

Preface

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Why Canada-Japan joint research on rural revitalization?

This book is the culmination of more than ten years of research activities of the Canada-Japan Joint Study on Rural Revitalization. The first contact and discussion about a joint project was in 1991 at the founding convention for the Institute for Rural Revitalization in the 21st Century (IRR21) that was held during the International Association of Agricultural Economists world conference in Tokyo, at which Professor Leonard P. Apedaile of the University of Alberta and President of the Canada Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF) had the opportunity to attend. Professor Apedaile visited me at IRR21 in the autumn of 1997 in Tokyo and gave the Executive Board of IRR21 a PowerPoint presentation explaining the activities of CRRF and the rural situation in Canada. He proposed that we enter into a Canada-Japan rural revitalization project, the so called 'CJ-Project' on rural revitalization, with a comparative research design to study rural Canada and Japan. IRR21 decided to be a partner in the CJ-Project.

At that point in time, as a Vice-President of IRR21, I invited Professor Nobuhiro Tsuboi of the University of Tsukuba to be the Japanese team leader. He and I organized the 12 member team consisting mainly of younger mid-career scientists. Only four researchers had study experience in Canada and/or other developed countries. The others would be working outside Japan for the first time. I expected such a fresh team to open a new way for comparative studies. I felt that foreign studies by specialists in domestic issues would contribute something quite new for rural Japan.

At that time, I was also Chairman of the Prime Minister's Agricultural Policy Council. To my regret I could spare not time to participate in the field surveys and could only join the meetings in Tokyo. The Diet (Parliament) had been discussing the Basic Law on Food, Agriculture, and Rural Areas to replace the Basic Agricultural Law of 1961. I was subsequently nominated to serve as the first Chairman of the new Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas Policy Council by the Prime Minister under the new law of 1999.

In 1999, Canadian teams visited two research sites in Japan each year until 2004. In turn, Japanese teams visited sites in Canada and participated in CRRF research workshops and conferences. A rural leaders' exchange took place. I really appreciate that the two leaders, Apedaile and Tsuboi and all research members in Canada and Japan worked productively and built friendships. They brought very fresh images of Canadian rural people to the rural people of the two Japanese sites, and finally publish their achievements here.

Stances on policies for food, agriculture and rural areas:

As Chairman of the Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas Policy Council, I had prepared the following four subjects as the basic ingredients for a new policy. These topics might appear to be very Japanese. However, I understand that as Japanese we have to reorganize our international relations from a new perspective to bring success to rural Japan for future

globalization and the new rural economy.

- New agriculture is a synthesis industry for life not merely another primary industry, and rural areas are the main place for creating its outcomes.
- It is important to reduce the distances between food and agriculture that now have become long and are ever increasing with the industrialization of the food chain.
- Rural areas and new agriculture need new talents such as people not born at the place and free from traditional family and social relations for creating new social capital and synthesizing the production of commodities with food safety, water conservation, the environment, and community amenities.
- The methods of making policies should be reorganized to give more weight to bottom-up inputs rather than the usual top-down approach.

Currently, rural Canada and Japan no longer have great differences in rural peoples' values and living standards, and both countries' rural areas are suffering almost the same problems such as aging, youth out-migration, poverty, high unemployment and environmental challenges. However, rural Japan still retains some traditional characteristics as a latecomer to prosperity because it has only a 50 to 60-year history of industrialization.

This recent Japanese experience may be important for third world countries that are following Japan in the industrialization of their rural economies. I am interested in comparing rural changes especially happening with agricultural modernization in Canada and Japan. Now both countries' rural people are exposed to globalization. How are rural Canadians tackling it? I have heard that rural governance in Canadian provinces is being restructured and municipal amalgamation is also taking place in Canada as it is in rural Japan. Can other countries learn from our experiences?

Rural problems in Canada, Japan and other OECD countries are not very serious compared to the vast rural development challenges in the third world, the hinterland of rural problems in OECD. As the editors of this book have written, the rural development of yesterday and today becomes rural revitalization after tomorrow. The huge rural population of the third world will surely face rural revitalization issues in their future as a fate if nothing changes.

I worry that people in both the developed and developing countries may face a very serious crisis possibly leading to world failure, unless rural development in the rural hinterland of the OECD changes to rural revitalization. As a latecomer, Japan has only recently realized over the last decade the need for this shift. To avoid a world crisis we have to study the rural future of the third world from now on.

What I expected of the Canada-Japan rural revitalization project:

Tsuboi and I organized the Japanese research team with younger mid-career scientists who are not specialists on foreign studies, but times have changed fundamentally. Comparative studies, done before globalization, compared countries with major barriers to commodity trade and with domestic agricultural support programs. These studies were carried out on the premise of protection. In the current era of opening trade, global technology and emerging digitization, specialists are required for comparative studies, which promise to be as

instrumental to future modernization as they were for achieving industrialization and efficiency in specialization. As globalization progresses, comparative studies should be carried out as if trade barriers have been removed.

The view that rural outcomes are about 'Fate and Choice' relates to the way events are seen as 'Subjects of simultaneity' and 'Subjects with a time lag'. This distinction is valid not only for rural Canada and Japan but also for the rural parts of developed countries and the rural third world. I think rural Japan has more opportunity for choice than does rural Canada because post industrialization outcomes may be a kind of fate for a more mature rural Canada. On the other hand, future outcomes may be subject to more choice for rural Japan, which is still on its way to a mature industrialization.

I hope there is much greater choice for the rural third world because it has so far to go to attain industrial maturity. As the options to choose from are more numerous, so the subject for research is more serious. The range of choices that will be opened for the third world are very difficult to apprehend without comparative research, especially as this world is rushing to achieve rural industrialization.

The experiences of the CJ-Project have challenged the subject of 'Fate and Choice'. Not only are the results hopeful for expanding choice, but I expect the book will contribute useful perspectives on choices in a very global third world. This seems to be a way for the survival of our planet.

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