


Sustainable livelihood and happiness generation in Minamata-city, Japan: A model for endogenous community development



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24–26 November 2008

Session 6: Sociology of Sustainable Development
4th GNH International Conference
Thimphu, Bhutan

Background

- **GNH in Bhutan is a local-grown concept**, which leads the country to achieve one form of endogenous development. If endogenous development path is critical for realizing a sustainable and happy society, it is worth while to review a country's development if it is endogenous or exogenous.
- **Japan started her modernization strategy more than 120 years ago**, after its Meiji restoration. Now Japan has become the **second largest economic superpower** in the world. However, as Kusago (2007, 2008) has reviewed, this economic growth did **not improve people's life satisfaction for the last three decades**.
- Then, a key question is following:
Is there any practical way to transform a development path from the existing exogenous one to another endogenous one?



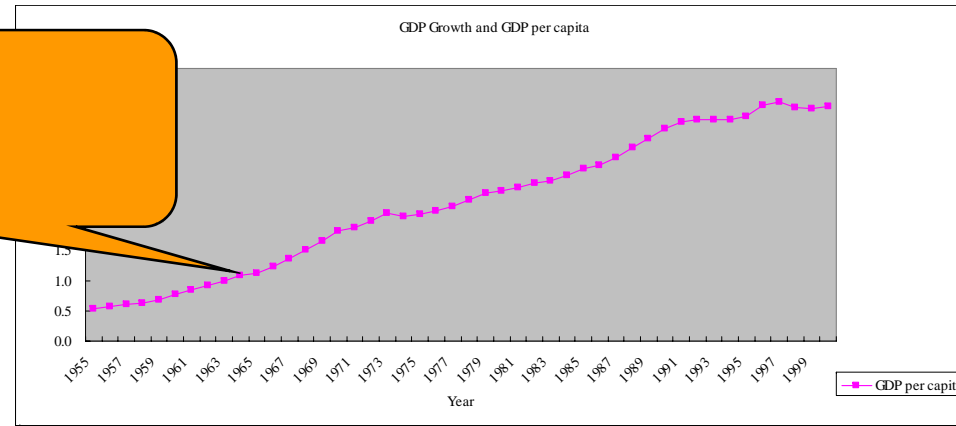
Minamata's transformation. What is this?

What is Endogenous Development?

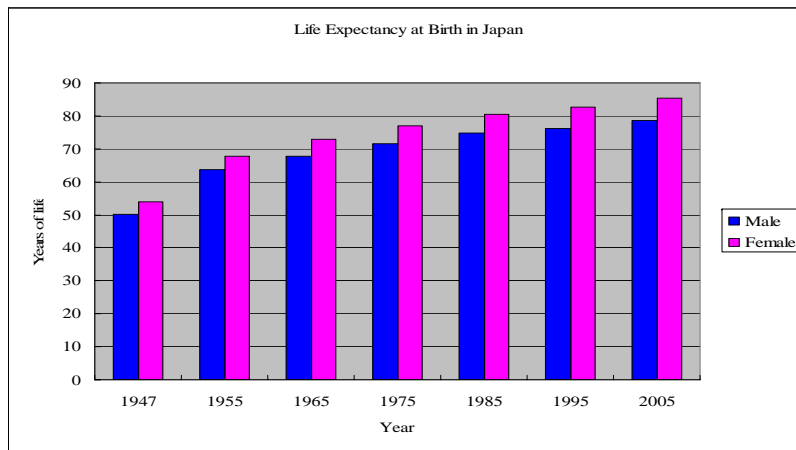
- Endogenous development approach was proposed by *Kazuko Tsurumi*, sociologist, in the 1970s in Japan:
 - *Development model initiated by local people with their own ideas and action – full use of local-resources, local people’s creativity and existence of key persons in development.*
- Tsurumi conclude that
 - **Japanese Modernization after Meiji restoration as exogenous** – borrowing concept of development from outside
 - **Community-based development** can be the center of endogenous development path.

Japanese Development: High on Human Development

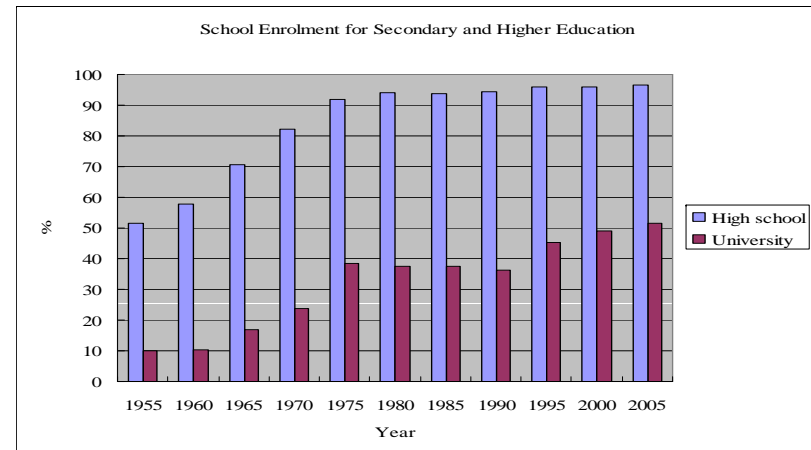
Per Capita GDP
has gone **UP!**



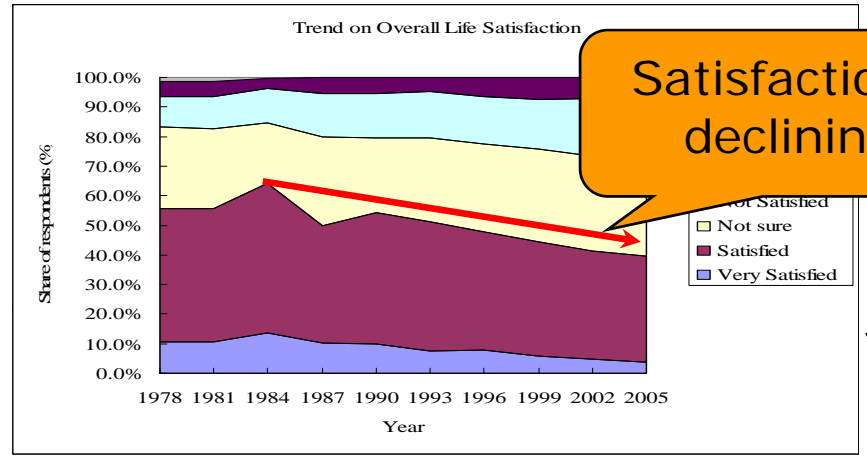
LONGEVITY



HIGHER EDUCATION



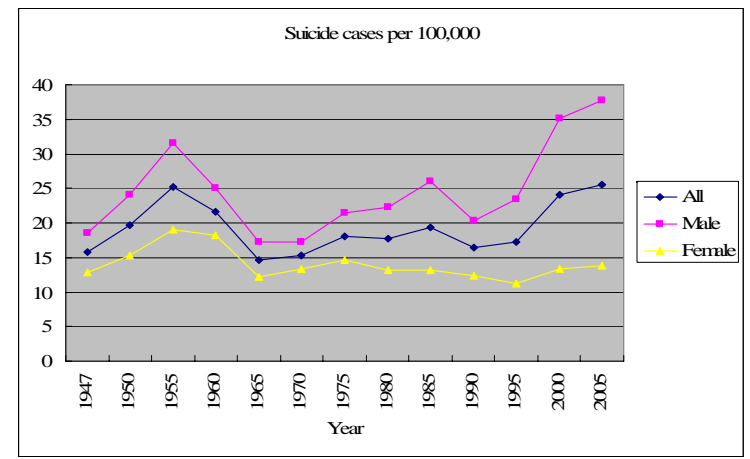
Japanese Development: Severe Social Costs



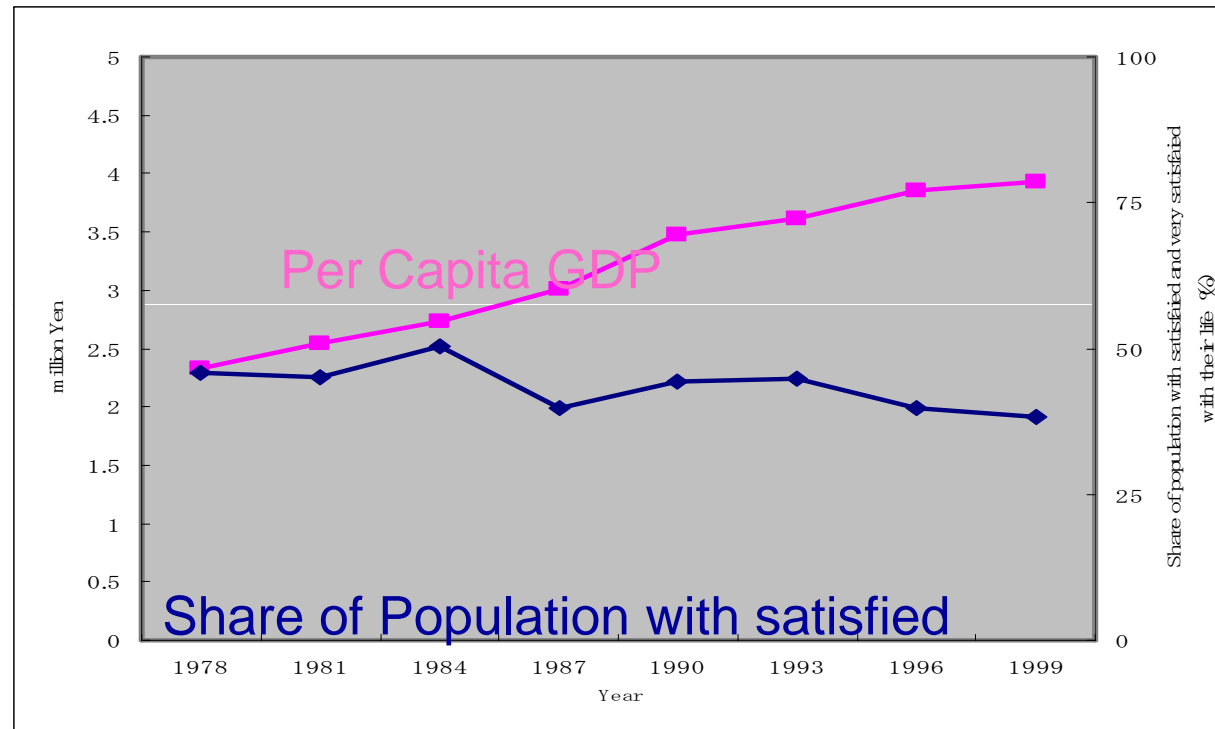
Satisfaction is declining.

- Industrial pollution
- Environmental Degradation
- Stress (commuting, less time with family, etc.)

SUICIDE CASES: Sharp increase



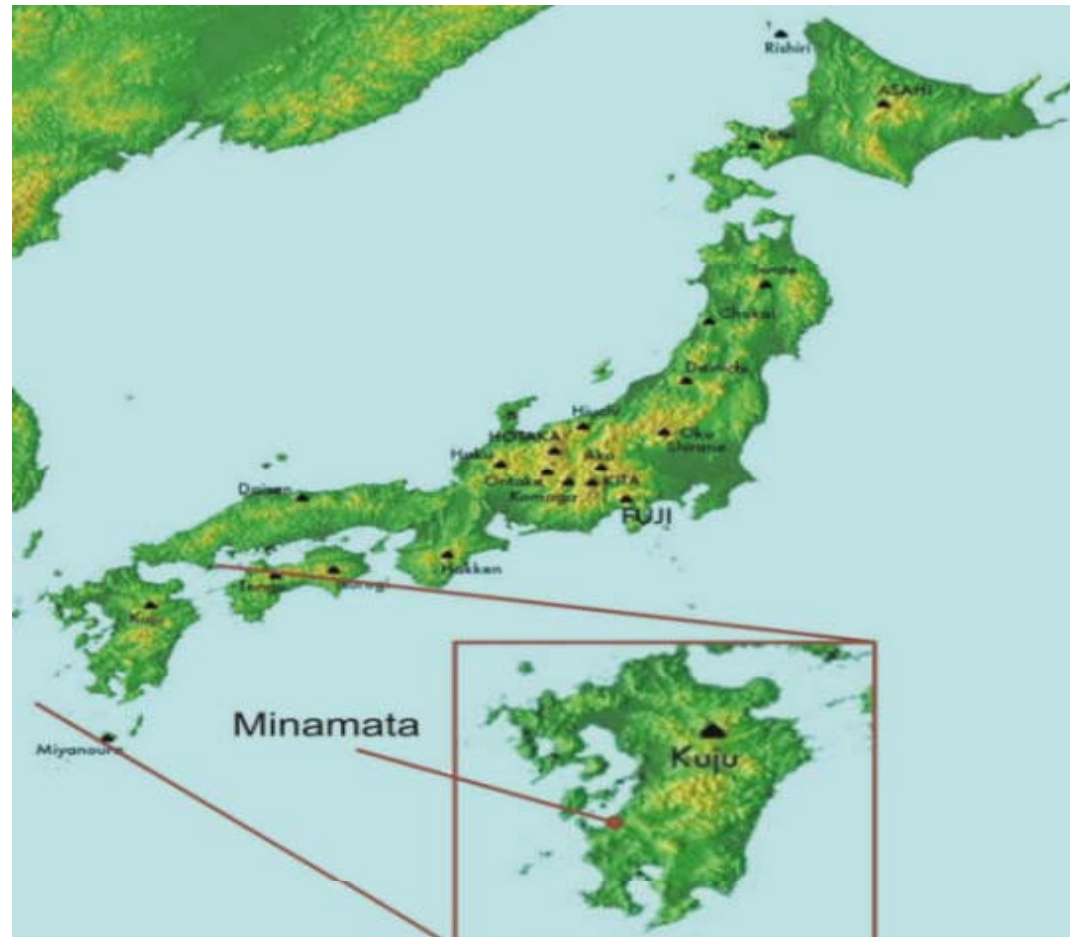
Easterlin Paradox in Japan



(Subjective data from *Survey of Lifestyles and Needs*, Cabinet Office)

Could we find a clue to solve the paradox at the local level through endogenous GNH approach?

A case of transformation in development: Minamata, Japan



2008/12/31

Minamata's Change: Expectation → Despair → Hope

- Minamata was a city benefited through industrial development in Japan.
 - *Chisso* company, one of the few leading chemical companies in Japan, set up its first factory (1908) in Minamata
 - Local expectation was so high in that factory job creation and positive impacts on local economy.
 - *local government and people welcomed before the Minamata disease occurred!*

Minamata's Change: Expectation → Despair → Hope

- Minamata Disease occurred in the 1950s by the discharged polluted water from the *chisso* company to the sea through food chain, and many people's long struggle started and continue for more than four decades.
- This made the Minamata community less viable, demise of a good old community and frequent conflicts seen among people in the same neighborhood over compensation issues and the city became full of hatred and hopelessness among people.
 - Destroyed psychological well-being of the disease patients, and deprived ordinary people's dignity and identity as a Minamatan.

Minamata's Change: Expectation → Despair → Hope

- However, **people and local government took action to change and transform** the city with own ideas, planning, policy instruments since the early 1990s.

→ *Let us look at how Minamata turned around its community from despair to hope*

Turning point: Elected **a good leader**: Mayor's Action in 1994

- From the 1950s to the early 1990s, central, prefectural and city governments did not assist much for those who suffered from the Minamata disease.
 - The Chisso Minamata factory was the only place where acetaldehyde, material for plastic, was produced by the mid-1960s.
- However, in 1994, *Yoshii Masazumi* was elected as the Mayor of Minamata-city. He delivered a historic speech at the memorial ceremony for the victims of the Minamata disease.
 - Apology city's less supportive attitude toward the Minamata disease patients, which aggravated their livelihoods and well-beings.
 - Proposed *a solution for dialogue* -- *Moyainaoshi approach*.
 - This made a huge impact over the course of the Minamata disease issues and its transformation from broken community with material comfort to reviving community with local determination and vision.
- **Change the style of the local government**: from people participation to government participation (into people)

New Minamata's vision: coexistence with local environment

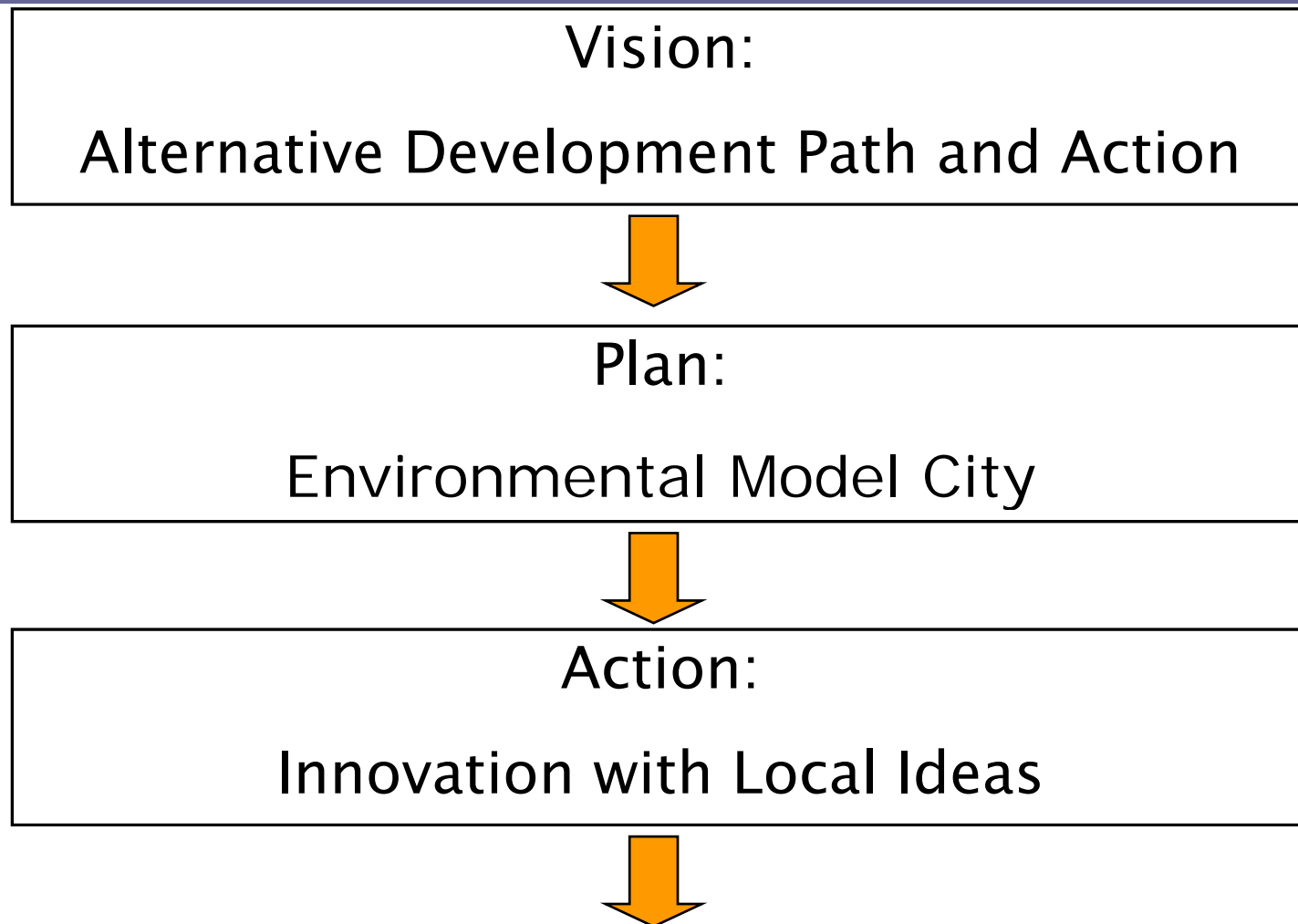
- Minamata-city's strategy to become a leading city on environment.
 - The city formulated its **development plan with citizen's participation** and it came up with the environmental model city idea.
 - **Environmental meister in Minamata** – promoted key persons in local-based environmental management and healthy food production
 - **Voluntary Women's groups** to reduce waste at home and at shops
 - **Community currency** introduced by the women's groups
 - **Eco-business industrial zone**
 - In 2008, Minamata is selected as one of the six leading model city on environment in Japan

Innovative tool:

Neighborhood Study Method

- **Neighborhood Study Method (*JIMOTOGAKU*):** effective tool to restore and empower rural communities in Minamata.
 - A tool to promote communication among local people by interaction with visitors.
 - Balance in **three types of ECONOMY**: self-consumption, community currency, national currency
 - Aware of and Respect **local ENVIRONMENT** and identify and promote **local CULTURE** as irreplaceable wealth
 - **GOVERNANCE**: local action and empowerment
 - A community (*KAGUMEISHI*) in Minamata with this method has received a award from the central government as one of the most viable communities in Japan.

Minamata's transformation path and goals



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Ultimate goals: SUSTAINABILITY, HAPPINESS, HOPE at the local level

GNH and Minamata's Endogenous Development Practice

- Minamata has changed its priority among different development goals by placing less on monotonic economic gains and more on people's positive atmosphere (joy, happy, and hopeful)
- GNH's Four pillars are the keys of Minamata action
 - Three types of economy (BALANCED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT)
 - Environment preservation (ENVIRONMENT)
 - Transfer local cultural heritage from the elderly to the youth (CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION)
 - Good leadership and local empowerment (GOOD GOVERNANCE)

Concluding remarks

- Minamata has given us:
 - lessons related to material prosperity and lopsided growth model;
 - **Minamata is not someone else's problem** for countries to strive for economic growth with bigger scale technology
 - a good practice to turn things around to people-led sustainable community development.

- It is not easy to transform exogenous to endogenous development path. However, as Minamata shows, **visionary and trustful leader, people-initiated social design and innovation, participation through dialogue and communication could lead the transformation.**

- There must be many like Minamata; therefore, it is **importance to search for good practice (and those to be)** in line with sustainable well-being enhancement, which eventually realize GNH.

Minamata is not the only in Japan!

On-going GNH-related practice in Japan (sustainability, happiness, hope)

- In Japan, some unique initiatives include:
 - **Application of the Neighborhood study** method in other towns and villages in Japan.
 - Arakawa-ward in Tokyo: **Gross Arakawa Happiness (GAH)**
 - **E's Japan and JFS (Japan for Sustainability): Ms. Edahiro and Mr. Oda**
 - A lecture series on happiness and sustainability
 - **GNH-institute: Mr. Hirayama**
 - Slow Life Movement: candle night campaign
 - **Gross Company Happiness: *Mukaiyama Toryo Inc., etc.***



Thank you!
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