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Research in Japan #1

satoyama – scenario building for future development

1. Uncertainties and scenario building

As a starting point for developing the scenarios I have chosen two uncertainties, which are in my opinion of high relevance for the future development of *satoyama* landscapes:

(1) Financial viability of *satoyama* landscape related businesses and households and

(2) People's interest and involvement in preserving *satoyama* landscapes.

These two uncertainties form two axes, each is separated into the two opposing and mutually exclusive ends called 'High' and 'Low'. Thus the field for scenario building is split into four areas or four scenarios. After identifying each scenario's driving force a descriptive title was assigned.

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following the lecture

Satoyama, the traditional rural landscape of Japan

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Peoples's interest and involvement in preserving <i>satoyama</i> landscapes	Low	<p>Technologically transformed</p> <p>HIGH financial viability of <i>satoyama</i> landscape related businesses and households but LOW (people's) interest and involvement in preserving <i>satoyama</i> landscapes.</p> <p>Driving force: technological innovation</p>	<p>Abandoned but newly used</p> <p>LOW financial viability of <i>satoyama</i> landscape related businesses and households and LOW (people's) interest and involvement in preserving <i>satoyama</i> landscapes.</p> <p>Driving force: population change</p>
	High	<p>Vibrant and evolving</p> <p>HIGH financial viability of <i>satoyama</i> landscape related businesses and households and HIGH (people's) interest and involvement in preserving <i>satoyama</i> landscapes.</p> <p>Driving force: linkage of urban and rural life and economy</p>	<p>Protected Areas</p> <p>LOW financial viability of <i>satoyama</i> landscape related businesses and households but HIGH (people's) interest and involvement in preserving <i>satoyama</i> landscapes.</p> <p>Driving force: political will for protection</p>
		High	Low
Financial viability of <i>satoyama</i> landscape related businesses and households			

Table 1

2. Four scenarios

As a next step, keywords were used to describe each scenario and to get a better understanding of the speciality of each in contrast to the other scenarios.

3. Storyline of scenario “Vibrant and evolving“

In this scenario the two uncertainties were both assigned a very high certainty.

Peoples's interest and involvement in preserving <i>satoyama</i> landscapes	Low	<p>Technologically transformed</p> <p>Technology driven innovation to develop competitive products that utilise resources that are abundant in <i>satoyama</i> landscapes and that requires only little human intervention. Automatised management, required additional energy provided with renewable energy by highly efficient biomass plants and solar energy. Assumed decreasing biodiversity due to mainly economically oriented utilization of farmland and woodland.</p> <p>Driving force: technological innovation</p>	<p>Abandoned but newly used</p> <p>Left on its own, fuelled by further decrease of rural population due to continuous migration into cities and population decrease; mainly young people migrate away. Further conversion of agriculturally valuable land into suburban areas or woodland, decreasing biodiversity. Abandoned areas and farmhouses become available for new forms of public or individual involvement and benefits. Examples of successful usages in underpopulated areas include the Finnish private weekend or summerhouses in the countryside called <i>Mökki</i> or self catering holiday cottages in Scotland.</p> <p>Driving force: population change</p>
	High	<p>Vibrant and evolving</p> <p>Village life as a viable alternative to urban life. Supposedly viable in areas where <i>satoyama</i> landscape is in close proximity to urban areas or suburbs. Modern transformation of the traditional, purely internal <i>satoyama</i> landscape goods and services flow into an interchanged flow of goods and services between <i>satoyama</i> landscape and adjacent urbanised area. <i>Satoyama</i> landscape as the necessary hinterland for sustainable urban life. Regionally oriented businesses lead the development. <i>Satoyama</i> landscapes are continuously evolving and with it our understanding of what <i>satoyama</i> landscapes are actually about.</p> <p>Driving force: linkage of urban and rural life and economy</p>	<p>Protected Areas</p> <p>Relying on volunteer activities or managed by the government, financed with subsidies, incentives and tax exemptions. Keeping alive a traditional image of <i>satoyama</i> landscapes, protected by laws similar to national parks. Viable for very distinct areas, a small percentage only. Interest in nature preservation increases but involvement may stay low. Possibility of fund raising or enabling, entry to public green via money charge or by volunteering and gaining points.</p> <p>Driving force: political will for protection</p>
		High	Low
		Financial viability of <i>satoyama</i> landscape related businesses and households	

Table 2

A high value of 'financial viability of *satoyama* landscape related businesses and households' means

that it is highly certain for businesses to achieve returns above cost of production and for households to have a decent income to support a normal way of life. A high value of 'interest and involvement in preserving *satoyama* landscapes' means that the ecosystem services for human well-being provided by *satoyama* landscapes are generally understood, accepted and required. People and businesses are generally proactive in opting for a pro-environmental behaviour and a regional quality-oriented consumption pattern.

In our modern world, a strong focus on market economy and globalisation has very often increased the benefit of cities but at the expense of the regional countryside and as part of it the *satoyama* landscapes. The globalised market has dramatically increased the dimension of each city's hinterland rendering the regional countryside very often less competitive and unattractive. In addition the environmental burden or ecological footprint of each city has increased many times over. To shift this development into a more sustainable direction for the benefit of both, city and countryside, this scenario suggests stronger regional interlinkage. The driving forces in this scenario are strong regional economies and markets, that surpass the modern image of city versus countryside. The functioning of cities and hinterland are generally intertwined. This view is derived from the fact that cities have and will continue to have their resource base outside their boundaries. It underlines the axiom, that without this base, there can be no city and that a city cannot sustain by itself.¹

The supposedly oldest record that advocates the preference for a well-functioning regional economy can be found in Book 1 of Aristotele's *Politics*: even when complete self-sufficiency was not possible, the local community should not waver from the principle of self-sufficiency, but should carry out trade only to the extent of supplementing self-sufficiency and should not bring commercial activity into the local community in a disorderly manner.²

In contrast to the dominance of the economically connected global market here the focus is on a well functioning local or regional market, where products and services that can be produced, offered and consumed locally are produced, offered and consumed locally in the first place. This could be described as an approach to increase the regional self-sufficiency rate and to produce regional wealth from regional resources. *Satoyama* landscapes are then appreciated as valuable hinterland for a sustainable urban life. A very important and political leverage to promote this issue is the carbon tax on transport, which makes local products more competitive. This can help in raising awareness of the relation between place of production and carbon emissions during transportation to the place of consumption. It has to be noted that in the future, when the energy for transportation may solely come from renewable and carbon free sources this leverage will lose its power.

Furthermore the social value of this approach lies in the simple truth that regional wealth consists of more than properties and stocks but also includes social capital and the freedom to pursue a congenial life-style in a regional society.

1
Kano, Katsuhiko (2000).
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Proceedings of the
International
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Sustainability of
Cities, UNU/IAS &
IICRC, Kanazawa,
Japan.

2
Maruyama, Makoto
(2006).
“Sustainable
economics and
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Tamagawa,
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Sustainable Cities:
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Perspectives on
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Press, Tokyo, pp.
70-95.

In this scenario, to live in a rural or rather nature rich environment is seen as a viable alternative to a purely urban life. Main stakeholders include regional businesses, households, administrations and organisations which lead the development. A regional labeling system similar to global bio- and eco-labels could further promote regional products and services to make them distinct from national and global brands and advertise regional qualities like home-made, environmentally friendly, carbon neutral etc. A successful *satoyama* landscape can be easily imagined in close proximity to urbanised areas or suburbs, where living close to nature doesn't mean to forgo urban amenities.

In other words the traditional, purely internal provision and usage of *satoyama* landscape goods and services would be transformed into an interchanged flow of goods and services between *satoyama* landscape and adjacent urbanised area to the benefit of both. A city as understood in this context is not anymore a place of consumption of products produced somewhere else but rather a place to promote and make maximal use of abundant regional resources. An imperative is to prevent over-exploitation and to avoid under-exploitation which automatically shifts the focus of all enterprise, regardless of private or public, into a sustainably oriented.

As the meaning of the word *satoyama* is derived from coppice woodlands, the utilisation of wood provides an easy example to illustrate the interlinkage between city and hinterland. Regional forest industry manages the forest stock. Trees are processed into wood and

timber for the regional building industry, wood pellets as energy source for houses and biomass for energy production. Urban dwellers can enjoy the amenities of walking in nearby forests that have marked walking routes and sights and dine and sleep in nearby restaurants and accommodations.

Regional festivals help in fostering the mutually beneficial relationship. Traditionally rural culture thus will migrate into urban areas and vice versa. A successful example for the latter is the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial in Niigata prefecture that has been held in 2009 for the fourth time already since its start in 2000. It not only involves local people but attracts and draws a national if not global audience into the area. Especially art and art related festivals can function as a medium to raise awareness and both are capable of moving people and connecting people through culture with nature.

The continuous exploration of regional wealth and resources for the communal benefit in an interlinked environment, city and hinterland, humankind and nature will foster innovation and sustainability not as a concept but as a lived activity. In such a situation the *satoyama* landscape will continue to evolve and develop and with it our understanding of what *satoyama* landscapes are actually about. Rather than merely historically developed agricultural places they are culturally transformed areas rich in nature and bio-diversity that provide a broad-range of ecosystem services for human well-being in a sustainable manner.