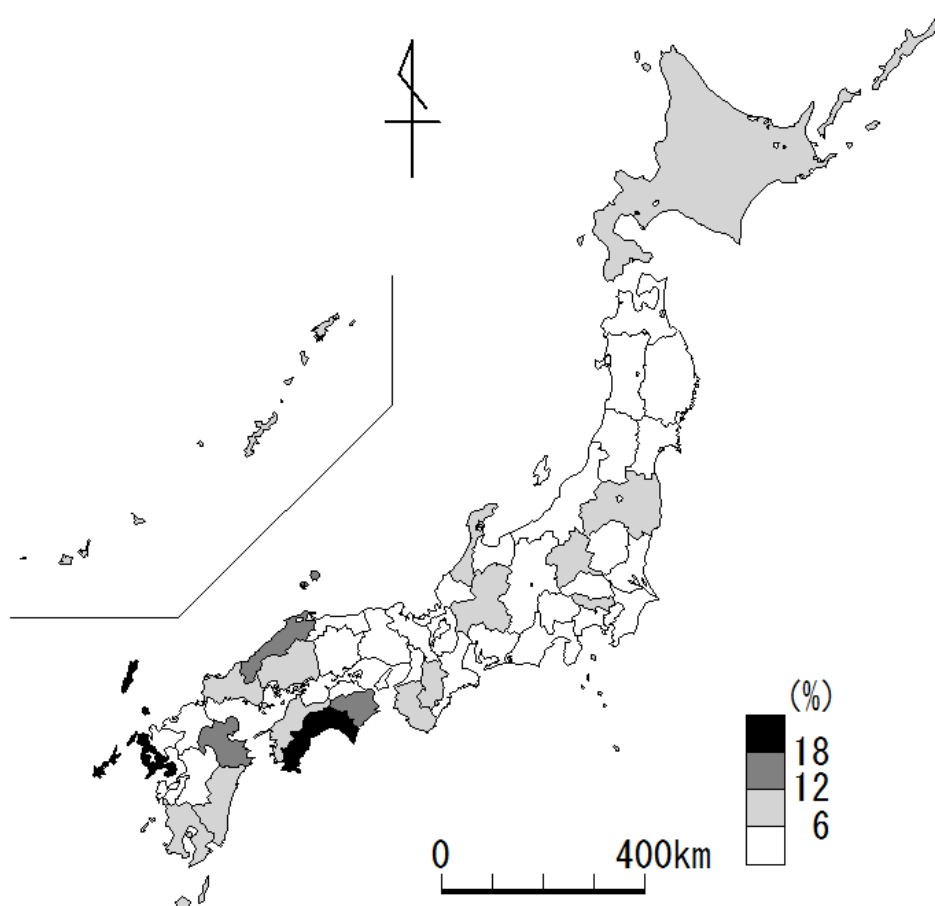


Figure 3 Ratio of distant rural agricultural settlements from urban areas; taking one hour and more to DID (2005)

Data: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery

3-2. Some Cases of Rural Settlement in the South-Eastern Part of Japan

As the author once introduced, there are some attractive cases of

activating a depopulated area utilizing social ties or SC. Two of them are Tsukinoya (Un'nan city, Shimane prefecture) and Yururi (Miyoshi city, Tokushima prefecture). Both of them locate in the western Japan and are registered as depopulated area by Depopulation Act.

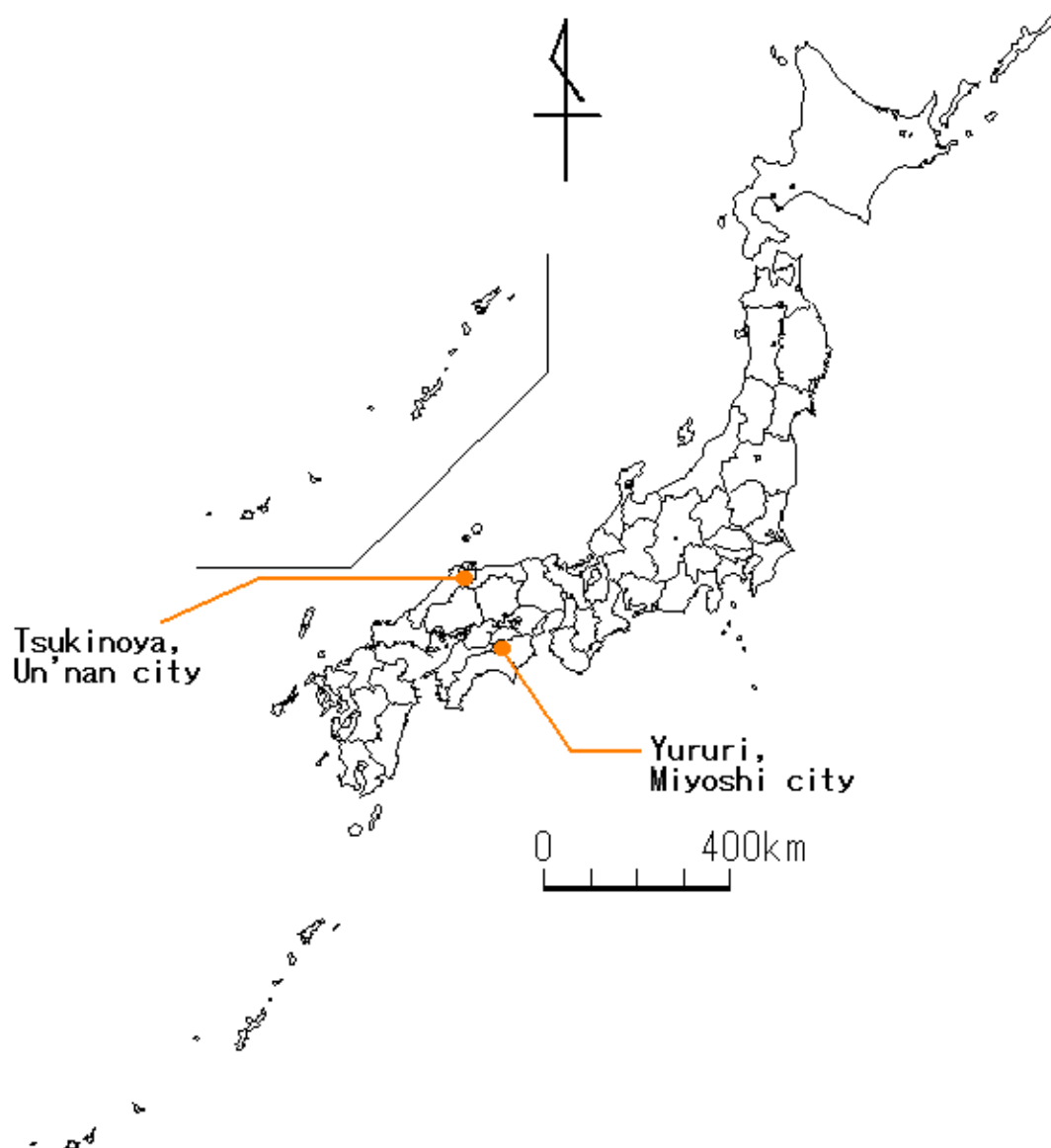


Figure 4 Location of two case settlements

1) Tsukinoya

In 1976 the Ministry of Construction (at that time; now the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport: MLIT) published news to build a dam

(Obara Dam) at the upper part area of Hii River in order to conserve the natural environment, to control water flow and to supply water to the lower areas. In order to build the dam, 11.9 hectares of home sites, 288.3 hectares of forestlands, 89.0 hectares of arable lands, 1.5 hectares of rough lands and 20.5 km of road are all to be sunk, and 111 households must be removed. After 1991, some households moved out but the other people stayed near there. Among the areas, Tsukinoya had maintained population of 112 in 2001 (decrease of about only 20%). In 2001, 54 persons, as for the number of elderly people of 65 or more years old in that time, are coequal with the ratio of 48.2%. Moreover, although the total number of houses is decreasing, the non-farmhousehold number is increasing rapidly. It shows that rapid de-agriculturalization could be seen in this settlement. The farmhouse number and a farm population actually decreased sharply through the 1990s, and aging is progressing especially on and after the second half of the 1980s there.

In 1998 they have established an agricultural corporation foundation "Tsukinoya Healing," and they produce branded rice, "*Oku-Izumo Iyashi Mai* (Upper-Izumo Healing Rice)" with other crops. Since the establishment they have been sold their agricultural products aggressively.

In 2001 they also have established another NPO "Tsukinoya Redevelopment Association" to reform and reorganize local fundamental functions of daily life in the community. The NPO covers wide range of activities as below.

/ Maintenance of traditional secret event of "*Kagura*" dance and music based on ancient myth which appertains to the local shrine there.

/ Improvement of traditional funeral rituals towards more convenient way.

/ Establishment of new community events.

/ Induction of cable television system and Inter-Net.

/ Establishment of a web site of the Community

(<http://user.kkm.ne.jp/tukinoya/>).

/ Construction of settlement centers of the community.

In 2009 the Tsukinoya Redervelopment Association had received a prize of Japan Association of Development of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, for the good treatment to reactivate their daily life functions.

2) Yururi

This part treats a new case of reactivation of depopulated area by “bridging” situation.

In Japan there are some associations of hometowners. The typical case is *Kenjin-Kai*. *Kenjin-Kai* is an association consists of members who come from the same prefecture. For an example *Tokushima Kenjin-Kai* means an association of people from Tokushima prefecture who are now living in the other prefecture.

Kinki (Kansai) district consists of six prefectures; Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Wakayama, Nara and Shiga. And in Kinki district there is “Kinki District Association of Tokushima Prefecturers” (*Tokushima Kenjin-Kai Kinki Rengo-Kai*) which has about 4,000 members.

In 2007 some of the members established a NPO named "*Furusato-Chikara*" (Power of Hometown). The NPO aims to construct a new settlement "Yururi", made of wooden houses in Miyoshi city, a rural part of Tokushima prefecture, and to promote movers from urban area into the settlement.

The new settlement, Yururi, which *Furusato-Chikara* constructed has some patches of small farmland attached to each house-site. Most of the residents there are retired persons just after 60years old or so (Baby-boom generation), and they were formerly urban residents. Now they can enjoy their new life and small agriculture there.

The houses of Yururi were made of blocks of thinned woods. In Japan thinned woods have just only very low value, so in much wider area practice of thinning forest and cutting thinned woods cannot be promoted. Forestry in Japan, as same as coal mining industry, has been weakened since the 1960's because of huge amount of import of cheaper woods.

The settlement was formally established on the 3rd September 2008 and they had a ceremony to celebrate the open of the settlement here. At the ceremony the governor of Tokushima prefecture and the mayor of Miyoshi city made their speech.

And the wooden blocks are produced by a local tertiary sector saw mill company "*Yamashiro Mokumoku*" which had been suffered from severe management conditions. So the construction of the new settlement contributes to forestry, saw mill industry and construction industry in the

local Miyoshi area.

But in the case of the new settlement by Furusato-Chikara, some of the thinned woods got higher added value. So, although the practice of Furusato-Chikara is small one, the aim to recall migration flow into a depopulated area and to revive local forestry is now remarkable.

Most of the members of Furusato-Chikara are living in Kansai district but they act in Tokushima prefecture. The NPO has two offices; in Miyoshi city and Osaka city. And the residents of the new settlements are from urban areas out of Tokushima prefecture. Then the members and the residents respectively act in their "bridging" situation in this case.

In 2009 the residents of Yururi started to cultivate some of vegetables and they have rented two greenhouses. After they had got enough harvest, then they started to hire some parsons with mental retardation as part-time-helpers and by it they found they connected to another local human network.

Almost at the same time, Furusato-Chikara developed their sawing spot up to the mountain forest by introducing "moving sawing system" that will be able to let the expecting areas of cutting and thinning forest extend wider. And the NPO is already planning to construct the next new settlement.

3) Some Other Findings at Rural Cases

So far as the author become to know from his research experiences, beyond his expectations, rural situation has become much diversified and simple urban-rural dichotomy is still more out-of-dated. And individual management of agriculture and forestry by households in Japan is sustained by the other side jobs. Part-time farmer can continue to cultivate because he or she has another job, like *Abendbauer*. And such part-time farmers used to introduce thinking way of *Gesellschaft* into rural family or rural society, so they are, in a meaning, urbanites partly.

On the contrary in urban areas, with extending life span, people are often used to live at the same place for longer time, then there *Gemeinschaft*-like local social network by the relation of settled habitation.

(4) Elements of SC, and Inter-scale and Inter-level

Problems

In Japan SC is easily and simply treated in social scientific works as the author mentioned already. So we must think that in what situation what is SC, and how it works when and where, by whom. Upon this, next thing we should do is to list up items or elements which are essential for SC.

The basic unit for SC is a man. And then a group of men make social relations or networks holding some purposes, goals or motivation with a trust in a “bonding” form. The bonding perhaps goes to further bonding, or bridging to another. At each phase or stage of shaping SC, important elements can be seen. Here the author writes them down as below (**Table 4**).

Table 4 Important elements of Social Capital

- (1) Member or membership: who is the member? (Age, sex, status, ability, consciousness, motivation, preference etc.)
- (2) Purpose, goal or motivation: what is the logic for establishment of the social relation for SC?
- (3) Property of SC: what and how are the resources, rules and norms of SC?
- (4) Boundary or range: how wide does the SC bring about benefits?
- (5) Accessibility: how is a degree of freedom or exclusiveness to use the SC, and how can people access to it?
- (6) Connection: how does the unit of a SC connect to the other ones? (further bonding, bridging, linking etc.)
- (7) Energy: how does the SC get energy or is it reinforced? (adding budget, members, trustworthiness etc.)
- (8) Inter-scale or inter-level functioning: how does the SC work among different scales or levels?

When someone asks the important essences of the SC, perhaps the items which the author listed above are enumerated. The thing that we must do such an argument means that the term "Social Capital" has been used and spread as even the definition was vague. But there are many terms that are used widely although the definitions are still really vague. In geography, the term “region” is one of the examples.

To examine the definition of SC connects to rich discussion about it, and

in addition, it becomes useful for the development of the operational or numerical models which concern to SC.

By the way, the composition that individual actions or agencies form SC and lead to a bigger scale collectively concerns to the problem of the level how a personal social action (agency) does connect to a total society; a famous problem of micro-macro relation in sociology. About this point Anthony Giddens has already discussed by his "Theory of Structuration" (Giddens, 1993), but in geography we can refer to a space system concerning with "Grunddaseinsfunktionen" offered by Munich School of Sozialgeographie (Figure 5) (Maier et al, 1977).

About the framework of space system by Munich School of *Sozialgeographie*, the author has already referred at the 1st workshop in Östersund, Sweden, 2004.

Once Karl Ruppert and Franz Schaffer, who are core members of German Social Geography of Munich School, showed "The Seven Fundamental Life Functions" (*Grunddaseinsfunktionen*); they are to reside (*Wohnen*), to labor (*Arbeiten*), to be supplied (*Sich-Versorgen*), to be educated (*Sich-Bilden*), to recreate (*Sich-Erholen*), to take part in traffic (*Verkehrsteilnahme*), and, to live in a community (*In Gemeinschaften leben*) (Maier et al 1977, Tsutsumi 1992). The exercitation of these functions needs places for them to work out. After Ruppert and Schaffer the functions cannot be workable without such needs (*Flächenanspruch*). If they get the space for them, then it also means they get workability in real (*Raumwirksamkeit*). Behind such a situation, social groups of human being exist as social geographical groups, within which people share socio-economic characters or indicators. Workspaces of functions of these groups are to be restricted by some reaches of areas (*Reichweite*) where a group can keep its influence. Through and after the process some function or its workplace is fixed upon the earth (*Verortung*). Then there we can see location or configuration of several kinds of facilities or buildings. Such a framework by Ruppert and Schaffer was built after influence especially by two

geographers, Hans Bobek and Wolfgang Hartke, who were teachers for them (Tsutsumi, 1992).

And also these *Grunddaseinsfunktioen* were established being influenced by "The Charter of Athens," even though it has been criticized and the new version was established in 1998 by German city planners. But in the state of Bayern, the *Grunddaseinsfunktionen* were incorporated into regional planning and some textbook of geography at elementary schools.

Among Japanese geographers the functions above are known relatively widely, but in real regional researches the geographers there are not always conscious of the functions. So here, as a trial, the author would like to show some kind of fundamental functions in regional life that have possibilities to be supported in a small community with relation to greater scale of spaces.

(Tsutsumi, 2005, p.133)

In **Figure 5** below, some fundamental functions for living take roles of binding each individual with a region. And it can be seen that at the phase of the functioning, people establish, use or reproduce SC among themselves.

And here the author also wants to advert to a mechanism of activating the settlement activity.

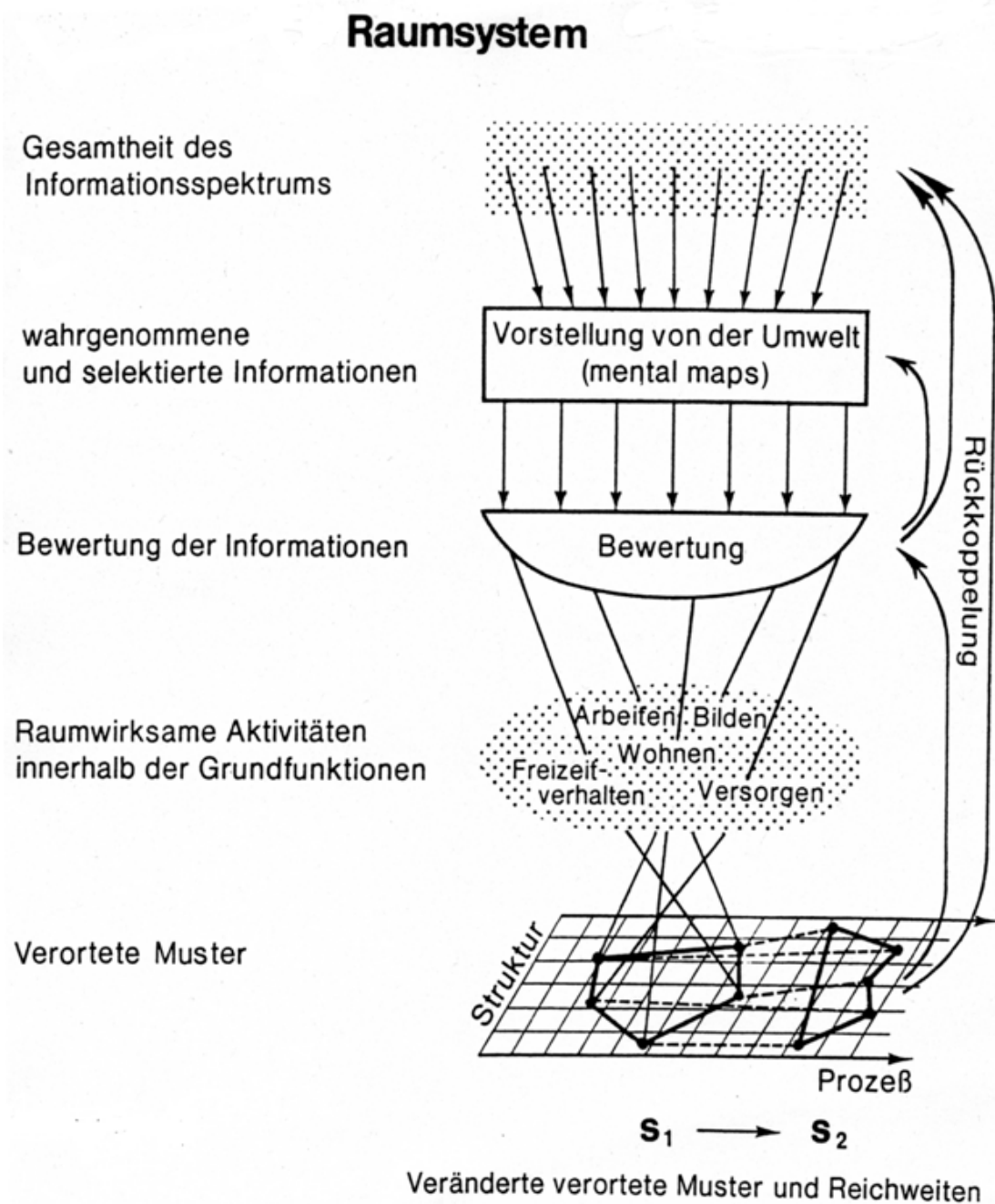


Figure 5 Space system of *Sozialgeographie* (by K. Ruppert; Maier et al, 1977, p.26)

If there is no activator, settlement cannot do anything about its activity naturally. And also settlement must make much use of some institution as for energy to make activity. Simply and solely speaking, settlement activity can be actualized through a mechanism system consists of settlement,

activator and institution (Figure 6).

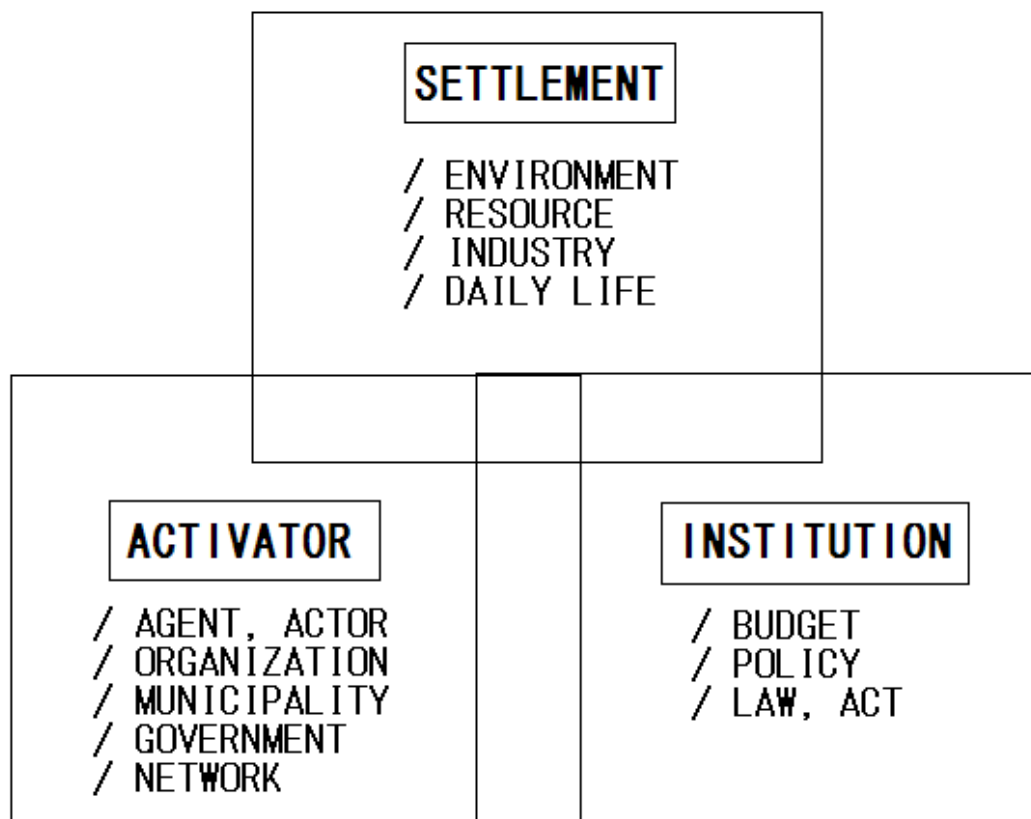


Figure 6 Mechanism of some essentialities to activate settlement activity

As Putnam (2000) mentioned, if SC has “bonding” and “bridging” phases, both of them can be seen through the mechanism system of settlement activity. That means not only bonding (especially inner social ties in a settlement), but also bridging (over to the outer social network or institution) is critical action in settlement movement. Particularly in the case of such a static database analysis in this paper, we must take care of not to accentuate too much on the bonding phase. That is to say, SC can be activated in a scheme of inter-scale and inter-level with complicated way.

(5) Not Concluding Remarks but a Short

Monologue

In order to consider the important but involved elements of SC, their networking, man, place and system (association and institution) are essential factors there.

Men or their intentional association with some sense, preference, direction will search, find, give a value to and activate SC. People then establish social network or Social Scape with some substances to make much use of SC.

To construct and sustain the Social Scape, communication is inevitable. On the stage of communication the Social Scape goes through a way of inter-level and inter-scale. If they use Inter-Net, the stage is on that of "placelessness" which means beyond or without spatial scale. So the situation of Social Scape is very intricate. The topic must be intently treated by social engineering (Bochev et al, 2004).

Also perhaps through Regulation Theory we would learn about management of SC from standpoints of forms of institution, ways of development, individual rule of game, habitus and so on, but it is the future task.

The author is originally field-worker being conscious of middle range way (Merton, 1957). He thinks accumulation of positivistic field research of rural areas is important. But often or sometimes most researchers used to treat only successful cases.

In Japan recently "Marginal Settlement" is one of the current topics (Ohno, 2005). Marginal Settlement is defined as being with high aging ratio more than 50%, and is to be abandoned and to be uninhabited in near future. SC study must be treat even such disappearing or extincting settlement.

The arguments of SC often bring about a risk to let people make a new SC unintentionally to sustain their own daily life. Especially in rural depopulated areas in Japan, autonomy, dependency and sustainability in using and making SC to activate daily living function are to be expected in a balanced way.

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*Abbreviation in the last parentheses each means E: English, G: German, J: Japanese

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