

# Sustainable livelihood and happiness generation in Minamata-city, Japan: A model for endogenous community development



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## Background

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- GNH in Bhutan is a local-grown concept, which leads the country to achieve one form of endogenous development. If endogenous development path is critical for realizing a sustainable and happy society, it is worth while to review a country's development if it is endogenous or exogenous. How about Japan?
- Japan started her modernization strategy more than 120 years ago, after its Meiji restoration. Now Japan has become the second largest economic superpower in the world. However, as Kusago (2007, 2008) has reviewed, this economic growth did not improve people's life satisfaction for the last three decades. (Easterlin's Paradox)
- Is there any way to transform a development path from exogenous to endogenous?



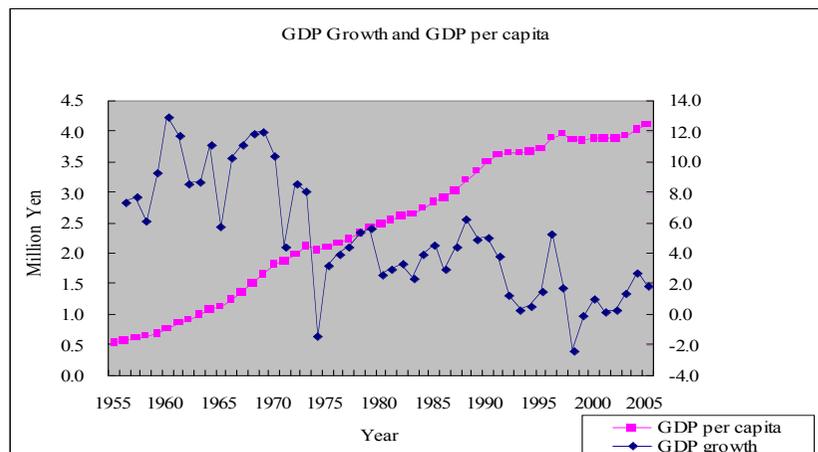
## Endogenous development: Happiness and Engaged Development

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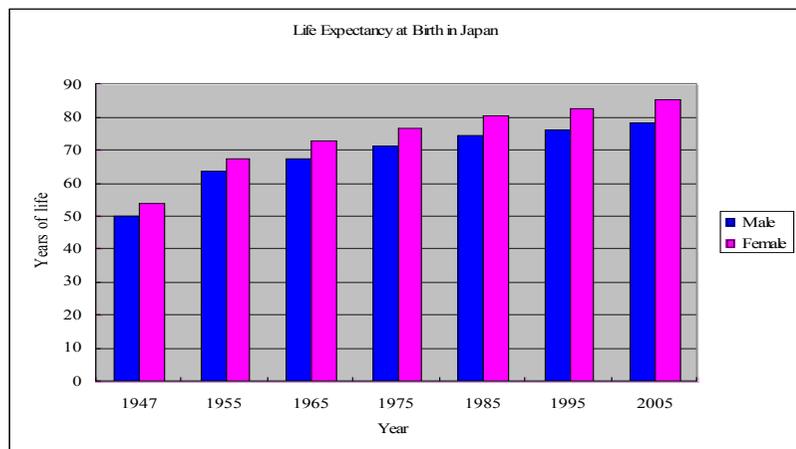
- Endogenous development approach was proposed by Tsurumi in the 1970s in Japan:
  - Development model initiated by local people with their own ideas and action – full use of local-resource, local creativity and key persons.
    - Japanese Modernization after Meiji restoration is seen as exogenous – borrowing concept of development from outside.
    - Community0based development is the center of endogenous development path.

# Japanese Development: High on HD

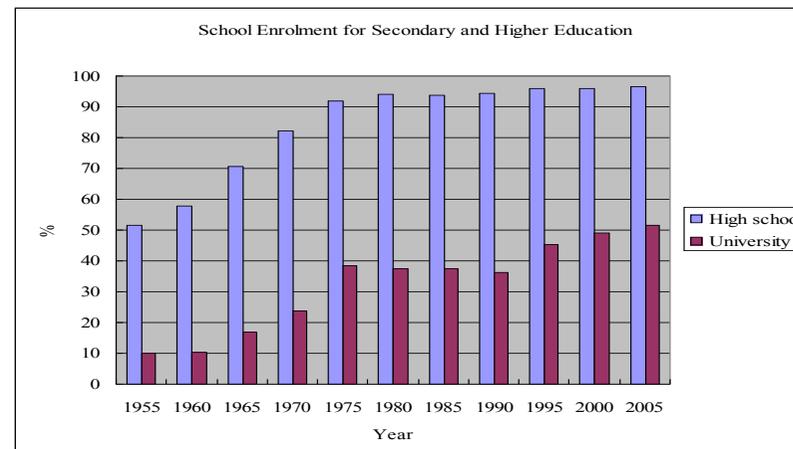
ECONOMIC GROWTH:  
Per Capita GDP



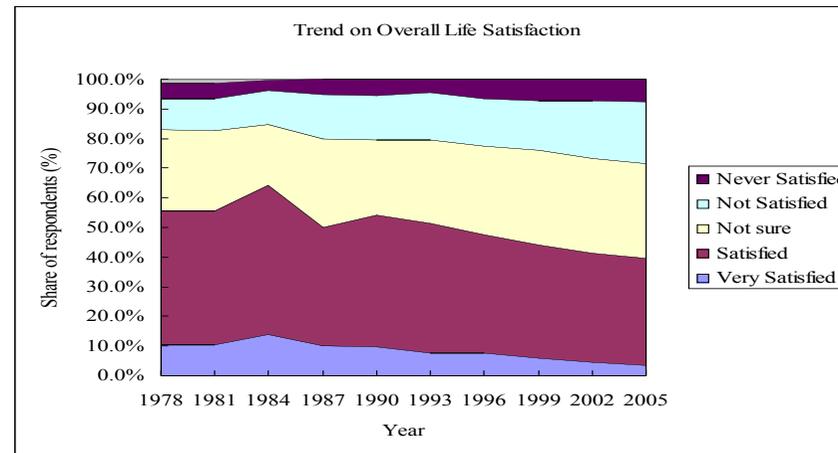
HEALTH: Life Expectancy



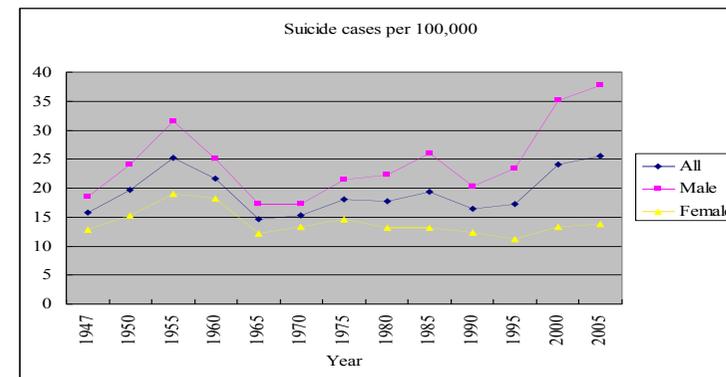
EDUCATION: Enrolment Rates



# Japanese Development: Problems

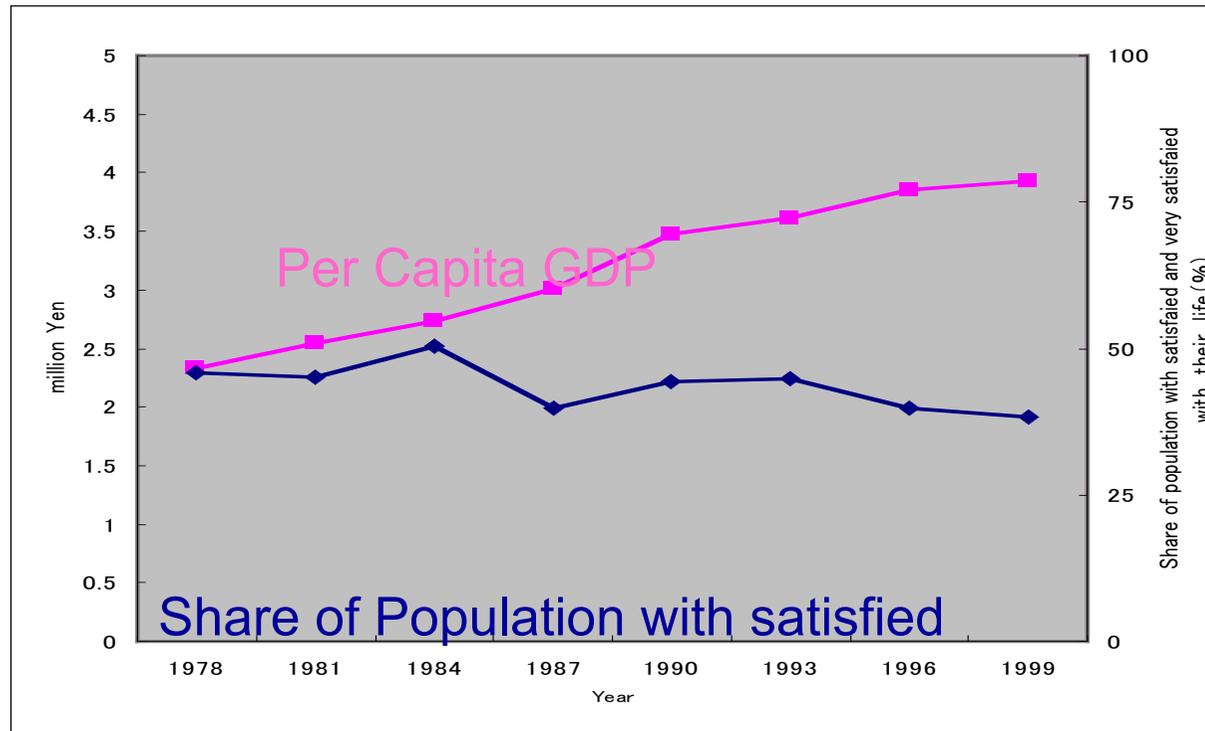


## SUICIDE CASES: Sharp increase



- Industrial pollution
  - Air-pollution
  - Noise problems
  - Water-pollution
- Environmental Degradation
- Stress (commuting, less time with family, etc.)

# Income vs. Happiness (Easterlin Paradox)



(Subjective data from *Survey of Lifestyles and Needs*, Cabinet Office)

Could we find a clue to solve the paradox?  
Is there a real case at the community level based on  
endogenous approach to challenge this problem?



## Minamata: **Expectation** → Despair → Hope

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- Minamata is a city benefited from the modernization through industrial development in Japan
  - Chisso company set up its factory (1908)
  - This company had been one of the few leading chemical companies in Japan by the 1950s
  - ideal job creation with the economic development strategy → *local people first welcomed before the disease was discovered!*

## Minamata: Expectation → Despair → Hope

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- Minamata Disease occurred in the 1950s by the discharged polluted water from the Chisso company to the sea through food chain, and people's long struggle started and continued for more than four decades. This made the Minamata community less viable, demise of a good old community atmosphere and conflicts seen frequent among people in the same neighbourhood over compensation, etc., and the city became full of hatred and hopelessness among people.
  - Destroyed psychological well-being of the disease patients, and deprived ordinary people's dignity and identity as a Minamitan.

## Minamata: Expectation → Despair → Hope

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- However, people and local government took action to change the city with their own ideas, plan, actions since the early 1990s.
  - ➔ Let us look at how Minamata turned around its community from despair to hope

Turning point:

## Elected a good leader: Mayor's Action in 1994

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- From the 1950s to the early 1990s, government – central, prefectural and city governments – did not assist much for those who suffered from the Minamata disease.
- However, in 1994, **Mr. Yoshii Masazumi** was elected as the Mayor of Minamata-city. He delivered a historic speech at the memorial ceremony for the victims of the Minamata disease.
  - His message was contrition and apology, and he stated that the city's past actions on Minamata disease had been mistaken and proposed *a solution for dialogue* as Japanese people did in the old days to solve a problem at the community level. This made a huge impact over the course of the Minamata disease issues.



Turning point:

Elected a good leader: Mayor's Action in 1994

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□ Mr. Yoshii's action

- Solving compensation issues for the Minamata disease patients
- Change the style of the local government: from people participation to government participation (into people)
- Promoted some who used to be regarded as eccentric in the city hall

➔ From exogenous (central-gov led) to endogenous (own development goals and agenda) approach

# A Minamata vision: coexistence with environment

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- Minamata-city's strategy to become a leading city on environment.
  - The city formulated its development plan with citizen's participation and it came up with the environmental model city idea.
  - Environmental meister in Minamata – key persons in environmental management and healthy food production
  - Voluntary Women's group to reduce waste at home and at shops
  - Community currency introduced by the women's groups
  - Eco-business industrial zone
    - In 2008, Minamata is selected as one of the six leading model city on environment in Japan

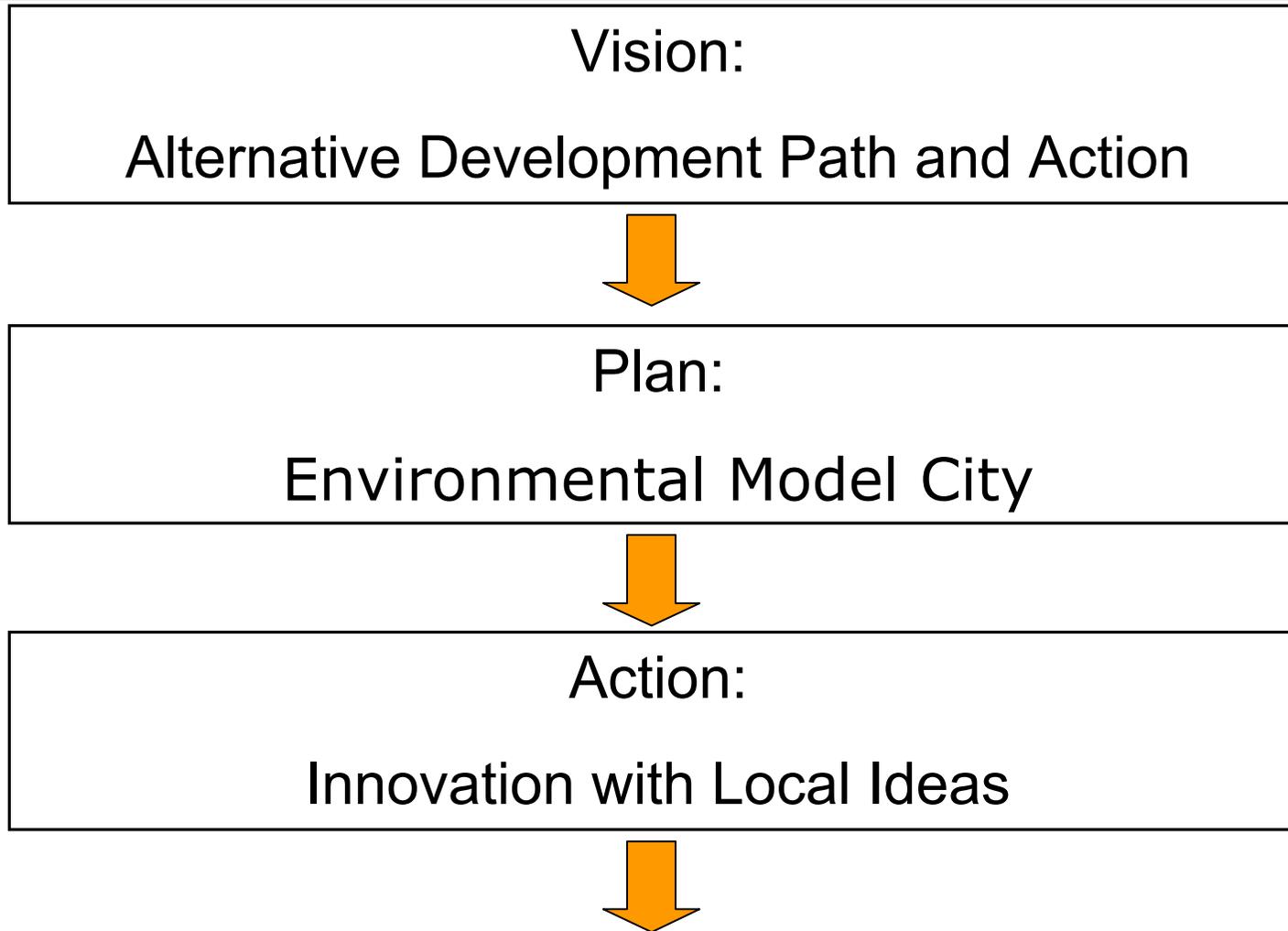
## Innovative rural community revitalization and empowerment tool: Neighborhood Study Method

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- Neighborhood Study Method (*JIMOTOGAKU*): effective tool to restore and empower rural communities in Minamata.
  - A tool to promote communication among local people by interaction with visitors.
    - Balance in three types of ECONOMY: self-consumption, community currency, national currency
    - Aware of local ENVIRONMENT and local CULTURE as wealth
    - GOVERNANCE: local action and empowerment
  - A community in Minamata with this method has received a award from the central government as one of the most viable communities in Japan.

## Minamata's path and goals

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Ultimate goals: SUSTAINABILITY, HAPPINESS, HOPE at the local level



# GNH and Minamata

## Endogenous Development Practice

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- Minamata has changed its priority among different development goals by placing less on monotonic economic gains and more on people's positive atmosphere (joy, happy, and hopeful)
- GNH's Four pillars are the keys of Minamata action
  - Three types of economy
  - Environment preservation
  - Transfer local cultural heritage from the elderly to the youth
  - Good leadership and local empowerment

## Concluding remarks

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- Minamata has given us:
  - lessons related to material prosperity and lopsided growth model;
  - Minamata is not someone else's problem for countries to strive for economic growth with technology – someone call GNP as gross national pollution.
  - a good practice to turn things around to people-led sustainable community development.
- It is hard to start an endogenous path in the middle of the pursuit of economic prosperity. However, as Minamata shows, visionary leader, people-initiated social design, participation through dialogue and communication could lead change in the direction.
- GNH's Four pillars are the keys of Minamata action
  - Three types of economy
  - Environment preservation
  - Transfer local cultural heritage from the elderly to the youth
  - Good leadership and local empowerment
- There must be many like Minamata and it is important to search for such good practice in line with sustainable well-being enhancement.

# On-going GNH-related activities in Japan (sustainability, happiness, hope)

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- In Japan, some unique initiatives are on-going:
  - Minamata's initiative (and other community based activities in Japan)
  - Arakawa-ward in Tokyo: Gross Arakawa Happiness
  - E's Japan and JFS (Japan for Sustainability): Ms. Edahiro and Mr. Oda
    - A lecture series on happiness and sustainability
  - GNH-institute and Japan-Bhutan Friendship Association: Mr. Hirayama and Mr. Yuge
  - Slow Life Movement and GNH



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Thank you  
Kadrinche

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