

How to create beautiful partnership to make sustainable community?
-a case study of making local agenda 21 in the difficult of consolidation of smaller municipalities-

Tamesuke Nagahashi
Community Design Center, Kyoto and Osaka

1 The Context of Making Environmental Local Agenda 21 in Japan

In 1992, the earth summit conference in Rio de Janeiro decided that local governments must create environmental local agenda 21 by partnership among citizen, business companies, and government for sustainable development in.

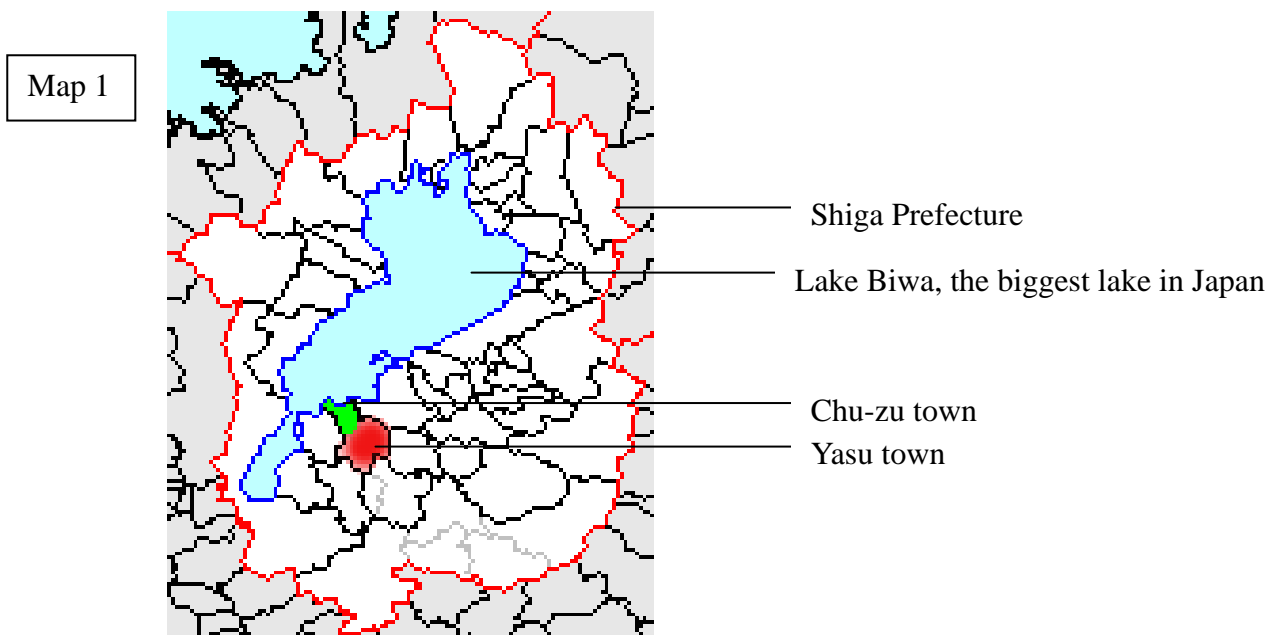
In 1993, in Japan, Environmental Basic Law was established, and each local government has started to make environmental local agenda 21. But it was not clear for most of local governments what kind of partnership and participation process for making it would be good. Most of local governments hired consultant companies to make it, and then collected scholars to approve it. Some local governments did public questionnaire to citizen as a way of participation. It is clear that there were any good participation process in the making local agenda 21, so most plans had not been implemented by anybody.

It is because (1) there is only abstract vision and goal in the plan, (2) there are no any concrete projects and strategies to get the vision and goal, (3) there is no organization and institution to implement it by participation, in fact there is no any participation process in making it. Who could take part in the implementation of it?

In Japanese local governments, the person in charge has change the position in 3 or 4 years. In 3 or 4 years after making the local agenda, even the person in charge who attended the making process had gone, so nobody knows the existence of the plan.

2 The context in these several years for remaking environmental local agenda 21 in Japan

In these several years, most of environmental local agenda has been remade or revised. It is because institutionally, in every 5 years, local government has to check whether the plan has been implemented and because the plan has to be renewed in every 10 years for the next decade. Besides



this situation, in these 3 years, Japanese central government has promoted consolidation from smaller municipalities to form larger ones, and in this case the new larger ones have to make new plans for

public management like comprehensive plan, environmental local agenda 21 and so on. In these situations, I took part in the making process of environmental local agenda 21 by citizen participation as a 3rd arm coordinator with contracting local governments.

Some local governments have gotten to think that in order to implement the plan, citizen and business group should better to attend the making process at least, and that it is important to create partnership among citizen, business group, and government to implement it. So I take part in the process as a coordinator of the 3rd arm in order for the 3 characters to work together well. I will introduce and consider how to create good partnership to make and implement environmental local agenda 21 by partnership among citizen, business group and government in case of Yasu city into which is consolidated Yasu town and Chu-zu town. (see Map 1)。

3 The difficulty, almost battle of making process in Yasu City

In October 2005, Yasu town of 37,000 populations and Chu-zu town of 12,000 populations was consolidated to Yasu City. The making process of new environmental local agenda 21 started in April 2006. Yasu city government appointed 28 people as local agenda 21 making official committee member. The member consists of 12 citizen by selected with public advertisement, 14 nominated members from stakeholders like 6 person from 6 business groups, 6 persons from 6 citizen groups and 4 persons from 4 neighborhood association. There are 60 official meeting and 20 extra meetings in each 3 sections, nature section, energy and green consuming section, and life style section until making the final plan. As a coordinator, By the way, I have attended the making process for environmental local agenda 21 by citizen participation in 7 municipalities for these 5 years. This process in Yasu city is the most difficult for me, almost like a nightmare. I will introduce how the process is difficult and how our process overcome the difficulty as the following,

3-1 Citizen's distrust to local government

To begin with, citizen, particularly citizen from former Chu-zu town has distrust to consolidation itself with disappearance of the town name, 'Chu-zu.' They think that the consolidation didn't have citizen's consensus, and still more the government even did not try to make consensus with citizens. 9 of 12 citizen members by selected with public advertisement are from former Chu-zu town. They volunteered to become the committee member in order to watch what the local government is going to do. The angry citizen members often suspect that the city government would manipulate citizen power and put the responsibility on only citizen without government's efforts. And furthermore, some citizen members attacked coordinators including me because they thought that the coordinator group was a subcontract hired by the government in order to manipulate them. One of coordinators got to be almost neurotic.

It seems me that it's most important that we should better first to show what is coordinators roll. Showing our rolls figure was very effective visually for others to understand us, particularly administrative officials who could not understand coordinators roll mostly. Although main officials in charge understand what is participation process and coordinators roll, administrative officials didn't. So administrative could not explain to other citizen committeepersons that the city really would like to advance participatory process in partnership with citizen for implementing environmental local agenda 21, so citizen committeepersons could not trust the city and coordinators including me.

It was really needed at least that the officials, particularly administrative officials, first understand the meaning of partnership process with citizen, business group and coordinator in order for them to have other citizen members trust themselves and coordinators. [See figure 1]

3-2 Government official's distrust to citizen

On the other hand, there is the government official's suspicion and bias against the citizen committeepersons, like 'he is a member of communist party, so he always oppose anything that the

government dose', or like 'she is like ombudsperson, so she always blame us', etc.

It seems me that the bias of officials can't have themselves listen and understand even the right opinion of citizens, and on the other hand that too right citizens opinion is sometime too much for the officials. The key for making good communication and relationships is how the both side could listen and understand well each others. In order to do so, I should better to start listening with anybody as coordinator without any bias, prejudice and prediction. The passion of understanding any others and anything was most important to me.

3-3 Hostility between Yasu town officials and Chu-zu town officials

And more over, there is a big problem of dividing, rupture or hostility between former 2 towns officials. Former Cyu-zu town didn't have environmental plan, but former Yasu town had it although the plan was just like an empty theory because there was any concrete projects and strategy which citizen, business group could implement by partnership and participation. So Chu-zu town officials sometime criticize the other because the Yasu plan was not good, and Yasu-town officials also blame the other because Chu-zu town did not have even the plan. It seems me that the battle is so ridiculous as same as eye mucus scoff at nasal mucus.

3-4 Rupture between 2 towns community

As for the 4th rupture, there is a big difference of community character between the two towns. Cyu-zu town has old and strong community as agriculture and fishing village. On the other hand Yasu-town is close to Japan Railway station and relatively urban in which the sense of community is getting down because new residents increased.

But it seems me that the both community has common issues that the both has faced strong development pressure and urban sprawl like big supermarket, monster apartment building and heavy traffic by vehicles as bed town of Kyoto and Osaka.

4 How to build each other trust and partnership for advancing environmental local agenda 21 process?

It was the most important for me to understand what happens and who tell what to whom with what feeling. Observing intently and listening well helped me for the understanding. It seems me that only understanding well would lead me to what I should better to do in this crazy situation in which each characters blame others.

I noticed that angry citizen members always told that they had good landscape, wonderful experience of playing in nature like river, Biwa lake and neighborhood forest, and good memory of eating fresh water native fishes in their childhood whenever they blame the officials and others. Particularly, the memory of relationship with water and river is so strong and it was common to the two different community people in Chu-zu town and Yasu town. For Chu-zu town community people, Biwa lake and the rivers which run into the lake are so sacred. But in these 20 years, the river was getting worse by covering with concrete, illegal dumping, domestic waste and agricultural waste from the upper stream of Yasu town. Chu-zu town people thought that Biwa lake is getting worse by worse rivers.

On the other hand, Yasu town people love some springs which is the origins of rivers running trough into Biwa lake and small fresh streams, but they are troubled about that forest and mountains which produce water are getting worse because of less management and illegal dumping.

Listening about memory of playing river and forest is very interesting to me. I tried to listen more and more to all members about their childhood environment and playing. People were unbelievably eager to talk about their sacred nature and landscape in their childhood in spite of which community Cyu-zu or Yasu they are from. More and more good memories overflowed, better and better the atmosphere of the committee was getting.

When I put their memory on map, all people understand that their memory are connected with each others in river, water and forest, and understand that Chu-zu town and Yasu town are a unit watershed, and also that not only their good memories but also their apprehensions about their getting worse environment are really related to each others in the watershed from the forest of springs thorough rivers to Biwa lake. This finding and understanding facilitated 2 community people's cooperation. It also means the cooperation between fisherperson, farmers and forestry in a watershed.

When I listened about their memories, I also asked them whether any good nature was gone or not, and whether any good nature remains barely or not. Some people told some places in which people can see good small point in river and forest even now. It seems me that this is very important because new comers who don't know old good memories and landscape can also see and experience the good points, and then they can start to think of expanding small good points to big fields. The citizen committee members got to understand this approach is just the beginning strategy of making and implementing environmental local agenda 21; first, finding out not only bad things but also good points even though the good points are so small, and then secondly sharing the good points to others and increasing comrades in order to expand the good small points to bigger fields.

The one thing 2 different community people agreed is that the reason why illegal dumping happens on river and forest is because people have lost concern about them by loosing accessibility to them. So they started to think about how people could regain friendship with nature of river and forest.

Anyway, thorough these communications, the process for making environmental local agenda 21 has advanced. The committee created a total vision which figures out the city in 20 years later, 3 objectives in nature, lifestyle and town mobility, and energy and refuse sphere for realizing the vision and 24 concrete leading projects; 11 in nature sphere, 8 in lifestyle and town mobility, and 5 in energy and refuse sphere.

It takes 1 year and a half from starting the committee to finish the plan making. From this fiscal year of April 2007, the first stage has started. A sightseeing river tour on traditional boat has been started by the committee members, for example. Old retired fishermen become boatmen, so not only traditional boats but also traditional rowing skills can be preserved, and people really can access and enjoy river itself, and then people who has concern about river is increasing. In order to repair the boats and to make some stuffs like boat garage, pier and deck, thinning wood in new forest management as another leading project are used.

With taking a backward a glance to my action, what I did in the process is just community design primer process, like Listening, Mapping, and Environmental autobiography. When I was buffeted by the first crazy situation, I was not so aware of this primer skills. But these skills and process were really kingship in crazy stream. These methods really encourage us to do trans action process. And also I got to understand environmental unit like watershed is really important for people's cooperation and connection with nature and community.

Figure 1

