Reviving cultural practices of using Nanohana (rapeseed blossoms) for community business: A case of citizen-government partnership in Iga, Japan

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Our paper ...

• Presents a case study of "Community Business" (CB) project in Japan
  • CB: a community endeavor to solve local issues with business-like approaches allowing for financial autonomy
  • CB using Nanohana (rapeseed) as a cultural resource
• Illuminates innovativeness and creativity of the ways the project uses Nanohana as a cultural resource and coordinates local actors
Emerging Community Businesses in Japan

- Strict fiscal conditions of public sectors in Japan
  - Local communities facing challenges to continue providing social services and solving local issues
  - Calls for private sector's resources & local community's self-help

- CB as a solution
  - More financially autonomous, community engagement for solution of local issues
Background 2
Growing attention to local agriculture, food, and environment

• Agriculture as the basis for sustainable community development
  • Food localization movement

• Linkage b/w food as a cultural resource & community development discussed in recent literature

• Cultural resources are NOT limited in fine arts
  • Farming and food can be a valuable cultural resource
Nanohana as a cultural resource in Japan

- Nanohana in rural life and culture
  - Sources for edible and lighting oil
  - Compost
  - Blooms on paddies as a distinctive spring landscape

- Nanohana culture once lost due to
  - Proliferated use of fossil oil
  - Changes in patterns of rice farming

- Recent Nanohana Project movements
  - Multiple uses of Nanohana Resources, including edible oil, bio-diesel fuel (BDF) from recycled oil, and animal feed
  - To establish local chain of resource use
Many Nanohana Projects tend to be...

- Initiated and led by private sectors (community groups) with limited public sector's initiative

- Interested mainly in environmental concerns

- Small-scale operation and low profitability, resulting in financial challenges
Our case study Iga Nanohana Project

• Large-scale operation

• Instigated with the local government's initiative but developed as a CB

• With the interests in
  • Not only environmental conservation
  • But also economic development using Nanohana as a cultural resource
Questions
In the Iga Nanohana Project...

How is Nanohana as a cultural resource used?

What are innovative and creative?

How are these related to the success as a CB?
Community Business in Japan

• Community endeavor to solve local issues with "business" approaches
  • Pursuing financial efficiency, autonomy and sustainability
  • Emerged 1990s through 2000s responding to fiscal austerities in public sectors
  • Shift from traditional unpaid transactions to paid transactions in social support in the community
Community Business in Japan
5 elements of CBs elicited from literature

Community-oriented

Non-profit

Voluntary motivation

Pursuing public good

Financial sustainability

Challenges
Location of Iga City

- Population: 92,000
- Major economies
  - Agriculture (but in decline, creating unused/abandoned farmlands)
  - Recently, manufacturing and service (esp. tourism) sectors
- Birthplace of Ninjas
Iga Nanohana Project – Overview

• Iga city office started in 2007 and purchased pressing and bio-diesel fuel (BDF) plants
  • Operated and managed by Ohyamada Agri-forest Enterprise (a quasi-government agency, OAFE) under entrust contract
  • Called for citizen's participation & provided free seeds

• Production of Nanohana
  • Total production areas: 61 hectares (150 acres)
  • Diverse growers (80) participated
    • Farmers, neighborhood organizations, schools, etc

• Successful CB led by the local government
  • Especially motivated voluntary mind and financial sustainability
Spring landscape with Nanohana in Iga
Iga Nanohana Project
Using Nanohana as a cultural resource

Growing Nanohana
- In unused farmlands
- Landscape reviving local heritage and attracting tourists

Producing edible oil
- Local brand edible oil products

Using as a source of BDF
- Collect and refine used Nanohana oil

Local resource recycling chain, economic development, community solidarity
Iga Nanohana Project
Principal actors and their roles

- **Iga City Office**
  - Total coordination
  - Contract with OAFE
  - Provides free seeds to growers and plants to OAFE

- **Iga Nanohana Project**
  - Harvest, processing, procurement and sales of Nanohana seeds under contract

- **OAFE**
  - Farming, schools, neighborhood orgs, etc.

- **Diverse Growers**
  - Farmers, schools, neighborhood orgs, schools, etc. growing Nanohana
  - Provide labor

Other actors involved:
- University
- Prefectural office
- Volunteer orgs,
- Chicken farms, etc.

Autonomy and freedom are guaranteed
Nanohana as a cultural resource
Tapping into rural heritage

- Spring Nanohana Festival
  - Food and farmers markets and other attractions

Walk-through in Nanohana field
Flyer of Nanohana Festival tied-up with local railway
Nanohana as a cultural resource
Exploring new possibilities

• Products from rapeseeds (Edible oil)
• An extensive product lineup
  • From premium extra-virgin oil to commercial-use
• An attractive brand name & design

Table condiment oil
Gift package

Brand logo tags
## Edible oil (Natane abura) product line-up

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product name</th>
<th>Suggested use</th>
<th>Volume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ichiban-shibori Natane</td>
<td>General heat cooking (frying oil)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra Virgin Natane</td>
<td>Non-heat cooking: Salad dressing, Marinating</td>
<td>50ml, 100ml, 200ml, 500ml, 5000ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Virgin Natane</td>
<td>Non-heat cooking: Salad dressing, Marinating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roasted Natane</td>
<td>Heat and non-heat cooking: Chinese (condiment for soup)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diversified products respond to diversified demands in market.
Nanohana as a cultural resource connecting the past and the future

Tapping into Cultural Heritage

Attracting diverse interests
- Reviving rural landscape
- Environmental conservation
- Education
- Earning income

Responding to diverse demands
- Novel products, modern package design
- Tie-up with other tourist events
- Better sales improving financial sustainability

Exploring future possibilities

Not only revival and preservation, but also renewal and (re-)creation, of cultural heritage.
Linkage b/w diverse actors & institutions to keep motivating volunteer mind.

- Efficient undertaking of project activities
- Provision of equipment
- Motivated volunteer labor
- Incentive thru subsidies

Iga City Office

OAFE

Iga Nanohana Project

Diverse Growers

Procurement of Nanohana seeds

Motivated volunteer labor

Autonomy and freedom are guaranteed
Conclusion

• Use of Nanohana as a cultural resource
  • Not solely preserves, but also revives and renews the culture by exploring new possibilities (new products)
  • But, needs should be carefully identified and appropriate marketing skills should be incorporated

• Linkage between different actors and institutions
  • Effectively coordinating strengths and advantages of public, quasi-public & private sectors
  • Especially, roles of the public sector should be reevaluated
  • Should be cautious about success stories