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## **JAPON KIRSALINDA SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK AÇISINDAN KADIN VE GENÇ NÜFUS\***

*RECONSIDERING COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY IN RURAL JAPAN:  
WOMEN AND YOUNG POPULATION AS AN INSIDE POWER*

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### **Özet**

Bugün, kırsal sürdürülebilirlik sorunu Japon toplumunun en köklü ve ciddi sorunlarından birisi durumundadır. 1980'lerden bu yana kırsalın sürdürülebilirliği ve kalkınması üzerine birçok sosyal politika, proje geliştirilmektedir. Ancak, bu politikalar ve projeler, 1990'ların ortalarına kadar kent nüfusunun kırsalın doğal ve kültürel kaynaklarını tüketmesi yoluyla kırsalın kalkınmasını ve sürdürülebilirliğini sağlamaya yönelik bir duruş sergilemiştir. 1990'ların sonu itibarıyla, köydeki kadın ve yaşlı nüfus kırsal kalkınma politikaları içerisinde anılmaya başlamış, ancak tam anlamıyla bir genel çerçeve çizilmemiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, köydeki az sayıdaki genç nüfus, kente göç eğilimi dolayısıyla çoğunlukla kırsalın geleceği noktasında tartışma konusu dahi edilmemiştir. Halbuki, bugün göç eğiliminin en yakın merkeze doğru olduğu ve de ulaşımın son derece kolaylaştığı Japon kırsalında, köy ile olan sosyoekonomik ilişkilerin göçten bağımsız olarak belirli bir seviyede sürdürüldüğü ortaya konulmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, bugünkü yapı itibarıyla, geçmişten gelen yerleşik nüfus anlayışının eskisi kadar etkiye sahip olmadığı düşünülmektedir. Bu sebeple de, kente göçten bağımsız olarak, genç nüfusun kendi yöresinin geleceğine ilişkin algı ve tutumunun ortaya konulması, orta ve uzak gelecekte oluşturulacak kırsal politikalar için önemli bir gösterge olabilecektir. Bunlara bağlı olarak bu çalışmada, Japon kırsalındaki kadın ve

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genç nüfusun, köyün geleceğine ilişkin tutum, algı ve planları çeşitli saha verileri üzerinden tartışılacak; kırsalın geleceği açısından kadın ve genç nüfus profilleri sınıflandırılmaya çalışılacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Japon kırsalı, Kırsal kalkınma, Sürdürülebilirlik, Japonya, Japon modernleşmesi

### Abstract

As generally known, Japanese society has experienced a big change not only economical but also socially since the second half of the 20th century, particularly since the 1950s. Due to urbanization in the 1960s, the younger population started to move to urban areas that caused the depopulation phenomenon (*Kasoka*) in rural areas and Japanese rural community has started to lose its functions for maintaining daily life and agricultural productivity since then. By the late 1970s, the decreasing rural population coupled with the sustainability of daily life and farming became one of the most serious issues in rural Japan. Since 80's, many kinds of social policies, development programs and projects which made the rural society and its nature, resources and culture consumption object for urban dwellers were designed and carried out. Moreover, people such as rural women and elderly population who had vital issues and real life experiences concerning rural living were mostly handled as ghost members in rural development policies and projects until the 1990s. In 1990s, rural women and young population have started to take part in studies concerning rural issues remarkably. However, most of these studies have considered the rural women totally and not attempt to classify them in terms of sustainability issues of the daily life, agricultural production and economic development. On the other hand, the potential of the young population could have a meaning in terms of sustainability of the community only when they were permanent residents in the rural community. It is indisputable fact that most of young generation today still has a tendency to move to urban areas. However, studies show us that they have still strong socioeconomic relationship with the community, and some actual roles in terms of daily maintaining and agriculture even they have moved out. That is, it is clear that the daily life of the rural community is more dependent on these "ghost members" than it had been. Therefore, in this paper, roles and functions of rural women and the young population in the daily life and attitudes concerning the future of the community will be reconsidered. Then, both rural women and the young population will be classified in terms of sustainability of the local community. In this way, the sustainability problems of local communities are expected to be discussed in a fresh perspective to establish a new paradigm for considering the issues of these local-rural communities.

**Key Words:** Japanese rural, Rural revitalization, Sustainability, Japan, Japanese modernization

## 1. Rural Community in Post-war Japan

As generally known, Japanese society has experienced a big change not only economically but also socially since the second half of the 20th century, particularly since the 1950s, and became one of the biggest economies in the world by rapid economic development. New opportunities made urban living more attractive for people from the rural area. Due to urbanization in the 1960s, the younger population started to move to urban areas that caused the depopulation phenomenon (*Kasoka*) in rural areas and Japanese rural community has started to lose its functions for maintaining daily life and agricultural productivity since then. In fact, there was a popular term during the 1960s called *Sanchan Nōgyō*<sup>1</sup>, which accurately describes the daily life and agricultural situation of the Japanese rural community.

By the late 1970s, the decreasing rural population coupled with the sustainability of daily life and farming became one of the most serious issues in rural Japan. Ikutsune Adachi and his colleague, Kondo, were one of the first researchers who mentioned sustainability issues of a rural community from the viewpoint of a decreasing population. They pointed out that social, cultural and production functions of the rural community in Japan would lose due a decline in population and named this situation as depopulation period -*Kasoka*- (Adachi, 1981; Adachi and Kondo, 1985). In order to prevent the loss of social and cultural functions as well as production power of the rural community, social policies, projects concerning village revitalization, and some village revival movements (*Mura Okoshi Undō*) have been established since the late of 1970`s. These are such kind of activities or movements that are basically established/organized by inner resource of villages and encouraged by municipal authorities (Knight, 1994). For instance, one of the most famous activities were created by rural dwellers was called *One Village One Product (Isson Ippin Undō)* movement (OVOP). This movement started in Oita Prefecture, Japan, in the late of 1970s. The main aim of OVOP was to vitalize the region's economy by producing special agricultural articles for each village.

On the other side, programs and projects were mainly designed by local authorities that focused on rural revitalization which has expanded its circle since the 1990s. Social policies and projects mainly focused on the economic development through activities such as Urban-Rural Interchanges (*Toshi Nōson Kōryū*) or Green Tourism and some Brand policies (Arahi, 2008; Inoue Kazue, Nakamura Osamu, Yamazaki Mitsuhiro, 1996; Ikuta, Yukawa and Hamasaki, 2006; Ikuta, Yukawa and Hamasaki, 2007). However, it was obvious that increasing the rural community population with urban dwellers didn't work, as it was totally irrelevant to the maintenance of the rural daily life and the future of the rural community (Tokuno,

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<sup>1</sup> Due to urban migration, particularly by the male population from rural to urban areas in the 1960s, the main roles for the maintenance of productivity fell upon the shoulders of those who remained behind, such as, grandparents (*oji-chan and obā-chan*) and mother (*okā-chan*), these three (*san*) *chan*, have managed to sustain the agriculture (*nōgyō*) life. Hence, this situation that the rural community has experienced is known as *San Chan Nōgyō* since 1960s.

2008). Conversely, approaches such those mentioned made the rural society and its nature, resources and culture become a *consumption object* for urban dwellers (Tachigawa, Yabe, Doi, Taniguchi and Ichida, 2005). This made the urban dwellers consumers that were supposed to be supporters of the rural community and agricultural life. On the other hand, it is of course undeniable that the rural society has been declining in its ability to resolve internal socioeconomic problems and to sustain itself without effective social policies. However, it doesn't mean that rural society will be maintained and promoted only by economic policies and activities as mentioned above. On these circumstances, it can be said that problems rural societies have, are in sort of vicious circle and it is quite difficult to resolve these issues in the framework of general "rural-urban dichotomy" not only Western scholars, but also Japanese researchers as Suzuki (1940; 1957) and Fukutake (1964) discussed in past. Today, in order to attempt to solve rural community problems in Japan, social policies and/or projects (as an urban socioeconomic capital) and community potentials (as rural side of dichotomy) are supposed to be adjusted for the needs of contemporary rural community. In other words, internal (rural) and external (urban) actors might be integrated in terms of needs of community. However, this -integration process- would be would not be successful unless population structure, economy, politics and etc. `system(s)` (external actors) and daily-social life of rural community would not be associated with (Mouzelis 1997:114-16). For example, today in Japan, there is still a common consciousness on regional development policies, which says *the more population, the more development*<sup>2</sup>. Today, this can be seen from many policies concerning rural society, for instance, the common consciousness regarding Population Increasing = Economic Development is still very strong. Hence, rural development policies such as Urban-Rural Interchanges or Green Tourism are also based on the population exchange. However, it is certain that both rural and overall population of Japan has started to decrease, and there will not be any population increase in the future (IPSS, 19). Therefore, it is not difficult to say that those development policies and projects will not become the main method to make the rural community better. As a result, we can say that creating a new perspective for the rural community is getting more important.

As it can be seen from the historical background of rural revitalization movements, people who have vital issues and real life experiences concerning rural living were mostly handled as *ghost members* (or *invisible members*) in rural development policies and projects until the 1990s. It is acceptable that from the 1950s to 1970s, there was no population aging and there was enough young population for maintaining the rural daily life and agricultural production. However, since the 1990s, feminization and aging of agriculture and daily life of rural community has become serious issues. The elderly population and rural women had comprised more than half of the agricultural work force. Today, it is clear that the daily life of the rural community is more dependent on these ghost members than it had been.

<sup>2</sup> This common consciousness has a background. The Japanese population had rapidly increased about four times within 100 years, and in this period, Japan experienced huge economic development and industrialization. In other words, in Japan, it is thought that the increase in population enhanced the economic development.

Through these facts, (particularly the elderly) women and young population are the people closest to daily issues of rural living and they have begun to be appointed as a *key person* for rural sustainability with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) since the 1990s.

## 2. Rural Women and Young Population: The *Inside Power* since 1990s to 2000s

Studies concerning inside power such as rural women or young population have increased remarkably since the 1990s. Most of these have focused on the agricultural productivity and economic freedom of rural women. Tangibly, issues such as family farm management, entrepreneurship of rural women, and women leadership in social life are most titles that have been studied in terms of rural community (Kanamori, Amano, Fujiwara and Kuba, 1989; Miyaki, 1996; Yagi, 1999; Iwasaki, 1995; Ichida, 1995). Moreover, some studies concerning rural women have focused on social roles and functions in family and community (Tsutsumi, 1999, 2000; Nishiyama, 2008; Tsuru, 2007; Nagano, 2005; Yamashita, 2006). However, most of these studies have considered the rural women totally and not attempt to classify them in terms of sustainability issues of the daily life, agricultural production and economic development.

In fact, this is not a recent issue. Since the beginning, rural & urban relationship and thereby the profile of rural people had been discussed in various studies such as Tönnies's *Gemeinschaft & Gesellschaft* (1887), Maine's *Status & Contract Society* (1861), Durkheim's *Mechanical & Organic Solidarity* (1893), Zimmerman's *Localistic & Cosmopolitan Communities* (1938), Sorokin's *Familistic & Contractual and Compulsory Relations* (1941) and etc. Even though the starting point and sometimes the viewpoint of discussions were totally different for each study, they still did have similar dichotomized point of view.

In Japan, particularly Eitaro Suzuki, Kizaemon Ariga, Tadashi Fukutake and also the other scholars focused on the rural and urban societies regarding the socioeconomic change process from the polarized viewpoint as given above. This dichotomized approach had also shaped the perception of "peasant" or rural people, as well. Suzuki's concept of "Natural Hamlet, Spirit of the village" (1940), or Ariga's concepts of "consciousness of life" (1938) which discuss social relationship, unity and kinship in Japanese rural community also show us that social and historical (traditional) accumulations of Japanese rural community shape individual's behaviors and thoughts. Torigoe also stated that the "thing" which shape/guide the behaviors of people are norms. And these norms were shaped by the accumulations that previous generations had gained by their life (2000:80). As it can be understood from previous studies, individual's perceptions and behaviors were thought in stereotype. However, due to the development of mobility and communication technology, particularly since 1990's, polarized structure between rural and urban society has been melting away (Kamata, 1987; Ishida, 1986). Besides, diversification on perceptions and behaviors of individuals in rural community has also been significant recently.

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Therefore, it should be accepted that there are many kinds of women in rural community in terms of sustainability and economic activities (Tsutsumi, 2000; Tsuru, 2007). For example, there is the woman who actively participates in order to solve the daily life issues of the community but who does not make any attempt to make an economical movement for the community; there is the woman who has no role or function in her social life but is very active in agricultural production and provides employment in the community. Therefore, discussing rural women in one term shouldn't be the way of rural studies. Classifying the rural women from the side of social and economical functions should be the one way to make social policies more efficient in terms of community sustainability.

Analyzing the perspective of the young population in the rural community has been shaped by the population-based development approaches, such as the more population, the more development. The potential of the young population have been considered from the viewpoint of a stable population. For instance, Study in Rural Areas (*Nōson Ryūgaku*) could be an example for the consciousness explained above. In other words, the young population could have a meaning in terms of sustainability of the community only when they were permanent residents in the rural community. However, most of young generation today still has a tendency to move to urban areas. Besides, some studies show us that migrated population (particularly the young population) has possible functions to sustain the family (*Ie*) and farmland (Ishizaka, 2002; Ishizaka and Midorikawa, 2005; Yamashita, 2010). Therefore, discussing and analyzing the attitudes and future plans of the young population regarding the daily life and the future of the community should be an important approach in terms of rural sustainability issues. However, when analyzing the attitudes of the young population, it may be necessary to pay attention to the definition of the young population because there could be differences between the young person who resides in rural areas and who plans to move to urban areas in the near future.

Moreover, even discussions on *Marginal Hamlet Theory* (*Genkai Shūrakuron*), which is the most popular discussion topic concerning rural community recently, are also still continuing from the same viewpoint as mentioned above. Until 1990s, Japanese rural sustainability and development issues were based on population jump. Akira OHNO (2005, 2007, 2008) has changed the aspect concerning rural future and proposed his framework in the middle of 1990s. This framework basically analyzes the extinction process of hamlet on the basis of demographic indicators such as aging ratio and attempt to classify hamlets/villages into four types. "Marginal Hamlet" is defined as a village in which 50% of the total population is aged 65 and community cannot maintain daily life by just internal sources. Additionally, if over aged 55 population is more than 50% of the total population, village becomes "Semi-Marginal Hamlet", and on the contrary, population of over aged 55 is less than 50% of total population of village, than it is "Sustainable Hamlet" according to Ohno's framework. However, as discussed above, it is not easy to generalize rural community just only with aging ratio in terms of sustainability. There are supposed to be some more indicators such as household, income and so on. Besides, inside power such as women or young population is not being discussed as an indicator or factor in this framework either.

Most of the studies mentioned in this paper concerns local communities and sustainability issues based on mainstream modernization and revitalization approaches that mainly aims at economic (agricultural) development by using irrelevant (urban) population. On the other hand, people such as women, and the young population as well as the second-third urban dweller generation have not been appointed as a key person in terms of creating a future for the local community.

Each community may have different conditions and the potential of a person could make a difference either in daily life and production life or for creating the future. Therefore, in this paper, roles and functions of rural women and the young population (high school students) in the daily life and attitudes concerning the future of the community will be reconsidered. Then, both rural women and the young population will be classified in terms of sustainability<sup>3</sup> of the local community. In this way, the sustainability problems of local communities are expected to be discussed in a fresh perspective to establish a new paradigm for considering the issues of these local-rural communities.

### **3. Additional Data**

In this part of the paper, we are going to additionally use some research results<sup>4</sup> that collected in Yamato Town, which is located in east side of Kumamoto Prefecture, in the center of the Kyushu Island by the member of Kumamoto University Regional Sociology Department. Author was also one of the members of the research team and has participated in these field studies and took a part in analyzing process. The main purpose of studies was to make clear that what kind of issues Yamato Town has in the daily life and agriculture. In this way, the issues concerning the daily life and production of local communities will be discussed and analyzed in a different perspective. In this part of paper, we are going to use some part of data of these studies, which are related to rural women and young population.

Yamato Town is about 1 hour distance from Kumamoto City center by car. It is a mountainous town at 1300 to 1700 meters. The area of district is 544 square kilometers. 72% of the area is forestland, 16% of it is being used for agriculture, and

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<sup>3</sup> When discussing about the relationship between the rural women and community issues, it should be necessary to focus on two viewpoints as community sustainability and development. Obviously, the terms of sustainability and development are quite complicated to be defined separately. However, in this paper, the term "sustainability" will be considered from the viewpoint of problems regarding the family or community daily life and possible solutions in order to maintain rural life. On the other hand, the term "development" will be considered from the viewpoint of the economical income through the agricultural production. In other words, the term "sustainability" indicates the social side, and the term "development" indicates the economical side of rural community issues.

<sup>4</sup> Researches were conducted in 2007 and 2008. Therefore, we are supposed to admit that data are not recent. However, as the aim is to show tendency of rural women and young population in terms of community sustainability, we would need some sort of additional indicators that were originally collected from field, in order to carry on the discussion further. Besides, there has not been any big social movement that changes general perception of women and young population concerning community future since then. Therefore, even though data are not recent, it will lead us to discuss about big picture. Accordingly, details about two field studies are as follows.

remaining area is residential land. According to National Census 2005, total population is 18,761 (40,898 in 1970<sup>5</sup>) and has 6160 households (7942 in 1970). Total working population is 60.1% of total population (75.9% in 1970). 37.9% of working population is in agriculture & forestry, 18.3% of is in second industry, and 43.8% of working population is in tertiary industry. 41.6% of total population is over aged 65 (6.88% in 1970). Accordingly, it is not hard to say that Yamato Town is also showing same tendency similar to the other rural communities in Japan (Yamato Town Office Report, 2005).

### 3.1. Yamato Town Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Survey (PTA Survey)

Today in Japanese society, PTA is a common organization and has a lot meaning for both community and education. Basically, this organization is composed of mothers who have school-age children. Particularly in rural community in Japan, PTA organization takes part not only in educational field, but also in social contribution activities. Cooking classes, community daily patrol, elderly care, and contributing to community festivals are some kind of activities that PTA organization has been dealing with in entire Japanese rural community. PTA in Yamato Town has also sort of functions in daily life and educational field same as the other rural communities counterparts.

The sample was composed of the mothers of students who are registered to elementary schools in Yamato Town, and was conducted with the support of Yamato Town Office. 156 respondents were chosen at random. This research was designed as standardized questionnaire and was sent to the respondents by mail, and 109 (69.9%) of the respondents participated to the study. The questionnaire included 21 structured questions. This survey could be divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire included basic data (face sheet) of respondents such as, age, education history, income, household structure, work, migration history, and etc. The second part of questionnaire inquired about the community attachment. The third part included many kinds of questions, which inquired the consciousness about "the daily life issues of the community", "future of the community", "future of own family and next generation", and etc.

### 3.2. Yamato Town High School Student Survey (HSS Survey)

242 respondents were chosen from the high school students who are registered to Yamato City. The research was designed as standardized questionnaire and was sent to the respondents by mail. 101 (41.7%) of the respondents replied to the questionnaire. 56.4% of respondents were male and 43.5% female (57 male 44 female). This study was conducted between November 22 and December 12, 2007 with permission of Kumamoto Prefecture Education Board. The questionnaire was composed of 22 multiple-choice questions. In the first part of questionnaire basic data (face sheet) such as age, sex, family job, household structure, and etc were asked. The second part of questionnaire inquired the future plans of the respondents such as "what are you going to do after graduation", "Are you going to stay in urban side or

<sup>5</sup> Late of 1960s and early of 1970s was the time that depopulation phenomenon in rural community in Japan has become more significant due to urbanization. This is the reason that "1970" is used for comparison.



come back to the home town, if you will leave Yamato for school or work”, and etc. In the last part of study the awareness about community issues such as aging, succession issues on agriculture, sustainability and development issues of the community, and etc. were inquired.

#### 4. Considering the Inside Power

##### 4.1 Rural Women

4.1.1. *Participation in Social Groups.* As generally known, there are many kinds of social groups and activities that directly target the rural women, which are supported by local authorities and NPO. These groups and their activities were established to give the rural women opportunity to improve their knowledge and enrich the standard of rural life through the informal education. There are various groups and activities with different contents. These groups mainly focus on the issues concerning the daily life from the aspect of home life, welfare, community culture, social relationship, hygiene, care and so on. Some groups focused on one subject such as home life, some contains a number of subjects such as culture, environment and welfare, or some include all the subjects in its content. The names of groups or activities may differ in regions. However, target, purpose and content of these groups are basically similar in entire rural communities in Japan. Herein, we would like to discuss potential roles of women in community life through the participation in social groups.

Katsunuma Town is in Yamanashi Prefecture, a neighboring prefecture of the capital Tokyo. Figure 1 summarizes women’s groups and associations in Katsunuma Town. As seen from Figure 1, there are many small groups for rural women and groups who are dealing with the home life, welfare, culture, agriculture and community issues in their programs. This is, of course, just an example for rural women groups.

After World War II (WWII), the organization that aimed at the emancipation of women and developed the idea of democracy had been established in Japan. It could be said that this movement after WWII, became the basic model for rural Women’s movements and organizations, which are active and efficient in local communities. Every woman representing her household had an obligation to participate in the associations and organizations. Also, as a social rule, most of the women are supposed to actively participate in these activities. This behavior pattern of the Japanese can be explained by the term of *Half Compulsory Communal Structure (Han Kyôdôtaiteki Kyôsei Kôzô)* that was utilized by Tadashi Fukutake (Fukutake 1964: 93). Fukutake used this term for the relationship structure between the individual and community (*Mura*) in rural Japan. Briefly, when considering the social structure of rural community, collective responsibility and liability in the social space of rural community forces the individual to act as the community expects. Therefore, the individual cannot behave, as he or she wants. And Fukutake defined this structure of relationship between the individual and community as Half Compulsory Communal Structure. Therefore, participation in activities and groups of rural women can also be counted as the result of this structure of the Japanese rural community. Moreover, Japanese people are eager

to learn new things. Besides, many rural women consider participating in social activities as an interaction with the community.

Figure 1. *Women's Groups and Associations in Katsunuma Town* (Otomo, 2008: 75)

	GROUPS AND ASSOCIATIONS	PERIOD		MAIN ACTIVITIES					
		START	END	HOME LIFE	WELFARE	CULTURE	ENVIRONMENT	OCCUPATION/ AGRICULTURE	COMMUNITY
1	THE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION in KATSUNUMA BLOCK	1955	1992	●	●	●	●	●	●
2	THE WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE (IWAI BLOCK)	1972	-	●				●	
3	KATSUNUMA TOWN LIASION COUNCIL OF WOMEN'S GROUP	1987	-	●	●	●	●	●	●
4	HOME LIFE IMPROVEMENT PRACTICE GROUP	1967	-	●				●	
5	THE BRANCH OF JAPANESE RED CROSS	1955	-		●				
6	THE FOOD BALANCE IMPROVEMENT PROMOTION COMMITTEE	1960s	-	●					
7	STUDY GROUPS ON ECOLOGICAL HOME LIFE	1970	-	●			●		
8	THE SOCIAL NETWORK FOR SINGLE PARENTS	?	-		●				
9	THE ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTEER SOCIETIES FOR SOCIAL WELFARE	1985	-		●	●			
10	THE WOMEN'S DEPARTMENT OF THE UNION OF MERCHANTS AND CRAFTSMEN	1961	-					●	●

From all these, it could be said that the participation in organizations of the rural women is not rare. Furthermore, it is also a fact that participation in groups and activities possibly raise the awareness and deepens their knowledge about issues concerning family and community. This way, rural women are performing a key role in solving the issues pertaining to local communities, and sustaining their daily life.

4.1.2. *Rural Women Shape the Community Future.* The attitudes of women on the future of the community are extremely important even if these issues are not dealt in social policies so much. It is necessary to consider and define the rural woman not only as a female but also as a mother when discussing their roles in terms of sustainability. Because, possible roles and functions of women could change when we consider them as a mother. Besides, it is needless to say that mother aspect mainly influences the education of the next generation and shapes the future of the child. If the mother is not satisfied with the rural life or hopeless of her family's future in the community, she may possibly force her children to migrate to urban areas. Therefore, influence of mother upon her children does not only shape the future of individual but also the future of community (next generation), too. Hence, it is necessary to consider the ideas and attitudes of rural women not only from the viewpoint of family issues but also from the viewpoint of the community sustainability in a wider scope.

As it can be seen from the results of Yamato PTA Survey, it is obvious that more than 70% of respondents do not think that Yamato is a convenient place to live. Moreover, a big majority of the respondents (93.5%) do not think that there are good opportunities for jobs and education. Besides, nearly all of the respondents are not satisfied with the traffic issues.

On the other hand, nearly half of the PTA mothers mention that they are free to do whatever they want and have many things to do in the community. Also, more than half of the respondents like to be in Yamato as well. From these answers, it is quite clear that most of respondents do not satisfied with the physical conditions of Yamato Town.

Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents have a problem or concern with the social life in Yamato Town as well. On the other side, nearly 70% of the PTA mothers like to be in Yamato Town. Eventually, it is not hard to mention that there is a dilemma here in attitudes of Yamato women regarding the daily life and the future of the Yamato Town. They are both content with the daily life in Yamato and not satisfied with the physical conditions. In other words, the tendency of optimism and pessimism regarding the rural life and future can be seen simultaneously. This realty can be generalized to the most of Japanese rural community, too.

Table 1. *The Attitudes of Rural Women Regarding Yamato Town*

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	I don't know
Convenient place to live	1.9%	24.1%	52.8%	19.4%	1.8%
There are good opportunities for job and education	0.9%	4.6%	39.8%	53.7%	0.9%
It is a convenient place for transportation	0.9%	5.6%	32.4%	60.2%	0.9%
Have many things to live for in this community	17.6%	37%	31.5%	11.1%	2.8%
Can live freely	3.7%	42.6%	32.4%	18.5%	2.8%
I love this region (community)	18.5%	47.2%	23.1%	8.3%	2.8%

Herein, there is an important question that we are supposed to consider. How can the attitudes of rural women that were analyzed above influence the next generation in terms of migration? It should not be forgotten that the answer of this question would possibly have an effect on the future of the community as well.

Therefore, here, we focused on the attitudes of the PTA mother towards the future of their children.

Table 2. *PTA members' opinion regarding migration of the next generation to urban Areas*

	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	I don't know
I want my children and grandchildren to live in here like me.	10.2%	34.3%	35.2%	18.5%	1.8%
There is no other choice. We have to accept that migrate to cities is better for them.	25.9%	52.8%	14.8%	4.6%	1.9%

The rural women have a tendency to be pessimistic in terms of the future of community. However, table 2 shows us that 78.7 % of the respondents think that it is better for children and grandchildren to leave the Yamato and live in urban areas. Moreover, 53.7 % of the respondents do not want the children and grandchildren to live in Yamato either. On the other hand, nearly half of the respondents (44.5%) still expect their children and grandchildren to continue to live in Yamato Town. Therefore, it is obvious from the data given above that there are different tendencies in terms of the future of the next generation which also affects the future of the community too.

One of the basic reasons for migration for the young population is having a higher level of education than they have already had. We had attempted to discuss the expectations of PTA mothers concerning education level of their children and grandchildren. So, we asked what the highest education level that they expect their children to have. Table 3 shows that nearly the half of mothers (48.1%) think that high school graduation would be enough for their children and grandchildren. On the other hand, 44.5% of PTA mothers want their children get higher education at university at least. At first glance, this situation can be explained as the increasing of education level of the rural community. This is also the reality for rural community in Japan. However, there should be one more side to this situation, which could be dangerous for the future of the community. Because, going to university also means leaving the rural community for a while. Additionally, some studies show that people who migrated to urban areas have a tendency to return their home village in their fifties or sixties (Ozsen and Kimura, 2008).

Table 3. *The Expectations of PTA Mothers Concerning Education Level of the Next Generation*

<i>Education Level</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Secondary School</i>	<i>0.9%</i>
<i>High School</i>	<i>48.1%</i>
<i>College</i>	<i>26.9%</i>
<i>University and/or Graduate School</i>	<i>17.6%</i>

<i>I don't know</i>	6.5%
<i>Total</i>	100%

From all these data mentioned above, it could be said that two different profiles of women come up in terms of community sustainability. One of these is the woman who despairs of the community's future, accepts and supports of the next generation leaving the home (rural community). On the other hand, there is another woman profile that still has hope for the future of the community and tends to attempt the next generation to stay in community. Herein, the important point that is supposed to be discussed is the woman profile that was defined as desperate and hopeless in terms of sustainability and future of the community. Because, the decisions on career plans of children and attitudes towards the community life will possibly have an effect on sustainability issues of the community. Of course, it is difficult to generalize these rural woman profiles to entire Japanese rural community. On the other hand, Yamato Town can be considered as an average mountainous because of its socioeconomic conditions and problems. Therefore, these woman profiles can give us some clues to discuss about relationship between rural women and community future for the communities, which are under the same circumstances as Yamato Town.

4.1.3. *Agriculture (Economic Development) and Rural Women.* As Kawate (2010) mentioned below, Japanese women in rural areas have not only social functions but also economic functions in order to develop the rural society.

"In Japanese farming villages, the number of women accounts for approximately 55% of total farming population, making the role of women very important in agricultural production as they handle their work of housekeeping, child rearing and care taking of the elderly and so on at the same time." (p. 25)

Rural women have been playing key role in agricultural production since the 1990s. Rural Women's Entrepreneurial Activities (RWEAs) are one of the most remarkable activities in terms of rural development. MAFF has defined RWEAs as follows. RWEAs are the activities related to agriculture, forestry and fisheries, which are performed by rural women. The purpose of RWEAs is to improve the quality of life of the community by means of generating income ways for rural women and maintaining farming. Recently, many women in rural areas in Japan have been initiating new businesses relating to agriculture through RWEAs. These are mostly economic activities that comprise processing of farm products, farmers' markets, and special rural restaurants with the menus of local products, and rural tourism activities. As Morifuji (2010) pointed out, RWEAs have decades of history starting from small group activities such as agricultural production and processing by Agricultural Cooperatives Women's Clubs or Life-Improvement Practice Groups for providing healthy and safe food for their families (Morifuji, 2010: 36). The numbers of RWEAs have been counted since 1997. There are two types of women entrepreneurship - individual and group. The numbers of group entrepreneurs were 5565 in 1997, which have increased to 3362 in ten years. On the other hand, the numbers of individual

entrepreneurs have increased nine times from 678 to 4076 in about ten years (MAFF 2008). In other words, both individual and group entrepreneurs have been increasing since 1997 though the rates of increase are different. RWEAs are contributing to agricultural production of community and providing work opportunities to the rural women as Mihara said (Mihara 2005: 73). In this respect, RWEAs are not the leisure activities for women to spend their time. Conversely, these activities must be considered as profession that provides serious economic income and employment opportunities.

The age data of participants RWEAs also reflects the present situation and characteristic as well. Only 4.8% of participants are under 50 years old. Members who are between the fifties and seventies comprise 72.8% of total members. Moreover, this number becomes nearly 90% when we add the population of aged over the seventies (15.6%). This age structure of the members of RWEAs also clearly explains explaining the aging phenomena in rural Japan.

The economic (income) side also shows us the power of RWEAs in rural Japan. Today, the annual income of an average farm household in Japan is approximately 7 million JPY. Moreover, according to MAFF (2008), 66% of RWEAs` have annual income less than 5 million JPY. Additionally, about one-fourth (25.4%) of RWEAs have annual income more than an average farm household has (MAFF, 2008).

As it is seen from the discussion above, it is not too much to say that there is clearly a rural woman profile who is in the center of agricultural production and economically more independent, also provides work opportunities through entrepreneurship.

#### *4.2 The Young Population (High School Students) as an Inside Power*

As it is generally known, one of the most important factors in sustaining rural community is the young population. Decisions that they make for their future might possibly change the future of the community. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the young population from the viewpoint of community sustainability. In this part of the paper, therefore, we focus on the high school students through the Yamato Town High School Student Survey data.

*4.2.1. Life Structure of the High School Students.* More than half of the respondents (54%) live with their families in Yamato Town and 31% of them live in dormitory. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of area of residence, 67.3% of subjects are living inside Yamato Town (home village) and 32.7% of respondents are living outside of the Yamato Town but in Kumamoto Prefecture.

The means of income could also be important for the young population to make his/her decision concerning the future. In Yamato Town, only the 20% of respondents` families still have main income from farming. Families of 41% of the students earn a living from the secondary industry such as construction works, mining, retailing, sale work and manufacture. Besides, about 25% of the families of respondents make a living from the tertiary industry such as office work and service business. That is, most of the respondents don't have a connection to agriculture in their daily life. Besides, only 8.9% of students attend the course agriculture/forestry and fisheries at the high

school. This also indicates that the young population of Yamato Town is losing the connection with agriculture.

On the other hand, the families of nearly 70% of the respondents have been living in Yamato since the nineteenth century (mostly before the Meiji Era) that might make them have strong connections to the Yamato Town as a homeland. In case of the students who are going to school outside of Yamato Town, when we look at the reason they preferred school outside of hometown, it is obvious that most of reasons have no relationship with hometown or family. About 33% of students preferred the school outside of Yamato Town that because that is favorable to go on to university. Besides, 20% of the students preferred school outside of Yamato Town because of the lack of courses that they wanted to attend. Only 6% of student wanted to leave home and live in the urban area. From these numbers, it might be said that high school students from Yamato Town do not leave their hometown that because they have family issues or they do have problems with the daily life of the community, but they do have rational reasons for leaving hometown.

*4.2.2. Individual Future Plans.* As we discussed above, future plans of the young generation are vitally important for the community. In the Yamato study, it was understood that 59% of respondents are planning to get higher education at university or college. One-third is planning to get a job in Kumamoto Prefecture. Besides, respondents who are planning to return home comprise only 3% of the total group. Besides, the possibility of the respondents who are planning to get higher education staying in urban areas supposed to be considered too. Because after graduation, they will possibly settle down in urban areas and the time of turning back to home village is probably going to be in their fifties or sixties. Which means, about 90 % of the respondents have a potential to leave community and start life in urban areas. This issue is also vital for the future of rural community and must be considered in depth in social policies as much as in economic development issues.

Table 4. *Individual Future Plans I*

<b>What are you going to do after graduation?</b>	<b>%</b>
I am going to go to the university	32%
I am going to go to the college	27%
Get a job in the Kumamoto Prefecture	30%
Get a job outside the Kumamoto Prefecture	3%
I will go back to hometown and succeed the family job	1%
Others (going Tokyo, abroad, etc.)	5%

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I don't know	2%
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On the other hand, when we analyze the plans of respondents from the viewpoint of where they plan to live, remarkable results come up. One-third of the respondents are planning to leave Yamato Town and not to turn back to home village again. On the other hand, the respondents who are going to live in hometown finally are about 40% of total. These rates can be generalized to all rural communities in Japan. One-fourth of total is significant proportion of the community, which needs young population in order to sustain itself. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the respondents who have not decided yet what to do.

Table 5. *Individual Future Plans II (Residence Area)*

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<b>Where do you plan to live after graduation of high school</b>	<b>(%)</b>
I will stay in hometown (Yamato Town)	9.1%
I will go to the Kumamoto City and will not go back again	32.3%
I will live in Kumamoto for a while and then turn back to Yamato Town	31.3%
I have not decided yet	25.2%
Others	1.1%

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4.2.3. *Attitudes towards the community life.* Opinions of the young people concerning the daily life may possibly change their minds when they plan their future too. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze not only the future plans but also the attitudes towards the community life.

Table 6. *General Opinions Regarding Hometown*

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<b>What do you think about leaving hometown of young population?</b>	<b>%</b>
I am concerned about lack of education and job opportunities.	%55.4
I admit that there are not only inconvenient points, but also better points of this community than urban. So, it is also necessary to consider living here permanently.	%31.6
Neither first nor second opinion	%6.9
No answer	%6.1

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More than half of the respondents are displeased with the opportunities such as work and education that may change the plans of young people. On the contrary, it is seen that one third of respondents have a tendency to stay in hometown. So, it can be said from table 6 that about one third of respondents in Yamato Survey have a strong tendency to stay in hometown. Here the issue that supposed to be considered is the situation of rest of respondents. As it is seen from table 5, about one fourth of respondents are still confused with future plans. Researches and some parts of social policies that concerning community sustainability are supposed to be focused on this



*undecided population* and must consider the way of making the young population remain and be the successor of family and community.

## 5. Classification of Inside Power

### 5.1. Classification of the Rural Women

Here, we shall attempt to classify the rural women and the young population from the viewpoint of community sustainability and development. Two topics, sustainability of daily life and economic development, were discussed in the paper. So, these topics can be set as dimensions and it is considered that the situation of the rural women in these two dimensions could be classification criteria. In other words, there should be two types of woman who are active (powerful) and inactive (ineffective) in the community in terms of two dimensions, community sustainability and development. As a consequence, four types of rural women come up as follows (see Figure 2).

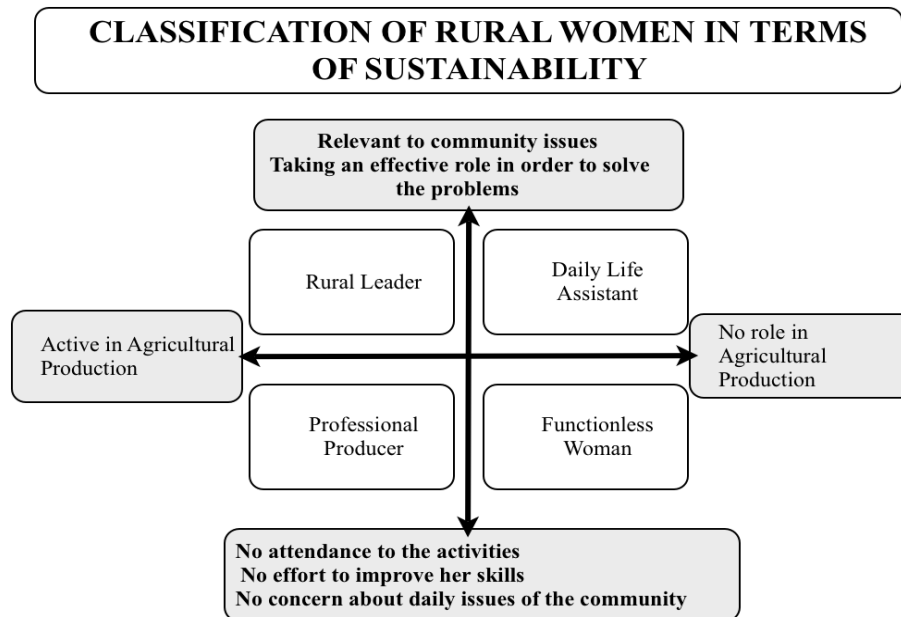
*Rural Leader:* This type of women is generally educated and has a work experience in urban areas. Most have an individual income. They are concerned with the community issues and are taking serious roles in order to solve the issues. Besides, these kinds of women are taking an active role in agriculture production. In other words, the women who are active in social and economic life in the community are called as Rural Leader in this study.

*Professional Producer:* This type of women is also educated and had a career and work in urban area. However, they do not concern with the community issues so much and do not take serious roles in order to solve the issues in the community. Most of them were born in rural areas but raised in urban areas. On the other hand, they create work opportunities for the rural community by the entrepreneurship that they build and have economic power in the community.

*Daily Life Assistant:* This kind of women who finished their compulsory education have concerns about the daily life of the community and try to take a role to solve the issues and make the daily life better. However, they have no independent income. They are mostly dependent on their husbands economically. Therefore, the only possible function that they might have is assisting in daily life such as elderly care and so on.

*Functionless Women:* Actually, there should be two kind of women type in this classification. One of these is the women who are in their twenties having no relationship with agriculture and have purpose to make a career in urban areas. They usually build their social environment and work connections in urban areas. They generally live with their families because of economic reasons such as free accommodation and food. The other woman of this classification indicates the elderly women (particularly over eighties). These kinds of women generally cannot move freely because of their physical conditions and have small social connections in their daily life. Moreover, at times some of them are bedridden.

Figure 2. Classification of the Rural Women in terms of the Community Sustainability



### 5.2 Classification of the Young High School Students

Same procedure was performed in order to classify High School Students as Rural Women. Firstly, two different dimensions, future movements (plans) and relationship with community, from rural women classification were set. Then, two criteria for each dimension were considered as next. In terms of future movements (plans), respondents were considered and classified according to whether they have a plan to stay in hometown or leave the community in future. On the other hand, respondents were classified in two categories according to whether they concern with the community issues or not in terms of relationship with community. As a result of this four types of young population came up as follows (see Figure 3).

*Successor / Leader of the Community:* This kind of students will probably stay in hometown and will be the successor of the family (*le*). Possibly they are the eldest son of the family. These students are satisfied with the daily life of the community and are concerned with the community issues. Besides, they will be the successor of the farmland of their families.

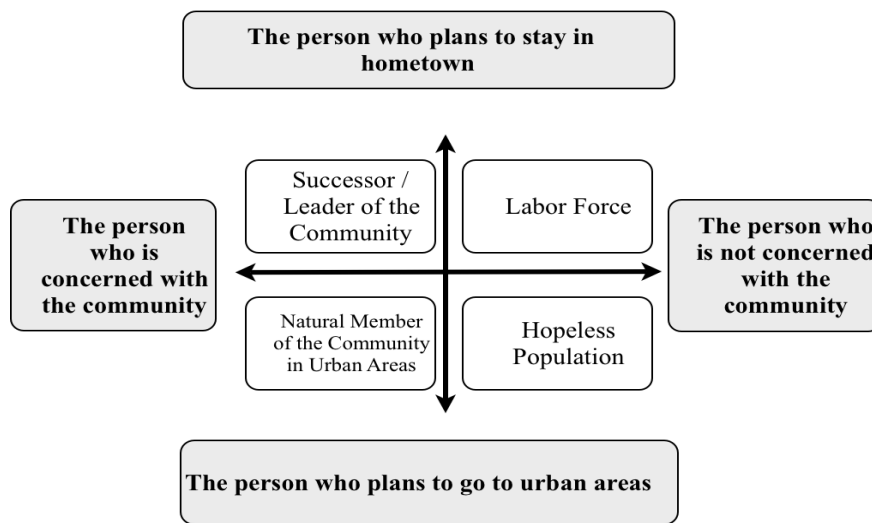
*Labor Force:* This kind of students will stay in hometown and will succeed to their family (*le*), and farmland. On the other hand, this type of students have tendency not to be concerned with the community issues in the daily life. So, it is hard to say that this type of students may have roles to solve the daily issues in the community. Therefore, these students probably will be only a labor force for agriculture.

*Natural Member of the Community:* This type of young people will probably move to urban areas for education or work. However, they are concerned with the community issues even they live in urban areas. They probably will not be the

successor to their family in hometown. On the other side, they will keep their connections with the hometown. So, they will be one of the assistants to sustain the daily life of the community. Besides, as researches show us that there is possibility of returning back to the hometown in their fifties or sixties.

*Hopeless Population:* This type of students will probably move to urban and will not keep their communications with the community. After a while, they lose their social networks with the community. Most of them will only be concerned with the issues of family, but not hometown. Eventually, this type of students will become real urban dwellers that are totally irrelevant to the community.

Figure 3. Classification of the Young Population in terms of the Community Future



### 5.3. Japan needs a fresh analyze framework for the rural community

There are still quite serious issues regarding Japanese rural society both in daily life and agricultural production. One of the most serious problems in rural Japan is the population issue or aging in other words. Besides, decline in agricultural productivity is also one of the serious issues in contemporary Japan. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there were many kinds of approaches in order to work these problems out. However, most of these approaches did not work as expected. It is needless to say that there should be various reasons why these approaches did not work well. One of them should be the point view of the analyze framework. As discussed before in the paper, both community issues and people living in rural areas are being considered in all in most of in terms of sustainability and development approaches. Besides, people who are experiencing the vital issues in rural community such as elderly, women and high school students were not considered as objects in policies, projects concerning rural community issues until 1990s. Even though, they were considered as main object in policies, however, the potential and/or social functions of the rural women or young

population for the future of the community were considered in all. It is obvious that considering and analyzing the rural issues and people who are having the issues in real life such as rural women and young population as *one object* is not a realistic (efficient) way anymore. As it has been analyzed, when concerning rural issues or setting up policies, studies should not generalize the issues and its solution way, but classify the issues, its methods and players who are having the problems inside in real terms.

Before that, social policies should first make an answer what is the most efficient way to sustain the daily life of the local communities. Then, it is needed to be decided who (what kind of people) should be the most suitable person in order to carry out those policies and aims for the future of rural community. From the results of the discussions done in this paper, it can be said that, tangible policies and activities will able to be possibly established when the procedures mentioned above done. In other words, recent social policies concerning sustainability will possibly not work effectively unless the inside power will be considered in details.

Therefore, in this paper, we have considered the future of the local community through the data collected from rural Japan. Concretely, we have analyzed roles and functions of women in the daily life and attitudes of rural women and high school students concerning the future of the community. After the analysis of rural women and high school students, we attempted to classify them in terms of sustainability of the local community.

In this way, it is expected that social policies will be able to have a clear target. Also, the meaning of the rural women and young population can be discussed in a fresh perspective to consider sustainability issues of the rural society.

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