



Regional networking and development – creation of new value through wider regional collaboration (summary)

Shoji Mino

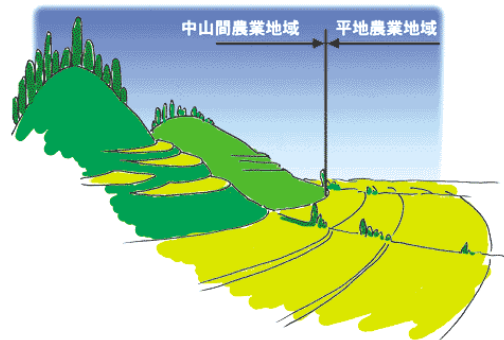
Deputy Mayor, Yabu-shi, Hyogo Prefecture

On April 1, 2004, four towns in Yabu district (Yoka-cho, Yabu-cho, Oya-cho, and Sekinomiya-cho) merged to form Yabu-shi. Yabu-shi is suffering a low birth rate and societal aging, and the entire municipality has been designated a depopulated region by the Japan government. Its population is 24,293 (8,713 households) and the proportion over 65 is 35.5%. Yabu-shi has an area of 422.91 km², which is 5.0% of Hyogo Prefecture. In March 2014, Yabu-shi was designated as a special national strategic zone.



■ Introduction

Escalating depopulation and societal aging caused by low birth rates and population outflow into urban areas are beginning to seriously affect the social and economic conditions of provincial regions. Municipalities are expected to implement measures to revitalize their communities and boost their economies.



■ Current state of depopulated regions

Depopulated regions are “communities where significant depopulation has deteriorated their dynamism and whose infrastructure and public systems have been developed less than other regions because of their poor productivity”. The entire area of Yabu-shi is designated a depopulated area. Approximately half of all municipalities in Japan, about 60% of our nation’s land area, are designated depopulated regions. On the other hand, their population is only 9% of Japan's total population, so this small number of people are maintaining more than half of our homeland.



Deregulation has attracted companies and encouraged the establishment of special agricultural corporations.

■ Some of Yabu-shi’s challenges—overseas deployment

Here are examples of Yabu-shi’s re-creation strategies in proactive agriculture, establishment of a 6th industry, and collaboration among industries:

- Active agriculture—branding and commercial production of Asakura sansho (a type of Japanese pepper)
- Promotion of industrial collaboration (creation of an agriculture, food and health industry value chain)



Yabu-shi has been increasing production of Asakura sansho for several years. It is targeted for the EU, where Japanese food is enjoying unprecedented popularity.

Asakura sansho

High-quality Japanese pepper originating in Asakura (Yoka-cho, Yabu-shi), a specialty nurtured over the long history of Yabu-shi.

Sake brewing is another example of local industry. Domestic sake consumption has been decreasing, so we are facing the challenge of developing new sales channels. The popularity of sake is growing in China along with the number of Japanese restaurants.

Ginkai Shuzou Co., Ltd.



Helped by the government’s successful inbound initiatives, more Chinese tourists are enjoying their encounters with sake, which has led to greater export opportunities. The small scale of this company has made it possible to adhere strictly to their traditional craft brewing methods. Their

products are also used as gifts for “hometown tax” payers.

■ Co-creation of new values

To change the current population concentration in urban areas, we need “co-creation” efforts by people in various fields with different ideas. Municipalities should focus on co-creation rather than competition.

■ Conclusion

I often hear the phrase “yosomono (outsiders), wakamono (youngsters), and bakamono (zealots)”, referring to the human resources needed for regional promotion.

- Yosomono hold objective views
- Wakamono are not afraid of challenges and not constrained by shackles
- Bakamono devote themselves to missions they believe in

I myself am a yosomono. Through my experience in municipal services, I have learned that this phrase is true. In addition, many successful cases involve:

- Kiremono (Bright men) who are capable of total management

The involvement of kiremono affects the outcome significantly. Yosomono, wakamono and bakamono can create a great driving force when managed by kiremono who are capable of leading the project. Changes will be made when these people focus on co-creation instead of competition among municipalities.

As Deputy Mayor with experience in the private sector, I believe the governments’ overall management capabilities are critical for regional revitalization. To incorporate the private sector perspective, I recommend that municipalities appoint two deputy mayors, one with a government administration background and the other from the private sector. The deputy mayor from the private sector will lead local revitalization management and help achieve greater co-creation.



Author profile: Shoji Mino

Deputy Mayor of Yabu-shi, Hyogo Prefecture since February 2013.

Born in 1956.

Work experiences:

- Consulting in tourism and regional vitalization
- Tanaka-ya Hotel (Nasu Shiobara, Tochigi): President
- Hotel Shikisai (Nikko, Tochigi): President
- Industrial Revitalization Corporation of Japan: handled Ashikaga Bank bankruptcy case
- Huis Ten Bosch: Executive Officer in charge of the park
- NYK Cruises: Purser for cruise ship “Asuka”
- Unimat
- Representative of Seattle School of the Japan Education Center for the Hotel Industry
- Nippon Travel Agency





The Outlook Foundation collaborates with leading professionals on our newsletters and delivers breakthrough proposals/suggestions for a brighter future.

For past issues of our newsletters, please visit our web site:

<http://theoutlook-foundation.org>

abrighterfuture@theoutlook-foundation.org

© 2016 The Outlook Foundation. All rights reserved.