

Regional Development Involving Diverse Stakeholders — A Case Study of District A in Kyotango City, Kyoto Prefecture

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1. Introduction

The population in Japan’s rural areas is aging and declining ahead of that in its cities, and facilities necessary for the settled habitation, such as shopping, transportation, and medical care and welfare, are becoming inadequate. Revitalization efforts are being made in these farming villages while promoting the utilization of local resources and environmental conservation to ensure that residents can continue living in the villages and to attract newcomers. Domestic and international surveys and studies are being conducted on these efforts; for example, Nordberg et al. (2020) analyzed community-driven social innovation (SI) in rural areas using the Quadruple Helix Model. This report analyzes SI initiatives with a focus on four stakeholders—local organizations, public institutions, educational and research institutions, and private companies—and points out the importance of building networks among local communities and their stakeholders. Here, we will introduce the development of activities in District A of Kyotango City, Kyoto Prefecture, arranged chronologically with a focus on the four stakeholders mentioned above.

2. Area surveyed

The population of District A has decreased by approximately 20% in the past ten years. Aging farmers, an increased abandoned cultivated land due to a lack of successors, and increased damage from birds and animals are major issues. Amid this situation, in Tango Town, Kyotango City, to which District A belongs, a non-profit organization was established in 2008 when a private taxi company withdrew from the area, with the aim of revitalizing the community and developing projects in cooperation with the district’s ward mayors’ association and city office (Figure 1). This organization took the lead in launching an on-demand bus service and instant vehicle dispatch service that uses a private app to enable the district residents to transport passengers for a fee in their own vehicles. Furthermore, the organization conducted a survey of all residents—from adults through to junior high school students—on community development. Various stakeholders in District A are also actively working independently to solve local issues.

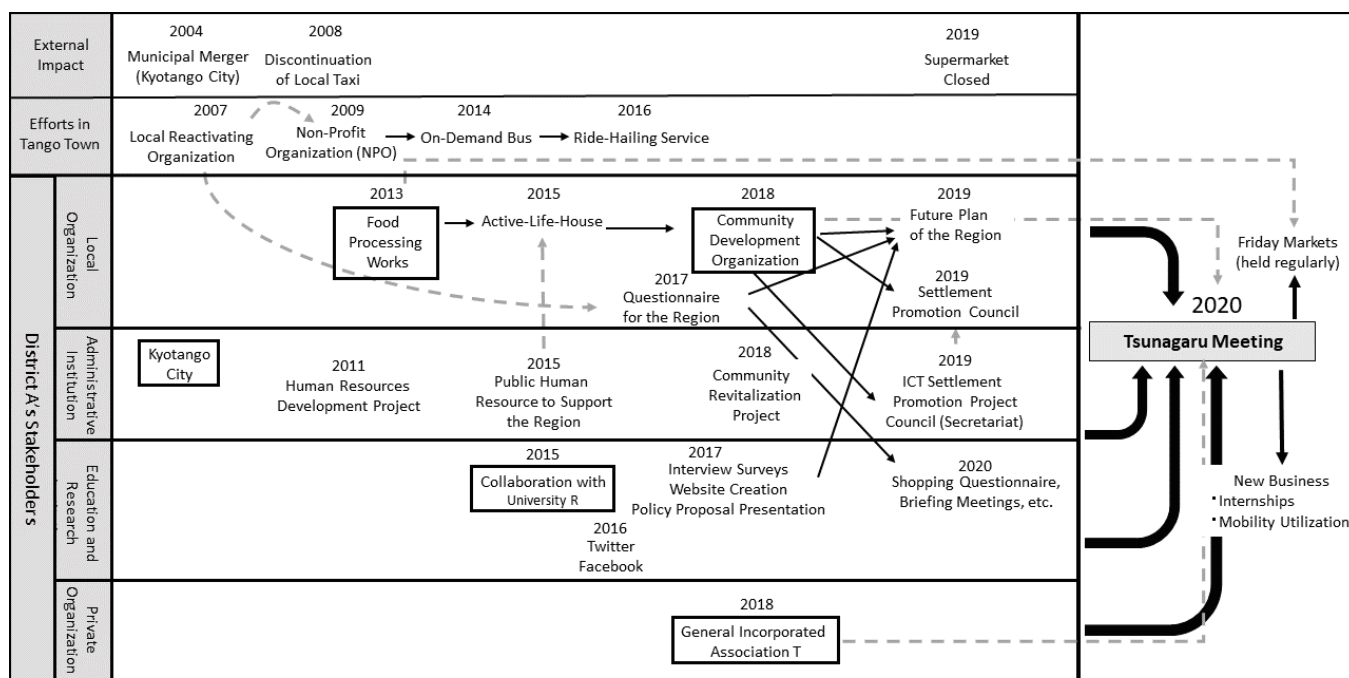


Figure 1. Collaboration with stakeholders in District A

Source: Created by author based on interview surveys

Note: Black frames indicate stakeholders; solid black arrows indicate chronological connections between efforts, and dashed gray lines indicate collaboration and involvement.

3. Role of Stakeholders

The roles of each stakeholder are summarized below in a chronological series of trends in community development activities involving District A (Figure 1):

Local Organizations: In 2013, the district formed a group called “Food Processing Works,” which uses the kitchen of a closed nursery school to develop and sell processed products using local crops and provides an opportunity to local women to play an active role in community regeneration. Later, in 2015, Active Life House which renamed from Food Processing Works was established as a base for local community activities to further utilize the nursery school, and efforts began to use its kitchen as a processing facility and its classrooms as a coffee shop. In 2018, with the aim of creating a more sustainable community, a community development organization consisting of nine representatives of local organizations was established as a central organization for community activities, spearheaded by the ward mayors’ association. This organization has played a pivotal role in various subsequent activities:

Public Institutions: Kyotango City obtains support from Kyoto Prefecture to fund community development activities and secure human resources. For example, under Kyoto Prefecture’s Human Resource Dispatch Program, under which personnel are appointed by the Prefecture to live in the community and work with locals to solve specific local issues, the staff dispatched as village community officers were involved in establishing and operating the Active Life House. District A is also cooperating effectively with government agencies in the area, for instance, the Tango Citizen Bureau serves as the secretariat of the community development organization when conducting national projects.

Educational and Research Institutions: In 2015, the University R in the Kinki region began various initiatives aimed at an on-site education of students and regional revitalization following a visit to the region by the faculty staff. These activities are conducted in District A with three pillars: (1) contribute to community activities by participating in such activities, (2) contribute to a sustainable community development by launching project activities as seminars, and (3) contribute to a sustainable community development through surveys and research activities. Local participation is encouraged from various angles, such as sharing local information through a website and social media, developing products using local ingredients, participating in local festivals, and presenting policy proposals to the local community about local issues based on surveys conducted by students. These activities have also led to the employment of several students in Kyotango City.

Private Sector: Although there is no strong collaboration between the local community in District A and private sector, “General Incorporated Association T” is heavily involved. Established in 2018, Corporation T’s main business is to provide support to those moving to and settling in the area. The organization is actively involved in regional revitalization efforts, such as coordinating “Tsunagaru Meetings,” a discussion forum of District A.

4. Stakeholder Networking

Residents of District A have taken the lead in community development activities in the district by collaborating with public institutions, educational and research institutions, and private companies. Alongside this horizontal network-building process, they have also created a vertical network by involving junior high and high school students to lead the next generation. In February and December 2020, “Tsunagaru Meetings” were held to provide a forum for community development discussions between diverse stakeholders both from within and outside the community, as well as a broad cross-section of generations in the community, from junior high school students to the elderly. Discussions and proposals made at the meeting led to the regular hosting of a “Friday Market” where local agricultural products and processed foods are sold, and an acceptance of interns through a talent discovery project. Furthermore, when the COVID-19 crisis severely restricted activities within the community and forced a cancellation of several projects, the students of University R used online meetings to maintain ties with the community and developed a tourism brochure and a curry-in-a-pouch product using local ingredients. Collaboration with educational and research institutions can, thus, be considered to play an extremely important role in this process.

5. Conclusion

A wide variety of community development efforts are being undertaken that suit local conditions. It is important for stakeholders to work together to promote initiatives. In the case of District A, in particular, which was surveyed in this study, local organizations have played a pivotal role in strengthening vertical networks across generations together with horizontal networks formed through cooperation with public institutions, educational and research institutions, and private companies. The creation of networks among diverse organizations and across generations may facilitate a sustainable and resilient revitalization of rural areas.

[References]

- Nordberg Kenneth, Age Mariussen, and Seija Virkkala (2020) Community-driven social innovation and quadruple helix coordination in rural development. Case study on LEADER group Aktion Osterbotten *Journal of Rural Studies* 79 : 157-168.