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風土は個性

個性あるまちを、つくる時

- | まちに個性と魅力を取り戻す
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日本でも人口減少が進むなか、全国の自治体がまちの魅力づくりに奔走しています。これからの時代は、インフラ(グレーインフラ)の整備に頼らずに、地域の風土に根ざした本来の個性を磨いてまちづくりを進める必要があります。

As Japan is experiencing its dramatic population decline, local municipalities nationwide have been making tremendous efforts to make their communities more attractive in order to survive for many years to come. In this unusual era, it is increasingly important to reshape these communities with traditional characteristics that are rooted in local climate and environment or geography, without depending on building infrastructures (gray infrastructures) with help from the national government's public works.

A Local Environment is a Local Personality

It Is Time to Build Communities with Personalities

Those local municipalities in Japan that are experiencing population decline increasingly have been facing the need to improve their communities' attractiveness. It has become clear to them that dependence on traditional 'gray infrastructure' projects such as highway and high-rise construction cannot sustain local economies. It is necessary, instead, to promote 'green infrastructure' by restoring nature and utilizing natural ecosystem functions. Landscapes and local green infrastructure based on local natural resources help develop the unique character, or personality, of each community thereby making it more attractive to residents and visitors alike.

We know of three factors that can develop the personality of a community: recover local biodiversity; preserve or restore landscapes based on local tradition and history; and, promote eco-tourism utilizing local resources. An example of each factor is as follows:

1) City of Toyooka in Hyogo Prefecture has been working on building communities where wild storks can live with people. Japanese storks became extinct in the wild many years ago, but conservationists in Toyooka wanted to restore an ecosystem with storks at the top. They did this by creating wetlands and by changing rice farming from reliance on agrichemicals to a system that reduces or eliminates chemical use. Rice that is produced by this method has become very popular among consumers and the farmers can sell it at 50% higher than the regular market price. And, the storks have returned. They are now an important tourism resource that brings added revenue of more than 1 billion yen (10 million dollars) annually which contributes significantly to the city's economy.

2) City of Kawagoe in Saitama Prefecture has been restoring old town landscapes based on its history of shipping industry with its many old Japanese warehouses called 'kura'. Each building has been restored to the look of the historical period, electric wires and utility poles have been removed and cables buried underground in order to restore the atmosphere of olden days. In 2014, the City developed a new plan to preserve natural landscapes in addition to historical street scenes. The City is expected to become even more attractive in the near future.

3) City of Hanno in Saitama Prefecture has been promoting ecotourism by using its regional resources. Its rich nature and traditional lifestyles are popular tourism resources. This tourism promoting efforts, initiated by the city government in 2004, received a national government 'Ecotourism Award Grand Prize' in 2008. Last year, the number of tourists visiting the City reached a new record high.

Overseas, there are many countries that make their local communities attractive by protecting their nature nationwide. In the Seychelles, an island country in the Indian Ocean off east coast of Africa, development of coconut plantations was encouraged in the colonial period. These caused extensive destruction of her nature; however, the Seychelles changed course by using attaining independence as an opportunity and decided to preserve and restore nature up to 50% of the entire lands. The islands have become one of the best ecotourism destinations in the world, but the government is carefully managing tourism development so that it will not become excessive and damage its environments and precious nature. As a result, its economy is now sustainable.

In Germany, federal law clearly stipulates that its nature and landscapes should be protected as much as possible. In addition, even small biotopes now can be protected under the federal law. This law also requires that each state and its local municipalities establish its own nature and landscape protection plan.

In Japan, we also have laws and plans that correspond to each of the three factors mentioned above, such as 'Regional Biodiversity Strategy', 'Landscape Plan', and 'Overall Plan for Ecotourism Promotion'. But there is often no coherent relationship among them. Therefore, it is necessary to establish coherence among these plans. This can be done by setting the Regional Biodiversity Strategy as the core plan and by integrating the Landscape Plan and the Ecotourism Promotion Plan into it. In this way, protection and restoration of local nature can help create beautiful local landscapes which can, in turn, promote ecotourism based on local resources. At this moment in Japan, these plans are not mandatory at the local municipality level. This needs to be changed. We propose

that every municipality must have these three plans based on the protection of local nature. Also, in order to create a sense of unity and cleanliness throughout a community, it is very important for each citizen to have awareness that 'each one of us is making our own home town'. If citizens show their welcoming gestures by 'dressing up each house', by decorating windows of their houses with local flowers or making their gardens almost parts of the streets, these small efforts can contribute to make their town very attractive. Such efforts will lead to a restoration of a charming community that is supported by a sustainable economy.



A park that protects storks. This city has succeeded economically by recovering an ecosystem with stork at its top (Toyooka City).



A city landscape unified by its historical atmosphere (Kawagoe City).



Popular tourism based on local resources (Hanno City).



The Republic of Seychelles has set aside 50% of its lands as protected nature preserves and succeeded in revitalizing its economy.

禁無断転載 海外との情報交流促進のため、要約を英文で掲載しています