

Community Settlement of Migrant Entrepreneurs: Case Study of "Sakawa Invention Lab"

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Abstract

Migration within Japan is now a move to urban areas to seek economic affluence. It is becoming the behavior of independent business entrepreneurs and those seeking to fulfill their lifestyles. The migration of young people who aim to become migrant entrepreneurs and use the regional development cooperative program is particularly notable. This paper examines the "Sakawa Invention Lab" case in Sakawa Town, Kochi Prefecture, to see how their settlement in the region is occurring. From this study, it can be inferred that their settlement in the region is caused by their participation in educational initiatives with the local community.

Keywords: migration, entrepreneur, stranger, community settlement

1 Introduction

In addition to the 281 million international migrants worldwide, more than three times as many, 894 million people are migrating domestically [1]. On the other hand, in Japan, interest in regional migration is growing, with the number of consultations on migration increasing yearly. Among Tokyo residents in their 20s, 45% are interested in regional migration, which is greater than the average for all ages [2]. Previously, such migration was mainly driven by the desire to move for economic affluence. However, the recent increase in migration to realize one's lifestyle in Japan is changing the image of the traditional migrant. In particular, independent business owners become economically independent entities in their work and independent of the local community. On the other hand, they will depend on the local community as consumers, as they will be involved with the local community daily. The local community is also expected to face difficulties in dealing with migrants due to differences in lifestyle and other factors.

However, an increasing number of people are trying to emigrate or start their businesses through the "Local Vitalization Cooperator" program that began in 2009. In fact, as of 2022, there are 6,447 active corps members, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications has set a goal of increasing the number of corps members to 10,000 by 2026 to create a new flow of people to rural areas [3]. This will be a means for young people seeking their lifestyles, work, daily life, and the building of personal relationships. The author also believed that they have the potential to transform the production system and social structure of local industries as migrant entrepreneurs who build new relationships within and outside the region, unlike the traditional rural migrants employed by primary industries.

This study examines how these Local Vitalization Cooperators become established in their local communities. Specifically, we will conduct a narrative analysis based on the data of "narratives" to clarify how the local community establishment takes place based on their experiences and changes in the time and place where they lived.

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2 Previous Studies on the Settling of Strangers in the Community

2.1 Research on the Concept of Stranger

According to Miyamoto [4], in the Japanese folk society of the past, there were many "strangers" who were immigrants who settled in the community until around the beginning of the Meiji period (1868-1912). These were artisans who could not make a living without specific skills or knowledge, such as hunters who handled guns to exterminate birds and animals, blacksmiths who made machetes, hoes, plows, and other farming tools, navy blue dyers who dyed cotton yarn with indigo, and tub makers who made vessels out of wood [4]. Their lifestyle was that of migratory artisans, but if needed in a village, they were welcomed, settled in a particular town, and cherished. However, "strangers" who came to the village without permission lived on the city's outskirts. In this way, the farming community was formed as people with jobs other than farming and "strangers" who came independently and settled in a community of only farmers.

On the other hand, Akasaka [5] pointed out that the existence of "strangers" is not an entity concept but a relational concept. This relational concept can be the locus that emerges in a community. However, this relational concept still needs to be fixed. For example, Kito [6] pointed out that "locals" and "strangers" in a community are transformed in the relationship between each person and their role in the local environmental movement. Rather than considering this relationship in binary terms, he argues that the "stranger" is the one who introduces a new perspective to the common knowledge within the community. In other words, the establishment of the "stranger" in the community is also an assimilation of the "stranger" in the relationship between the "stranger" and the community. This transformation is a phenomenon that can happen to anyone.

This transformation can also be considered from the perspective of regional revitalization. Shikida et al. [7] focused on strangers' involvement in the internal regional system from the perspective of regional revitalization. They attempted to elucidate the transformation process by classifying it as the relationship between the ownership of local resources and the consumption and creation of services. They point out that "strangers" are not established through long-term stays, participation in local activities, and feelings for the region but are transformed and established in the area through the ownership of resources and the creation of services.

2.2 A Concept of Migrant Entrepreneur

This section focuses on the characteristics of strangers who migrate and entrepreneurs who set up businesses.

Tokuda [8] defines a stranger as "a person who possesses the characteristics of a 'migrant' cultivated outside the social group and those of a 'permanent resident' as a factor in the group's composition. In this respect, he agrees with Schutz, who says, "One who tries to be permanently accepted by, or at least tolerated by, the group with which one approaches" [9]. Simmel also describes the stranger's nature as a settler: "Only by continuing to play the role of a 'mover,' bringing products produced outside the sphere into the group when needed, can he become a permanent fixture" [10].

Following Simmel [10], strangers bring something from the outside as migrants and establish themselves as permanent residents of the land from which they obtain something from the outside. Moreover, Shikida argues that by bringing something from the outside, the stranger transfers skills and knowledge that do not exist in the region and encourages creativity [11].

As mentioned above, in Cantillon's words, an entrepreneur is "a person who starts and operates a new business or specializes in such a business" [12]. Thus, it is possible to consider strangers as agents who transfer technology and knowledge from the outside by acting as local entrepreneurs. This can be accomplished by realizing Schumpeter's five types of innovation [13]. It is also consistent with Drucker's idea of looking for change, adapting, and using change as an opportunity [14].

Simmel argued that even when strangers become established, they are "mobile" because of the nature of their occupation [10]. Although they belong to particular groups, they are not confined to or bound by them. As Simmel states, they are mobile beings sustained by their general relationships with the region. However, a solid attachment to or responsibility for the area does not necessarily establish this relationship. In other words, strangers may become rooted in a region through their attachment. Thus, it can be concluded that some strangers are intermediaries between the outside and the inside and that those who become entrepreneurs create new value.

Therefore, I propose the concept of a "migrant entrepreneur" as an agent that creates new value within a region by serving as a link between the inside and the outside, bringing skills and knowledge from the outside and becoming attached to the region to which they have migrated. This concept can fill a gap in the literature regarding entrepreneurs who start businesses as strangers (without fully conforming to either the idea of "entrepreneur" or "stranger"). Migrant entrepreneurs can be considered to have the following characteristics:

A) Making a difference in community relationships

Akasaka argued that "the stranger is not an entity concept but a relational concept" [5]. He states that the relational concept here does not refer to an individual human being as an entity but rather to a social existence that appears in the relationships among human beings. Kito points out that the roles of inside and outside in the environmental movement within a community may change. Eventually, strangers may assimilate through their relationships with the locals [6]. In other words, the arrival of migrant entrepreneurs in a region can change the status quo, allowing them to establish themselves in the area further.

Within Isahaya Bay in the Ariake Sea, Kito pointed out that natural science researchers who migrated and settled in the area were "strangers" [6]. These migrant entrepreneurs/strangers analyzed and made sense of the local situation from a relatively objective point of view. They approached the local life and culture through empathy and understanding. In such situations, the migrant entrepreneur is an agent of change in local community relationships.

B) Developing a creative city

Migrants in Europe can be considered strangers. Regarding what immigrants mean to the communities they move to, Landry pointed out that their skills as workers lead to creative activities in the city and noted that "In Europe, the involvement of strangers and immigrants has historically contributed to the creative cities" [15]. On the other hand, Florida identified the creative class, stating that "belonging to this industry are science, technology, art, design, entertainment, media, law, finance, management, medicine, and education," and argued that the concentration of creative people is a factor in fostering creativity within cities [16].

It can be argued that by settling in an area, migrant entrepreneurs bring creativity to the region

and contribute significantly to city formation. The region also encourages inclusive social participation, including that of social minorities, through art and culture. In other words, accepting strangers as migrant entrepreneurs in an area can foster creativity.

C) Creating industries and employment in rural areas

Sasaki et al. proposed the concept of “creative rural villages” based on the idea of creative cities [17]. They referred to these villages as “attempts to open up a new society from the periphery rather than from the system’s core” [17]. In contemporary rural areas, migrant entrepreneurs may foster creativity in Japanese farming villages. They also suggested that local communities can be revitalized through art, food culture, and urban-rural exchanges through alternative tourism and that the independent actions of local communities can generate exchanges with migrant entrepreneurs and create new cultural values, industries, and employment in marginalized communities. The key to fostering such exchanges is creating a society that prioritizes the creativity of each human being, including migrant entrepreneurs. These exchanges are a product of the imagination and labor of human beings. By working creatively, migrant entrepreneurs contribute to forming local industries and employment.

D) Contributions to local branding

Shikida [18] referred to the changes that strangers foster vis-à-vis community development as the “stranger effect” and argues that we should seek to manifest these effects, including local rediscovery, pride cultivation, and knowledge transfer. Shikida et al. [19] posited that branding by the “intermediate system,” a mediator within the region, determines the success or failure of towns’ tourism development. They argued that beyond inward-focused tourism, which has tended to be limited to facility development-type tourism, comprehensive management directed toward needs outside the region is required.

When aiming for image enhancement and economic revitalization through branding that takes advantage of the attractiveness of products and services, culture and climate, natural landscapes, and tourism resources in such regions, the activities of migrant entrepreneurs can make significant contributions to regional resources. The activities of migrant entrepreneurs in an area can help clarify their characteristics and establish their identities, thus making residents aware of the new values and fostering their pride in their home region.

E) Becoming a member of the community

Nakajima [20] pointed out that migrant entrepreneurs can be recognized as adding value to the local community. The bearers of the region’s industries are those born and raised in the region and those who have migrated from other areas—thus being strangers. Although they may see themselves as strangers when they first move to a location, this conception may change as they become involved in revitalizing depopulated areas. Subsequently, they become insiders as they establish themselves in the community and continue their business. They may then grow to see themselves as residents who play a role in the community and become attached to it.

Migrant entrepreneurs have the characteristics mentioned above. In that case, the community will see them as a “stranger” as an egg (apprentice) for a newcomer, a migrant entrepreneur. This is expected to be especially true in rural areas. In this section, we review previous studies on the regional settlement of strangers regarding the regional development cooperation corps as an apprenticeship for migrant entrepreneurs, which is almost synonymous with the regional settlement of strangers.

3 Method

3.1 Overview of the Survey Area

Sakawa Town [21] is located in the midwestern part of Kochi Prefecture, 27 km west of Kochi City. The topography is basin-shaped, and the town is famous for tea, strawberries, Niitaka pears, Buntan pomelos, and other fruits. The locally brewed sake "Tukasabotan" is one of Kochi Prefecture's most famous sake. Sakawa Town is also known as a town of culture and education. Many literary and educational figures were born in the city, such as Mitsuaki Tanaka, who played an active role in the Meiji Restoration, and Tomitaro Makino, a botanist who left his mark on the culture and thought of Japan. The three most famous sightseeing spots in Tosa are Seigenji Temple, Nyoridaiji Temple, Chikurinji Temple, and Makino Park, selected as one of Japan's 100 best cherry blossom viewing spots.

The population of Sakawa Town [22] was 11,856 (as of October 1, 2023), peaking at 18,785 in 1955. The population began to decline during the high economic growth period due to the outflow of population to urban areas, and although the decline stopped in 1980-85, it began to decline again in 1990; the number of residents reached 13,947 in 2010. By age group, the number of children aged 0-14 and the working-age population aged 15-64 declined, while the number of the elderly population aged 65 and over exceeded the number of children. In addition, the population of the 20-24 age group, which is in the period of higher education and employment, is declining significantly, which is unique to rural municipalities. As of October 1, 2023, the city still had 1,192 young people, 5,606 working-age residents, and 5,028 elderly residents, showing a marked trend toward fewer children and an aging population[23].

As a countermeasure, Sakawa town is actively utilizing the "Local Vitalization Cooperator" system, which began in 2009, to recruit members to specific areas for one to three years. The "Local Vitalization Cooperator" members are hired as fiscal year employees of the local government and work to solve local problems. The local community expects them to remain in the area after their term of service ends. However, whether they continue to live there at the end of their term of office depends on their own will. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC), the national average rate of settlement is 65.3% for those who have completed their term of service by the end of March 2021 and continue to live there afterward is 77%, much higher than the rate in Sagawa Town[24].

Against this backdrop, Sakawa Town opened the "Sakawa Invention Lab" in 2016 at the initiative of then-mayor Kazumichi Horimi, staffed exclusively by members of the Local Vitalization Cooperator. The "Sakawa Invention Lab" was modeled after the so-called "Fab Lab." It aimed to increase the value of the local cypress wood and the workers' income. Before the "Sakawa Invention Lab," Sakawa Town recruited local development cooperatives in 2014 to train forestry workers to become leaders in the self-supporting forestry industry. According to Horimi, "Sakawa Town is a town where 73% of the area is mountains, 70% of which are planted forests, half of the town's location is planted forests, and 80% are cypress trees, which are usable mountains.

By the way, the "Sakawa Invention Lab," which has been set up with conventional FabLab equipment to allow Sakawa children to experience and show adults how to make new products using digital machine tools such as laser cutters and 3D printers, was started with three objectives in mind. (1) To provide an educational opportunity that leads to school education. (2) To develop products and create new channels for small businesses and industries. (3) To become a place where people gather as a community. Seven members (members in FY2022) of the Regional

Development Cooperation Corps are working as staff to achieve these goals. Three of them are young people in their 20s working to establish their businesses after their term of office ends.

3.2 Survey Methodology

The author considered the regional development cooperatives of the "Sakawa Invention Lab" to be like the eggs (apprentices) of migrant entrepreneurs. Also, believing that the qualitative data from their lives may contain essential findings, the author will use direct interviews with survey targets. However, since the total number of survey targets is small, quantitative and statistical analysis is not suitable, and the author decided that it would be adequate to closely observe the actual conditions of each of them in their daily lab activities and then interview them directly. The research method used was semi-structured open-ended interviews, and the data from each "narrative" was analyzed to elucidate the subjects' local settlement. From this, we hoped to clarify the effects of the Local Vitalization Cooperator" system, which began in 2009, to recruit members to specific areas for one to three years. The "Local Vitalization Cooperato, the eggs of immigrant entrepreneurs, on local communities. We hope this will lead to greater acceptance in the local community and generate a synergistic effect on the local community and the immigrant side. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show a summary of the interviews.

Table 1: Summary of Interview Survey

Survey Title	Survey of "Sakawa Invention Lab" staff in Sagawa Town
Purpose of the Survey	The purpose of this study was to clarify the social, economic, and cultural significance and value to the migrants and to the community of continuing their activities by focusing on the trend of those who migrate from outside and settle down to start their businesses in Sagawa.
method of investigation	A survey using life story interviews with semi-structured open-ended questions
date of survey (e.g., of a survey)	August 4, 2022
the subject of an investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff in their 20s working at the Sakawa Invention Lab were selected as interviewees. ● We selected three individuals who intend to move to Sagawa Town, Kochi Prefecture, between 2020 and 2021 and start a business in the field of manufacturing while employed as a Regional Development Cooperation Volunteer and as a staff member of the "Saawa Invention Lab." ● The three subjects with these attributes in this area were all, and although the actual number was small, the survey covered the entire population.

The four main themes of the interviews are as follows: Table 2.

Table 2: Themes of Hearings

item number	Hearing Topics	summary
1	Why did you move here?	How he immigrated, started his own business, and his life so far.
2	Current Job	Daily livelihoods and the products they produce.
3	Living and interacting in the community	We are living and interacting with the surrounding residents and engaging with the local community.
4	Future Prospects	What are you aiming for in the future? Or what you would like to work on after starting your own business.

Table 3 summarizes the interviews with the three survey respondents. The names of the survey subjects were anonymized.

Table 3: Summary of Survey Subjects

Investigators	Activities	Date and time of interview
A	Planning and operation of children's craft classes	2022/08/04 10:15-10:45
B	Public relations and operation of children's craft classes	2022/08/04 11:51-11:35
C	Development of craft products	2022/08/04 16:48-17:30

3.3 Survey Results

The following summarizes the narrative data obtained from the survey targets by theme. Matters and events involving personal information are described in a manner that does not interfere with the activities of the survey targets.

I. Why I moved here

Upon graduating from university, A moved to Sakawa Town for a place to use his product design studies. B fell in love with the nature of Sakawa Town, especially the scenery of the Niyodo River, when she traveled alone as a student and moved to the area upon graduating from a clothing college. C consulted a friend about her original independent spirit and was introduced to the Community Development Cooperation Corps program. Through an Internet search, he found an opening in Sagawa and applied.

All three individuals decided to move to an unfamiliar place quickly. They had been students before moving to Sagawa, A, and B. A and B, students before moving to Sagawa,

felt that finding a job in the city was incompatible with their lifestyle and way of thinking during the time they spent job hunting. On the other hand, C had been working for a company before moving to Sakawa Town and was looking for a new environment and a place to work.

II. Current Work

A oversees the after-school invention club at the Sakawa Invention Lab. He devises programs for children to make things and play with them. In addition, she is involved in making signboards and leaflets at the request of the town office, as well as planning workshops at the local support center. B is also in charge of public relations and the after-school invention club. He has been conducting workshops on sound and body play as part of his project. C practiced analog craftsmanship at her workplace before coming to Sagawa. Still, after coming to the Sagawa Invention Lab, she learned how to use PCs and digital tools from a senior cooperative member. C knew how to use PCs and digital tools from a senior cooperative member. After about two years, he learned how to use the tools and became able to use a laser cutter to create digital data. He is also considering possibly using the tools for his leather crafting business and holding a laser crafting class for residents.

A, B, and C are each planning original initiatives. A targets children and local people, B targets children, and C targets local people, each trying to communicate their creativity to the local community.

III. Life and Interaction in the Community

He lives in a house that looks like an old house near his workplace, which the town owns. In the city of Sagawa, there are many vacant houses whose owners or managers still need to be discovered. He says that he has no trouble living only by bicycle because Sakawa Invention Lab is in the center of the town and has a town hall, a supermarket, and a home improvement center. B lives in the area. He said he moved to the area because of the fear of tsunamis. The relationship with the neighbors is simple. There is no sense of "What are my neighbors doing? Each person lives independently and does not have an image of the countryside. Should you need a large general hospital, a dermatologist and an otolaryngologist are nearby. C lives in an environment with a caring older man. He rings the doorbell when there is a cleaning of the community association and says, "Now. Is there any time after this? He is always asking, "Do you have time after this? However, because of his proximity to his neighbors, he quickly introduces people and procures necessary items. They have tools, a warehouse, a light truck, and almost everything they can get, and they plan to get a house soon.

IV. Future Prospects

A says that as a designer, it is essential to have some problems to solve and that whatever he does, he needs to listen to the city's people. He also wants to work on products in collaboration with local companies. In doing so, he hopes to make customers happy. B would like to become a certified nursery teacher. They also want to set up a café and consultation room in the forest. Above all, he does not want to be tied down by money or time. From his experience, they are also concerned about children's tendency to get caught up in their smartphones and feel stressed. C.'s activities include working with people outside the company as much as possible and taking orders for work. He also wants to utilize the laser ¥ wonders if he can provide other artisans with data for storing patterns. There is also communication with leather artisans outside the area. He would like to open a leather craft

class for the community on a membership basis, with a curriculum that can be completed in about a month.

4 Discussion

The survey results in the previous section will be analyzed in relation to the characteristics of migrant entrepreneurs.

First, let us look at the origins of the Sakawa Invention Lab. Opened in 2016, Sakawa Invention Lab is located in an agricultural and mountainous village area in Kochi Prefecture, a typical area with a declining birthrate and aging population, so to speak, with a significant decrease in the younger population. However, the area is rich in timber (especially Japanese cypress), a forest resource. It has the function of a fab lab, which is rare to introduce in the so-called countryside, and it has the objectives of education, new product creation, and a place for people to gather. The project is expected to synergize with the prior work of self-supporting forestry. It will take time for these activities to be recognized as a tangible result of the region's attractiveness. Still, the fact that they were repeatedly covered by the Internet media, including Japan Job Hyakka, and the publication of the experiences of young people who had moved to the area may have contributed to the project's success. A, B, and C, who were interviewed this time, searched the Internet media to find out about the Local Vitalization Cooperator or the Sakawa Invention Lab and their reasons for emigrating. This suggests that the Sakawa Invention Lab is attractive to them and contributes to the region's branding.

"Sakawa Invention Lab" was established to revitalize the local community and encourage immigrants to settle there. This means that they have become strong supporters of the local community. Their presence in the town will facilitate the creation of a community with other immigrant entrepreneurs who have already developed their skills and will help the town transform into a creative city.

Next, I would like to consider how the work of the staff of the Sakawa Invention Lab, a Local Vitalization Cooperator, can become a livelihood and generate employment as an industry after their term of office ends. They are trying to share their creativity with local people in their work. This is not just business but a way of working to make a difference in the relationships in the community. It is an image of the community and themselves becoming one. We hope to see the creation of a new industry with an aspect of education, which is one of the objectives of the Sakawa Invention Lab.

5 Conclusion

From the discussion so far, we can say that the case of the "Sagawa Invention Lab" is consistent with the concept of migrant entrepreneurs. Their taking root in the community is also nothing short of a transformation. However, this report is limited to three interviewees and is based on something other than such data. Therefore, increasing the number of interviewees and verifying the results in the future will be necessary. In addition, the quality of the immigrant entrepreneur concept could be further enhanced by adding analytical methods such as questionnaires to the "narrative" data obtained from the interviews. Further research is needed to develop the theoretical aspects of this study further.

In this paper, through the case of the Sakawa Invention Lab, we interviewed local development cooperation corps members in their 20s, who can be regarded as the eggs (apprentices) of migrant

entrepreneurs, and examined how they become established in their local communities. As a result, we verified that the characteristics of the regional development cooperative members of the "Sakawa Invention Lab" in Sakawa Town, Kochi Prefecture, have particular relevance to the characteristics of migrant entrepreneurs. We also clarified their migration motivations, daily thoughts, and prospects. From this, it can be inferred that their settling down in the region is based on their relationship with the area and that their livelihood is based on the image of an educational livelihood that is integrated with the region. C retired from the Sagawa Institute of Invention and Innovation in March 2023, B in February 2024, and A in March 2024. As of April 20, 2024, these three are living in Sakawa Town, searching for their way of life.

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