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Creating a Community of Resilience: New Meanings of Technologies for Greater Well-Being in a Depopulated Town

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Abstract

This article reflects upon the process of care in a depopulated town that is progressively graying. This has led to a consciousness of older adult's well-being and has led to the creation of living places for people from diverse cultural backgrounds and multiple generations. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in this town, this article traces the activities of persons searching for ways to promote a new industry in a manner that is appropriate to the local environment and that also matches the needs of older adults, aiming to help them continue to live in the community. It explores the kind of world discovered by those older adults who have continued to work by taking advantage of both their own resources and those of the community, and looks at how creative ways of supporting those efforts have affected the lifestyle of younger generations as well as the very nature of the town. It also explores the meaning of the development of technologies as an element that makes up the time and space in which people gather and considers the ways the community expresses and shares wisdom.

Keywords: aging, depopulation, work, technology, community, environment, Kamikatsu, Japan

INTRODUCTION

Japan has become well-known for its rapidly progressing aging and depopulation. Since 1994, it has witnessed the emergence of the so-called "aged society," with 14-21% of the population aged 65 or older, and became classified as a "super-aged society" (21.5%) after the population estimation conducted in 2007. There are frequent reports of depopulated towns or villages falling into a critical situation with the local community, public service and social infrastructure no longer functioning and the natural environment being destroyed. Since the beginning of 1990s, this situation has been such a concern that areas

with more than 50% of the population aged 65 or older have been called "Genkai Shūroku" (region in limit situation) (Ōno 2005), expressing worries especially for older people lost or isolated. Genkai Shūroku increased to eleven municipalities in 2010 according to the latest national census. These days, graying and aging in "new towns" developed on a wide scale after 1960s are also a concern as they are in the U.S. (Stafford 2009).

In an effort to halt depopulation and isolation of older people, researchers of economics and demography have insisted on the importance of promoting primary industries in regions experiencing depopulation



Photo 1: Japanese dolls of an older man and woman in traditional silk kimono (Photo courtesy of author)

(Matsutani & Fujimasa 2002: 94-99). This is because in Japan, the ability to continue work and other roles is a significant factor contributing to the well-being of the older adult. According to one international comparative study on the traits of the aged in five countries, the older adult in Japan have a greater tendency to attach importance to having a paid job and to getting along well with their neighbors (Maeda 2006; Yuzawa 2003:176). In the history of Japan, the older adults have important roles working in the community, such as tending pineland and caring for and educating children (Miyata et al ed. 2000:22; Miyamoto 1984:33-43) (Photo 1). Aging and depopulation may deprive both older adult and younger generation of the opportunity of cultivating inter-generational relations (Thang 2001), and going through life as a whole.

Kamikatsu-cho (Kamikatsu Town), located on the island of Shikoku, is an example of an area that has suffered from progressive aging and depopulation. Several prior studies reported the reconstruction of regions as carried out both by local governments and a semi-public joint venture (defined as a category of the third-sector in Japan). Honma (2007) and Ōe (2008) referred to Kamikatsu Town in their comparative studies on successful cases in promoting primary industries in various depopulated municipalities,

focusing on the government's designation of special districts of structural reform. These reforms were an attempt to avoid restrictions in certain fields and to stimulate the administration of local districts. Ōe has termed these attempts as "welfare promoted by industry" (Honma 2007: 70-71; Ōe 2008: 69). One of leaders of the semi-public joint venture of Kamikatsu Town reported his efforts toward cultivating new products as an agricultural instructor (Yokoishi 2007). The mayor of Kamikatsu Town also gave reports of recycling system developed in the town (Kasamatsu and Sato 2008).

In previous research, I conducted a general study concerning Japan's aging society and the well-being of people from various generations. First, I examined historical changes in the thoughts about the lifecycle starting from medical writings of Hippocrates (ca. 460-370 BC) (Terasaki and Suzuki 1994). I found that similar to western

conceptions of the lifecycle (Cole 1992), such as "the stairway of life" that first appeared in medieval western society in the form of "The Seven Ages of Man" in the *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* ("World in Pictures") textbook by John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), for example, adults became recognized as the "norm," while the older adult and children became peripheral, or were considered only as recipients of care by the adult generation. Second, based on fieldwork, I examined the process by which older adult in Kamikatsu Town have been able to continue making use of their abilities and their local material resources, culminating in the promotion of a new industry. The article sheds light on townspeople's search for the way of normalization for older adult to participate in their new work (Suzuki 2005; 2009; 2010).

This article, based on fieldwork and interviews I conducted starting in 2004, proceed to look into how a depopulated town revive with creative ways of promoting a new business through indigenous products, and how the venture has spiraled not only to provide well-being to the older adults, but also allowing for more new ideas to surface by younger people who came from outside the town. I especially focused on experiences of older women who participated in the industry and the ways their work reshaped both their social life and personal outlook. I also shed light on how technologies and the creative ways of

supporting the older adult's activities have affected the lifestyle of the younger generation and the town itself by examining the process of developing technologies and working out plans toward the creation of new events and activities. Through those works, each townspeople as well as people that considered about the town contributed to the empowerment of the local community by pursuing well-being, without clinging to generational or gender-based norms or roles (Matsumoto ed. 2011). I also explore how older adult in particular came to expand their system of mutual aid with the cooperation of people outside of their town, sharing leisure time and regenerating experiences in addition to work.

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW INDUSTRY

Crises and changes of Kamikatsu Town

Kamikatsu Town is situated upstream of Katsuragawa River in the central region of Tokushima Prefecture of eastern Shikoku. The town is dominated by range of mountains higher than 1000m above sea level. Low-lying lands under 200m comprise only 4% (4.2 square km) and lands between 200m to 500m are 28%, thus two thirds of town is nestled in upland region. Some 55 settlements are scattered in the mountain slopes of the V valley, around 100m to 700m. □Forest area reaches 86.1% of the town. 68% (73.96 square km) of agricultural land is located over 500m and can be seen up to 600m (Kamikatsu-cho 1979: 3-8).

The population of the town was 1783 and the number of households was 763, the percentage of the town's population aged 65 or older was 52.4% according to national census of October 2010. In the years between 1915 and the Second World War, the number of household increased but the overall population decreased. The population peaked at 6,356 in 1950 when returned servicemen and dislocated workers came back to the town. Since 1955, the population began to decrease, and since 1960, it fell fast due to drastic out-migration to the three major metropolitan areas as well as to such cities in Tokushima prefecture as Tokushima, Komatsushima, Anan and Katsuura (Kamikatsu-cho 1979: 23-26, 1216). Kamikatsu Town thus has been regarded as a Genkai Shuraku in critical condition.

The town's main industry – lumber and mandarin oranges of the Onshu variety – had started to become unprofitable during Japan's rapid economic growth years of the 1970s and 1980s, owing to increasing imports and the expansion of production of those products in other areas of Japan. In February 1981, the town bore the brunt of an unprecedented cold wave that was quite localized, with

the mercury going down to -13 degrees Celcius (around 9 degrees Fahrenheit), dealing a devastating blow to its mandarin orange orchards. Trees of the special indigenous varieties of aromatic, sour citrus fruits – such as yuko and sudachi – were also on the verge of dying. An agricultural instructor, Mr. A, was transferred from Tokushima City to help develop new crops suitable to chill high ground. Various other crops as scallion, nozawana and shiitake mushroom, were planted experimentally, but people's livelihoods barely improved (Yokoishi 2007:160-165). Having lost hope, many of the local residents turned to alcohol or became depressed. Deprived of the opportunity to cooperate in farming and seasonal festivals they were happy with in the past, people lapsed into saying nasty things about others at "Idobata Kaigi" (gossip meetings). It thus became an urgent task to revitalize not only the town's economy, but its spirit as well.

New work of leaf production: discovering the resources of a town

The town's residents tried to create a new industry suitable to the town. They came up with a hit agri-forestry product, inspired by a conversation overheard at a Japanese restaurant in Kyoto. Mr. A, the agricultural instructor brought to Kamikatsu, was eating dinner this restaurant after a long day of work when he overheard some young women happily conversing about the beautiful leaves decorating their food. Mr. A thought to himself, "Those kinds of leaves can be found all over Kamikatsu Town – is it really true that they make people so happy?" Indeed, leaves are often placed upon *kaiseki* and other types of Japanese cuisine as a garnish, with the cooks normally obtaining the leaves themselves in the vicinity. Mr. A, however, wondered whether the demand for leaves might be high if young people like the women in the restaurant enjoy food so much, including the leaves. The work of picking the mountain leaves was perfect for the older adult of Kamikatsu Town, who were quite familiar with local vegetation. Moreover, the work did not require so much physical energy.

Mr. A returned to Kamikatsu and broached his idea with the local residents, but no one took him seriously at first. Older people who had previously thrived in the forestry and mandarin orange industries refused to believe that just going to the mountain, picking up leaves, and putting them in a box was "real work." His proposals were not easily accepted by the townspeople, in part because he was considered an "outsider." It was hard to persuade the older adult, who had so far enthusiastically engaged in the development and production of other agricultural products that "leaves could be products" too.



Photo 2: A woman prepares and packages leaves (Photo courtesy of author)

At last, he found several farming households whose female members agreed to cooperate with his plan. The various kinds of leaves collected by the women—all in their 60s—were loaded by Mr. A in the agricultural cooperative's automobile, which he drove to Osaka and Kyoto in an attempt to peddle them at several markets. In the beginning, Mr. A found difficulty in grasping consumers' needs, such as the form of a leaf, color, size that are called for each season. Reluctantly, he made repeated visits to restaurants where leaves were actually being used in cooking. Bit by bit, he learned how to choose and arrange leaves that would be seasonal and those that would bring out the best flavor of the food.

When the enterprise got off the ground, the town entered a semi-public joint venture, prepared cooperation with an agricultural cooperative association, and began to tackle this industry completely. Indigenous leaves and branches of plants growing in the village were commercialized as ingredients in food, including the leaves of persimmon and maple trees, nandina, giant elephant ear (a kind of taro), camellia plants and bamboo grass, along with azalea flowers and the flowers of plum, cherry and pear trees.

The industry was successful beyond everyone's expectations. Moving forward 19 years to 2005, some 300 kinds of leaves were being shipped from Kamikatsu Town, with annual revenue exceeding 250 million yen (around \$3.25 million), accounting for more than 80%

of the product being sold at the Osaka Central Wholesale Market. City-dwelling customers now enjoy dishes decorated with beautiful leaves, and willingly pay for them as well. More than 150 households (around 20% of all households) in the town participate in the production of the leaves, with the average age of the people engaged in the tasks of collecting, washing and packing the leaves standing at around 68 (as of 2005). Many women and older adult do the work as it allows them to apply their knowledge of local vegetation and because of relatively light workload in all stages of production (Photo 2). They earn a monthly income of 200,000 to 300,000 yen (around \$2,500 to \$3,750); some people even occasionally earn 1 million yen (\$12,500) a month. Kamikatsu Town had successfully created a top-

selling product that could be made primarily through the activities of its older adult residents.

DEVELOPMENT AND MODIFICATION OF TECHNOLOGIES TO INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY AND CHANGES IN OLDER PEOPLE'S LIVES

While the work of the older adult may seem outwardly simple, it is in fact hardly simple at all. It is not enough for them just to pick some leaves here and there—the harvest must be planned and designed in a way that meets market needs, with the leaves being sent to the market at an appropriate time. The act of producing the kinds of leaves that match such needs is something that older people ought to do well, for they have seen various kinds of leaves over many years change colors throughout the four seasons on the slopes of the mountains. Still, there remained for the producers the issues of identifying exactly which kinds of leaves were being demanded by the market, as well as figuring out a method to transport the products to the market in a timely fashion.

The special efforts that were utilized to bring out the abilities of the older adult in Kamikatsu Town can be broadly categorized into three types, as described below.

Divert use of wireless telegraph for equal information dissemination

First, it was suggested that the town's existing simultaneous-broadcast wireless system, designed for use in disasters,

be utilized to equitably get information sent out to the people participating in the leaf production. For people living and working in scattered mountain areas, the simultaneous-broadcast wireless system has been utilized to inform townspeople of emergencies and other important matters. This time, a new system was organized by which the disaster fax service could be used to send out information to the leaf producers, forming a network that allowed everyone to quickly acquire information such as requests for shipments, etc. That way, information about seasonal leaves in demand including the copy of leaf samples that help the producers easily adjust the form of a leaf, a color, a size, to a standard, are sent swiftly and simultaneously to all the farm households registered as leaf producers.



Photo 3: Using a computer with a trackball device to receive and send out information on deliveries (Photo courtesy of author)

Upon receipt of the fax, the producers can then ascertain whether or not they can make a timely delivery of the amount of leaves specified in the order, and then make a phone call to the central office to place a bid for the job. After that, they take the packed leaves to the agricultural cooperative by the specified deadline. Only if a bid is placed does the order get finalized, however, so the old people of Kamikatsu Town always keep close tabs on the condition of the leaves growing on their mountains as they patiently wait for a fax to come in, acting very quickly until their phone call to make their bid goes through. Once, when I was interviewing one of the local women, she got a fax with an order request, whereupon she quickly dropped everything else to concentrate on the mountain leaves.

Producers' feeling of fulfillment by acquiring information of the area

Second, a computer system—loaned to anyone who asks for it—has been developed that is easy even for older people to use. It is extremely important for the leaf producers to get timely market information—regarding such things as the products being traded, the deadlines for delivery, and prices—so that they can plan what to cultivate in light of the season. As such information constantly changes, it was considered desirable to have it distributed through the network to the individual producers, who would then be able to act on it.

As far as using computers was concerned, discussions were made about the type of software and settings that

could be used by older adult for the first time. An easy-to-handle trackball, with the ball moved by the entire palm, was devised for older adult unaccustomed to clicking a mouse. The older adult could receive and send out information by simply rolling the trackball and moving the cursor to the desired place on the easy-to-understand, color-coded screen (Photo 3).

What especially makes the leaf producers excited is getting constantly-updated information about their own sales totals and sales rankings, as well as which kinds of leaves are hot sellers. With color-coded bar graphs depicting shipment targets and current shipment status, the leaf producers can instantly decide whether to ship seasonal items or those in constantly high demand. Every day, the older adult lift up the protective cloth covers over their computer screens and pay rapt attention to them.

Another method to share information was Mr. A's handwritten newsletter reminiscent of the bulletins used to exchange information at elementary school. The paper includes detailed information about leaves and is chock-full of stories about minor events in the town. Each issue, too, is distributed by fax. The townspeople are often highlighted in the newspaper, and they look forward to reading about each other's activities there.

Transportation and communication

Manufactured leaves have to be supplied to an agricultural cooperative association by the fixed time. In a town without a public transportation facility except for a trunk road, reservation of transportation which older adult can easily use was a pressing need.

Taxi services are now being provided through paid volunteers in special zones, allowing the older adult to deliver their products safely to the agricultural cooperative to meet the prescribed deadline. Kamikatsu Town applied to the government to develop the original system of helping aged and disabled people to move around town with volunteer-run, fare-charging taxis. The "Project in Special District of Transportation with Fare-charging Volunteers" was approved through the government's policy of "Special Districts in Structural Reform" in May 2003. This policy was efficient because residents devised an idea that is suitable to a region they live. Thanks to the system, older adult who cannot or do not drive are now able to ask someone else to transport them without hesitation.

Changes in the lives of the aged

The way of life of older adults in Kamikatsu Town has changed significantly thanks to the new leaf-collection industry. Thanks to the stable income they earned through the "easy and clean work", they were able to enhance their lifestyles and build a sense of hope in the future. With their extra money, the first thing they did was to increase their avenues for amusement. Mrs. B said that although it seemed small pleasure, she was relaxed and happy to have a cup of beer with her husband at supper time after work. Her husband had been engaged in charcoal burner, but he had never got enough money from his hard work. Now they cooperate in collecting, coordinating, and shipping leaves. They feel so happy to have something to work for together and to talk in smile about. They even hope that their son's family come back to the town and inherit their work.

In the case of older women, especially—those who had married into farmer's families or who had been housewives—a whole new life began, one in which they had income to spend freely for the first time. Mrs. C, who was 84 years old in 2005, evenly split the income she made from collecting leaves with her daughter-in-law, who was helping her in her work. Although Mrs. C lost her husband long time ago, she was proud to have supported her grandson living in the city to buy a house and to prepare for family gathering all by herself. She and her daughter-in-law work and live together happily.

The second thing the old people of Kamikatsu Town did with their extra money was to use it to invest in the future. Examples of that include people who have planted new trees with an eye on those kinds of leaves that are in high demand. Mrs. C, who has the nickname of "Ace," has been participating in this work from the very beginning of the project, and has continued to plant new persimmon trees in anticipation of future harvests. While it takes some three years from the time a tree is planted until it can be harvested for its leaves, she says that she looks forward to it.

From the viewpoint of the investment, it is a new experience for the work colleagues to make bus trips to Kyoto for the purpose of study tours, not only the sightseeing trip. On the tours, they can enjoy going to restaurants that buy their leaves to see how they are actually prepared, and taste dishes with the leaves in them. It makes good opportunity for them to spark the new ideas together.

The leaves have gone beyond merely being things that are "plucked" to things that are "made." The relation between such factors as sunlight and altitude with the color of leaves can only be predicted by those who have a lot of experience. What was formerly seen as the town's weak point—its unsuitability for planting crops because of the scarcity of flat land—is instead now recognized as its strong point, namely, the ability to get leaves of all sorts of colors. The whole town is now viewed as "shelves in a store," with the people totally absorbed in the task of caring for the nature of the forest.

The third change that came about was the increased number of opportunities for individuals in the community to "exist with visible faces." Many of the women, particularly, told me that for the first time, they felt that they existed with a "visible face." Thanks to the information they get sent to them over the network, they can keep track of what their colleagues in the business are doing and learn about the market, even while they remain at home. Mrs. D is happy to do her work with her son thanks to the growing accessibility of work. After being ill, her son is not strong enough for working outside but he can drive to bring leaves for his parents.

The opportunity for people to meet others face-to-face has also expanded because they have common topics of conversation. The townspeople use the well-appointed facilities of the remodeled and expanded local public inn to enjoy the hot springs there, and often get together in the inn's meeting room to discuss common themes.

THE DESIGN OF WELL-TRAFFICKED PLACES

The changes in the lifestyle of the older adult in Kamikatsu Town led to changes in the atmosphere of the whole town, including the lifestyle of other generations and the way people interacted.

The volunteer taxi service that was organized to help the work of the older adult can be done by anyone who can drive, but one necessary condition for the drivers is to be within voice range of their customers. Thanks to the introduction of the small taxi system, both older adult and younger people have expanded their opportunity to talk with members in the vicinity. The small changes have led to an increase in the number of conversations, bringing about a sense of greater vitality to the town.

Since 1993, the "1Q (Ikkyu) Athlete Meet," named after the famous Buddhist priest "Ikkyu," who loved to hold dialogs in the form of questions and answers in order to get and share good ideas, has given everyone in town a chance to express their opinions on how to make the town a better place to live and visit. Starting in 1995, the town was divided into five districts, each with six representatives (two of which are women) serving on a 30-member committee that was organized to think up and transmit ideas about the town, including its environment, at the meet. Each of the five districts presents its problem, and the committee has figured out a solution together as it did in developing the taxi service for townspeople living in the mountains.

According to Mr. A, such activities are positioned as an attempt to "*Ki wo Sodateru*" (foster spirits) of the residents. Thinking and coming up with ideas are said to be a form of "play." Surely, in places outside of work to earn income to support their livelihood, new arenas were created for people to be active in the community, where ordinary people came to have experiences that were universally illuminated by coming out to the front stage.

Transition to a "clean town" by the efforts of recycling

One stage for fostering spirits was the recycle center set up to support the town's economy and ecology. Since the town did not have an original garbage dump, garbage processing was an important subject of discussion. The townsfolk did not want to use tax money either to buy an incinerator or to ask another town to dispose of their waste materials. Searching for the good way to recycle, they solicited, over the Internet, someone who could help them develop a feasible system of recycling for the town. They received an application from a young woman who had learned many ways of recycling in Denmark. She has

lived in Kamikatsu Town since the summer of 2004, and has taken leadership as Director of an NPO (nonprofit organization) called "Zero Waste Academy." to improve the method of recycling.

Recycling begins with carefully classifying waste. The newly hired recycling expert and the townsfolk formed "Zero Waste Academy," and developed a system to separate rubbish according to categories. Following the expert's directions, the townsfolk have come to separate their rubbish into 30 or more groups at the "Hibiya Recycle Center." At the center, people classify garbage, with a clear explanation given of how the rubbish is to be recycled. The recycle center also resembles a small museum where children can learn recycling. People now enjoy more opportunities than ever before to converse with others by consulting other older people on the center's staff as they carefully separate their garbage. A volunteer group that helps older adult or carries their garbage was also formed. Now the rate of recycling in Kamikatsu Town is 80%, compared to just 19% overall in Japan (Kasamatsu and Sato 2008: 107).

The "Zero Waste Academy" publishes a journal called "Kurukuru," a Japanese word describing a circular motion, to introduce its "eco-life," giving information to the townsfolk about how to make small articles from waste materials. Kamikatsu Town has been known for its efforts to recycle garbage to become a "clean town," which will enhance its image of growing "beautiful leaves."

Nowadays, the recycle center has become a kind of community center, the site of various activities being put into practice. A place called "Hidamari" (meaning a "cozy place in the sun") has been set up next to the center as a meeting place. The space has been utilized as a place for people to bring their unneeded items for recycling and/or making things. There, older adult and young people enjoy making new shirts, bags and hats out of material recycled at the center, as well as koinobori carp streamers, making use of older adult's knowledge on sewing with old cloth such as tafu (made from bark of the region in winter). In that small space, people use their leisure time to pass on knowledge about sewing and making things, with cloth remnants being transformed into new items.

Deployment of the local specialty stand of a town

Another stage that has been established for people was the local grocery store, "Ikkyu-san," which has served as the site for the new plan of cooperation between the young people coming to the town from the outside and the town's older adult and housewives. Since 2000, young salesmen and women have been dispatched to Kamikatsu Town for

a year at a time by a NPO in Tokyo. They select and sell the foods considered to be interesting from a stranger's viewpoint. In cooperation with the housewives, they sell a small amount of vegetables, home-made side dishes, the seasoning made from citrus fruits, the traditional rice-cake sweets that are characteristic of the region.

Next to the product is a small piece of paper where they can write down such information as where the product came from, what times of the year it is best to eat certain mountain vegetables, etc., and delicious ways to prepare the ingredient. That gives tourists and newly-arrived young residents information about the region's distinctive food culture and connections with the natural environment. On the second floor of the shop, both tourists and townspeople often enjoy healthy meals using local food at lunchtime as well.

Activities of the younger generation and a new movement in the town

Most people in Kamikatsu Town welcome returnees (u-turn people) and newcomers (i-turn people). For older adult and townspeople of Kamikatsu Town, various new plans have been a sense of discovery of new ways to use their leisure time, and that has led to the discovery of new jobs and activities for young people as well. Some young people, after a temporary stay, decided to continue to live in Kamikatsu Town.

Since 2005, a working-holiday scheme has been instituted in the town, with more than 100 persons participating while staying in farmers' homes. A few of the participants have moved to Kamikatsu Town as well.

Each year, one person sent from an NPO to work as a clerk at "Ikkyu-san" as a relocated person from the outside. The town pays for part of their living expenses, also supporting their lifestyle by providing low-cost housing—a house filled with the scent of new wood—built by a joint public-private lumber processing venture. That also meant the use of local timber, one of the resources in the town, which has promoted forestry. Some 17 young people have been sent there so far, with six of them settling permanently.

One young person, when asked why she wanted to keep living in the town, said that it was because the townspeople frequently talked to her about the way of living in the town. Young people have plenty of opportunity to try their idea together with a resident. By expressing their viewpoint as a "stranger", young people can gain a valuable place as a member of the town.

There are also those who apply experiences obtained in the town in new places. The woman who took charge

of maintenance of a recycle center offers her experience now in another location near Tokyo. Thus, the experience cultivated and accumulated in Kamikatsu Town has been shared and utilized by people of other areas with similar challenges of aging and depopulation. People who have worked in town would share the same subject with and feel sympathy with people in other areas in Japan.

Although newcomers increased, the total population of Kamikatsu Town did not grow significantly. Older people have died and some students have moved out of the town to go to school. However, the circulation of residents gives the town a chance for new conversations and ideas to grow. Thus, townspeople have made efforts to share resources with people living outside of the town as a means to offer urban dwellers the chance to own a tanada or "terraced field" in the town. Summer outdoor concerts have been held for the townsfolk and visitors at the tanada, now famous throughout Japan for its beautiful scenery. In former times, rice planting was conducted with the cooperation of community members of a settlement and rice-planting festival was held. Nowadays, tanada has been tended through the cooperation of townspeople and outsiders, and the concert gives various meaning to this mutual aid.

In order to realize their vision for the town, old and new residents alike are trying to find out how the factors once considered the disadvantages of a depopulated town have turned into advantages more recently. However, they do not have a vision of making Kamikatsu Town a "big town" or a tourist spot.

The idea of maintaining and employing a town efficiently came to be shared by people through developing techniques and technologies of communication and sharing the town with newcomers. This involves the superimposition of each generation's life cycle as the culture of the district is being spun forth.

CONCLUSION

Kamikatsu Town was a depopulated town that aimed to promote an industry that took advantage of the region's special features and the practical knowledge of the older residents. Their innovations enabled the accessibility of work, which not only allowed older adult to participate, but also changed the lifestyle of the community including other generations. The numerous innovations aimed at the district's revitalization created a new range of activities, in turn increasing the number of opportunities for everyone to better communicate with each other.

The new store selling locally-produced goods served as a physical entrance or "channel" through which new young

residents and tourists were attracted to the town. The recycling center became multifunctional in nature, having set up places for people to relax and socialize. This led to the development of indigenous products of the town that utilized recycled goods. Those attempts also expanded the spaces for interpersonal exchange within the town, and opened up the possibility for people to build new relationships.

The older adult's feeling of happiness and well-being came not only from the money they earned, but also from social and cultural factors such as their place in their family and community. Without stereotyping older adult as "objects of assistance," their participation in an activity as full members of the district resulted in their feeling that they existed in the community with a "visible face." Having their own money—earned through work that they were good at—led to new activities, giving rise to a situation that might be described as "cyclical coexistence" (Suzuki 2005: 355, 366), in other words, a practice of care that works only when everything moves in cycles in conformity with the setting and situation of the people who are related to a certain place.

All the technologies have been applied by face to face communication until users understood after many trials and errors, not by simply distributing manuals. Such normalization processes have only taken shape by listening to wishes of each older adult as well as by looking into the environments where they have been leading their lives. This kind of effort is indispensable toward cultivating "a society without handicaps" (Suzuki ed. 2012: 1), a place where people are able to live performing what they would wish without feeling barriers, and where they are able to get a feeling of sharing a place with others and being included in the community.

The purpose of developing and applying technologies is not to make people live independently, but rather to get access to ideas of how to care for the town in which people of various positions would want to live, and developing a more holistic system of care. For the people in the town, the act of building a relationship of interdependence—namely, depending on each other and helping each other out—for the purpose of letting others advance in their chosen field and accomplishing what they want done, leads to mutual recognition and the ability of each person to secure his/her niche in life. At the present day, developing technologies for normalization of the environment would surely give more opportunities especially for older adult living in changing society to extend care as in former times for the place they live as well as younger generation would want live.

In the past, mutual aid was practiced mostly within the family and among community members in a settlement to accomplish work such as rice planting, forestry, and roofing, and to prepare the festival following harvesting. At present, a greater variety of mutual cooperation is conducted by a diversified group of people, often as an experience of "rite of passage." The residents of Kamikatsu Town noticed that it was not only economics or governmental administration that gave people power to think about what they value in everyday lives and in the future, but also the time they had for pleasure and regeneration, often on occasions of new types of events shared with various people. Producing local foods and newly invented handicrafts by making use of the resources of the area, townspeople enjoy communicating with visitors and discovered the meaning of sharing leisure time to continuously develop ideas and reconsider their values. This promotes the resilience and flexibility of the community toward the well-being of people living in as well as visiting the district.

Developing technologies has enhanced accessibility and communication for people to participate in generating ideas to care for the place they live in as well as in regenerating themselves to reconsider what they value for their future life design.

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