

The Livability of Japanese Rural Village:

A Case of a Woman in a Depopulated and Ageing Community

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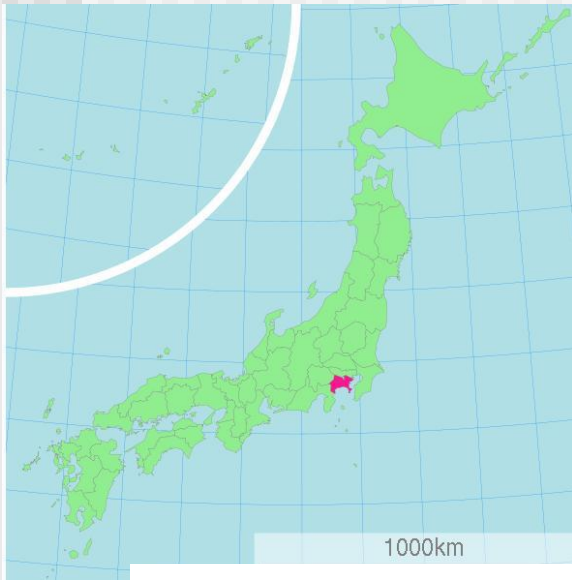
Objective and Method

- To examine livability of rural area for the elderly in contemporary Japan.
 - By fieldwork focusing on a woman in order to capture her lived contexts in detail.
-  To illustrate difficulties in living in “shrinking society”.

Japanese Postwar Development

- Livelihood (Primary Sector :41.4%,1955→5.1%,2005)
 - Depending on income and market economy
 - Public transportation service and motorization
 - ← social infrastructure built by the government
- Expanded area where people could enjoy the “middle class living standard” ...as long as economy goes well.
- Younger generation, however, moved out to large cities to earn much higher income.
- *Shrinking Society*(90's~) appears in rural area
 - Depopulation and ageing
(Over 65: 27.1%--cf. 20.1% in the nation, 2007)
 - Declining tax revenues of the local government
 - Declining economy

Research Site: X village



Located in a hilly area in the hinterland of Tokyo-Yokohama metropolis (two hours by train)

Population:

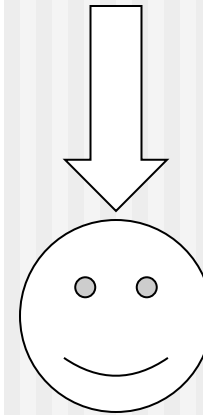
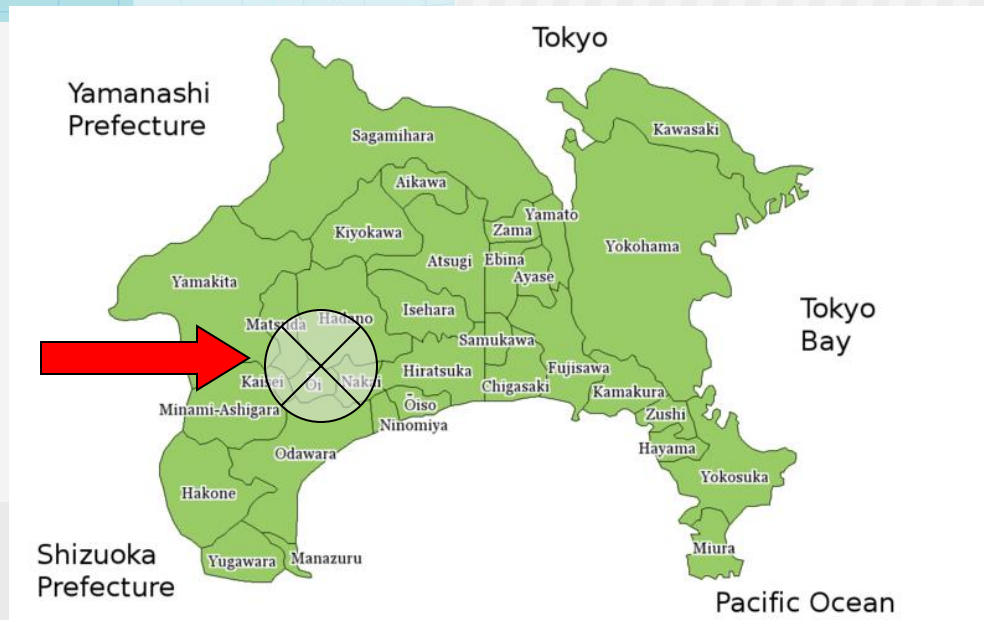
304 (1985) → 254 (74 households, 2005)

Over 65:

43 (14%, 1985) → 64 (25%, 2005)


Houses in which the elderly lives alone:

1 (1985) → 10 (2005)



Mrs. A
-85 years old
-was a teacher
at elementary
school

-abandoned
farming in the
60's.

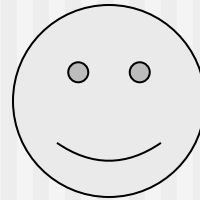
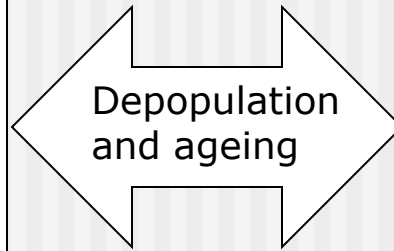
An aerial photograph of a village nestled in a valley. The village features a mix of traditional Japanese-style buildings with tiled roofs and modern structures. A prominent feature is a large, white, curved retaining wall or fence that runs across the middle ground. The surrounding hills are covered in dense, colorful autumn foliage. In the foreground, a paved road curves through the landscape, and a small building with a white van parked in front of it is visible. A text box with a white background and black border is overlaid on the image, containing the text "Roads and cliffs are all paved." with a white arrow pointing downwards towards the road.

Roads and cliffs
are all paved.

Mrs. A's Lived Experience in "Shrinking Society" at X village – "Shopping Refugee"

Market Economy

-Commodity and food shops on which Mrs. A previously depended withdrew from the village



Public Services

-Pension (O.K. so far)

-Transportation (Bus, decreasing)

→ There are shops and hospitals at the base of the hill. But she cannot access to them.

Communal Support

-Has been deteriorating
-Only maintaining her house

Familial Support

-Providing commodities (twice a week)
-Not enough, not always

-They don't work as enough safety net.

→ Shrinking society directly means her insecurity of life.

“Why doesn't (cannot) she move out?”



X village

Restrengthened Gender Role

-Her relatives who moved out to city demand that she, as “house-keeper”, stay to maintain her house, their “home” in the country side.

Nuclear family, Individualization, and “Global Elite”

Her son and daughter do not hope to live with her.
They often move to foreign countries as member of global company.

Ageism

-difficult find apartments whose owner allows the elderly to live alone.

-tentatively rents a room near her daughter's house with the contract that she never uses fire in the kitchen.

-cannot stay there for so long.

Urban Area

In Lieu of Conclusion

- The case of Mrs. A represents...

- The number of Over 75 living alone: 5.5 million (2005)

- Over 75 who have driver's licence : 20.4% (female, 14.4%)(2005)

- Rethinking postwar development

- Expanding area where people can enjoy "middle class life."

- ←By economic growth + the governments' support

- ????

- Need for policy innovation?

- The local government? ← Limited resources

- NPO? ← They don't exist in a group.

- The burden did eventually tend to be concentrated on family members so far...

References

- Sugita, Satoshi (2008) *Shopping Refugee: Another Problem on the Elderly (Kaimono-nanmin: Mo Hitotsu no Koreisha Mondai)*, Tokyo; Otsukishoten.
- Watanabe, Satoshi (2009) “The Ageing Community: Human Insecurity in a ‘Developed’ Society”, in Umegaki Michio, Lynn Thiesmeyer and Atsushi Watabe, eds, *Human Insecurity in East Asia*, New York; United Nations University Press (pp. 47-71).