

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE IN KINOSAKI

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a case of community design movements in Kinosaki town, a hot spring resort in Japan. Citizens' initiative in community design is needed because of a coming municipal merger problem in the year 2005, a huge change and reorganization of local authority boundaries on a nationwide scale. Kinosaki is characteristic for having *zaisanku*, which owns and manages hot springs as a profitable communal asset. Family business people like traditional-styled innkeepers are involved in community design centered on tourism promotion. Participatory community design workshops have been undertaken for listing the projects for community design for the next 100 years. The process of listing the projects itself is also the process of creating new shape to the local governance. There is controversy over establishing a new organization such as a community enterprise as one of the main actors to carry out the projects. It is necessary to create new organizations by citizens' initiative, on the basis of existing organizations.

INTRODUCTION

Japan faces a huge change in the system of governance in the near future. There are approximately 3,100 municipalities now in Japan, but some of them will be merged together in a few years. The Japan Government's policy is to decrease the number of municipalities to 1,000. It is said that the actual number will be somewhere around 2,000. Municipal mergers have happened a couple of times in the modern history of Japan. Several effects are expected as a result of municipal merger. One is promotion of efficiency in public service and finance. Another is improvement to public service and residents' convenience, and so on. The largest reason, however, is to deal with financial deficits in the central government's and local municipalities' budgets.

On the other hand, there is the fear that it becomes difficult to offer public service corresponding to the detailed characteristics of each area with limited human and financial resources. In this situation, the role of citizens' initiative in community design becomes more important. It is necessary to organize citizens' groups and create good relationships with new municipalities in order to enforce local governance. It goes without saying that the existing citizens' network and movement are important when organizing new groups and citizens' initiatives.



Figure 1.
Townscape
of Kinosaki.
(Photo: Goto
Laboratory)

As a report of the collaboration work with our laboratory at Waseda University, this paper examines the recent case of Kinosaki town, a hot springs resort with 4,300 residents and approximately a million annual visitors, in Hyogo prefecture. The town also is expected to be annexed into one city with five neighboring municipalities so as to hold approximately 90,000 residents next year. There is a beautiful townscape with seven public hot springs buildings, traditional-styled inns, a river with trees along it.

CITIZENS' INITIATIVE IN KINOSAKI

Kinosaki has a unique governance system. There used to be four villages in the old Kinosaki region. When those four were merged into one town, Yushima village, which owned the source of the hot springs, established the quasi-local authority (*zaisanku* in Japanese). The aim of *zaisanku* council is to manage the public hot springs. The council composed of 11 selected residents from Yushima has decision rights as to any reform of the hot springs. There is another council in an old village unit to manage communal assets other than the town council.

A secretariat of *zaisanku*, which is called the Department of Hot Springs, is set up in the Kinosaki municipality to actually manage the public hot springs. Salaries of employees in the Department are paid not by the Kinosaki municipality, but by *zaisanku*. Reforms of hot springs are also done from the budget of *zaisanku*. *Zaisanku* is financially blessed because of entrance fees to the hot springs.

Promotion of the hot springs resort itself is done mainly by the local Tourist Board. The Tourist Board is mainly organized by local business people such as traditional-styled innkeepers. They plan and carry out events, sometimes clean the river, and are involved in many other activities. The Kinosaki municipality gives some financial aid to the Tourist Board for tourism promotion. Tourism promotion is an important factor of town



Figure 2.
"Community
Design
Drama"-the
third workshop.
(Photo: Goto
Laboratory)

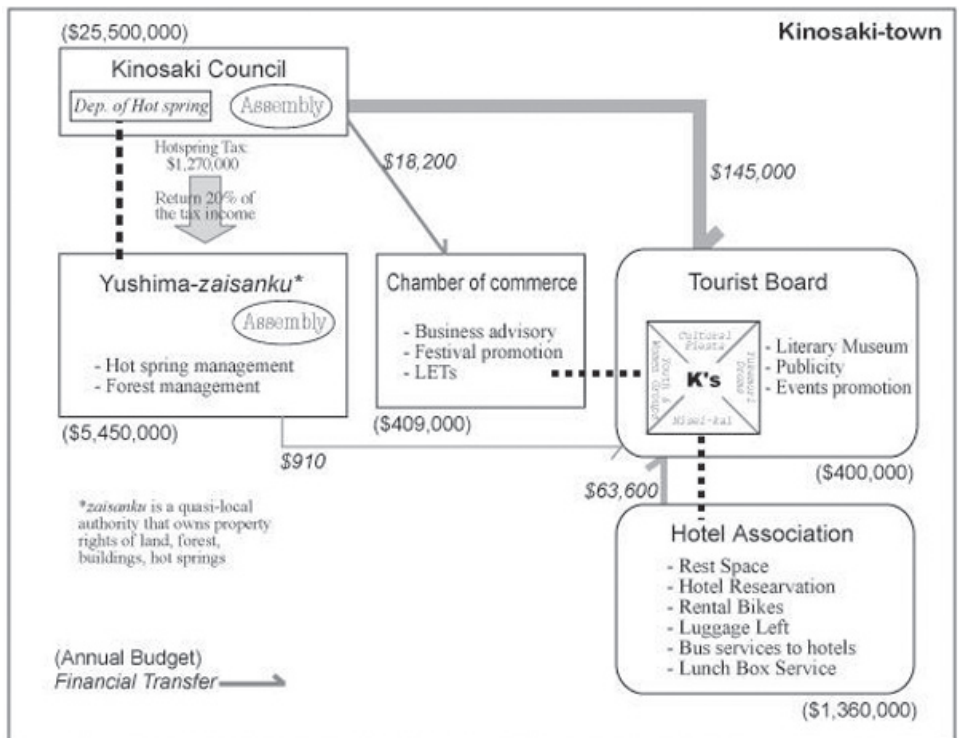


Figure 3. Relationship of the current organization before the merger.

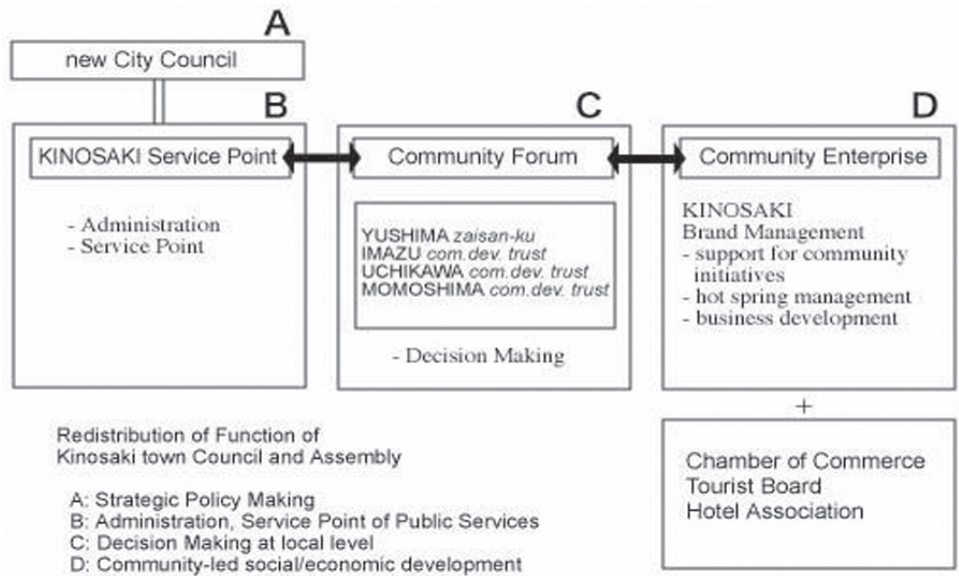


Figure 4. Redistribution of self-autonomy function.

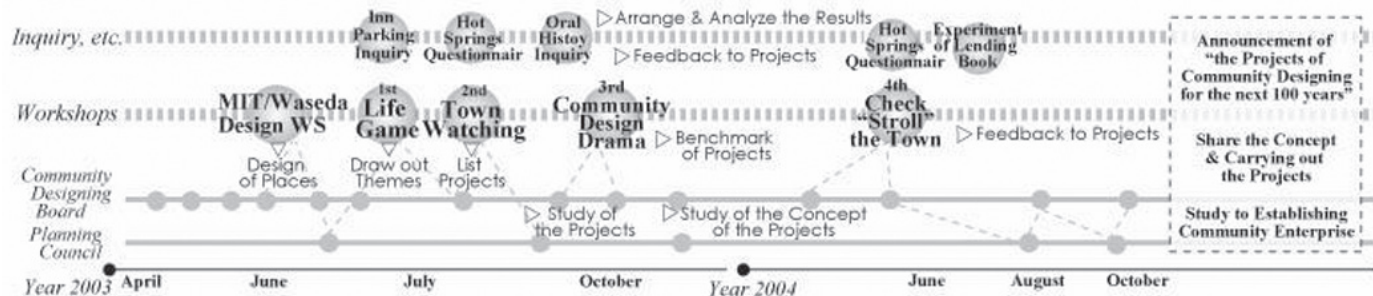


Figure 5. Flow of community design.

development in *Kinokawa* because many residents run tourism related businesses.

It is a concern that the newly merged City Council might decrease the budget for town design in *Kinokawa*, and also financial aid to the current Tourist Board. To handle the case, the Community Design Board was established last April. The Board has been working on listing the projects of community design for the current town area covering the next 100 years with our laboratory. The Community Design Board consists mainly of local young people, some of whom run traditional inns. Ten meetings were held last year, some of which members of our laboratory attended.

PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DESIGN WORKSHOPS

Participatory community design workshops have been held since last April, three last year and one this year. The results of those workshops have been reflected in the projects of community design. Our laboratory had also held a joint design workshop by graduate students of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Waseda University in June of last year. At the workshop, some residents and members of the Community Design Board had an opportunity to have discussions with students.

The first workshop was called “Community Design Life Game,” where residents answered questions concerning problems in the town, assuming that if they are to spend a lifetime of 100

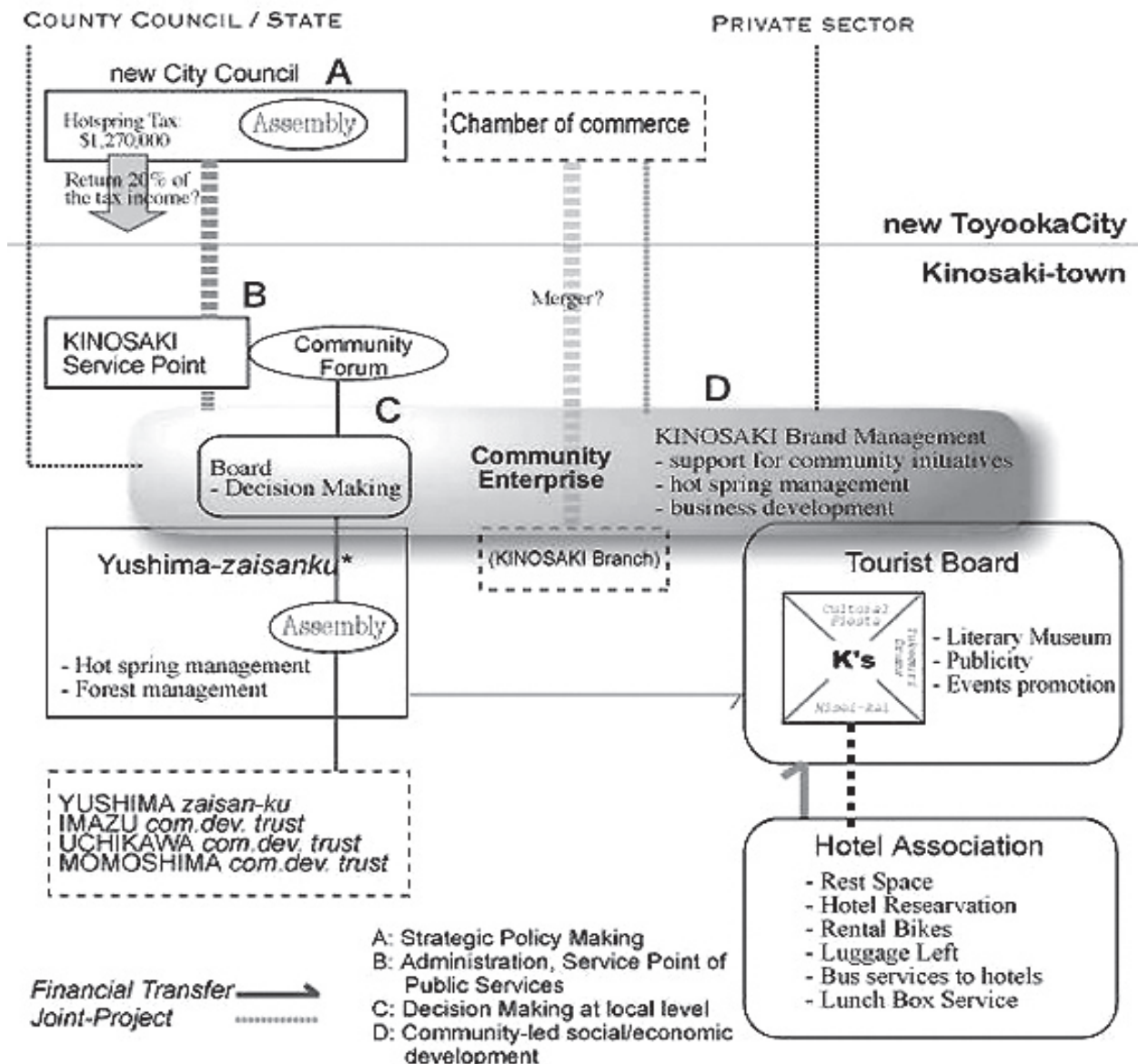


Figure 6. Relationship of new organizations after the merger.

years in the town. Discussions were made after the game. The aim of this workshop was to discuss themes of community design in *Kinosaki*. Six themes were drawn out: welfare, education, transportation, nature, events, and townscape. At the second workshop, "Town Watching," participants were divided into six groups of residents and students to find actual sites relating to themes drawn out from the first workshop. Walks were followed by discussions so as to recognize problems and to share future images of the town. The first two were held in July of last year.

In the third workshop, "Community Design Drama," students and residents participated in playacting. The drama had two simple scenarios, each showing possible future with or without the community enterprise. Dramas were done to share further understanding on predicted situations after the municipal merger and the composition of the enterprise. In the discussion, a lot of detailed questions came out as to the establishment of the enterprise. Even though the workshop itself could not enhance participants' morale to establish the enterprise this time, it was a precious opportunity for residents to discuss the situation after the municipal merger and the enterprise. After the workshop, the chairman of the Community Design Board mentioned the demand of community brand management, which would encourage residents to establish community enterprise.

Finally, three workshops were held last June. Students of Goto Laboratory discussed a concept of the projects of community design and proposed the theme "stroll." This concept was admitted in the Community Design Board and the Monitoring Board. The aim of workshops this time was to examine the concept. Accordingly, one workshop involved walking around the natural areas surrounding the town, another workshop involved following written signs in town. The final one was to walk around the town to check for various signs. The workshops were planned based on feedbacks from the previous ones.

The process of listing the projects of community design itself is also the process of creating a new shape of local governance. Residents' spontaneous movements to hold workshops for their own community activities were seen. Such spontaneous movements can happen without the help of outsiders like our laboratory.

ESTABLISHING COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE

As one of the main actors of the community design projects, there is a controversy regarding whether to establish a new organization like community enterprise. The existing Tourist Board and Chamber of Commerce can be a driving force in a community enterprise since the members are so actively involved in community design. A planning sector with wide and long-term vision is needed in a community enterprise since

the current activities are tourism-oriented. New organizations are expected to be involved in town management including brand management of the resort *Kinosaki*, which the current associations are not handling.

Reorganizing the current Chamber of Commerce into TMO (Town Management Organization) is considered to be another option. As a set menu of planning in Japan, it is required for a central commercialized area to establish a TMO. Although it is known that most TMOs do not function well because of lack of management know-how and financial problems. A TMO is able to get financial aid from the Japanese government menu. New organizations like community enterprise can become TMOs. In either the case of new organizations or the current association, residents' spontaneous movements are important for local governance.

Considering the process of management and decision making of important communal assets, *zaisanku* will remain and function as it has. However, there is a controversy to establish a Community Forum to discuss community problems for enough public service after the merger. It is very important for the new organizations to create equal partnership with the new city municipality. In doing so, municipal mergers can be a good opportunity for creating local governance.

CONCLUSION

Residents cannot rely on the local municipality after municipal mergers in terms of rich public service and financial support. Residents are needed to do what they can do by themselves. Residents in *Kinosaki* have had local initiatives in tourism promotion. After the Town Municipality leaves the town, stronger local initiatives in other fields will be important. Through the participatory workshops, other fields of community design have been experienced. It is expected that more spontaneous movements will emerge to carry out the projects by residents. It goes without saying that new projects should be added one by one according to residents' movements. Community enterprise is expected to support such movements by the residents.

REFERENCES

Goto, H., Murakami, K., and Yoshida, M. 2003. In Search of a Shape of New Governance, Quarterly Magazine *Machizukuri*. Gagugei Press.