Networking, Knowledge and Community Capacity Development[1]

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Abstract

The introduction of strategies to build bridging and bonding social capital stimulate community capacity development and knowledge creation and sharing and contribute to the increased ability of communities to successfully introduce higher value-added community policy structures. This paper explores these processes by looking at the development experience of Oyama-machi, an inspirational archetype of the One Village, One Product (OVOP) movement of Oita Prefecture, Japan. The paper examines three social capital building (networking) strategies introduced to Oyama-machi prior to the introduction of the OVOP movement in Oita: *Oyama Yuusen Housou*; the *Ohayou* softball tournament; and an overseas sister city relationship. These strategies built bonding and/or bridging social capital, impacting upon community capacity development and knowledge creation and sharing and the subsequent introduction of higher value-added community policy structures such as new produce, agricultural processing techniques, and ways of conceptualizing community.

Keywords

Social capital; networking; knowledge sharing; knowledge creation; community capacity development; community policy structure; Oyama-machi; One Village, One Product (OVOP); rural development.

Introduction

In recent years, it has become increasingly apparent that an alternative approach to development, one that benefits the rural poor, is called for. Given the vast discrepancies in accumulated capital and access to markets, with a 'level playing field' urban areas will perform over and above rural regions. Rural communities need to recognize and employ alternative methods and resources to be able to compete and achieve real improvements in residents' quality of life.

This paper outlines the successful development experience of one rural community in Oita Prefecture, Japan. Oyama-machi was one of the archetypes of the acclaimed One Village, One Product (OVOP) movement which was introduced into Oita Prefecture in the late 1970s.

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By examining Oyama-machi's experience from the perspective of community capacity and community policy structure it is possible to identify strategies that stimulated endogenous community capacity development and subsequent introductions of improved policy structures. Strategies to build social capital and encourage knowledge creation and sharing were especially important in this process and are focused upon in this paper.

Community capacity development and policy structure model

The model illustrated in Figure 1 illustrates community capacity development and community policy structure. The model may be used to conceptualize development, describe and evaluate community capacity and community activities as well as community development planning (Miyoshi and Stenning 2008). Community capacity is invested in the elements of the community (individuals, leaders, organizations, and networks) and is characterized by a sense of community and levels of commitment as well as the community's collective ability to set and achieve objectives and recognize and access resources for productive use.

Figure 1 Community Capacity Development and Policy Structure Model
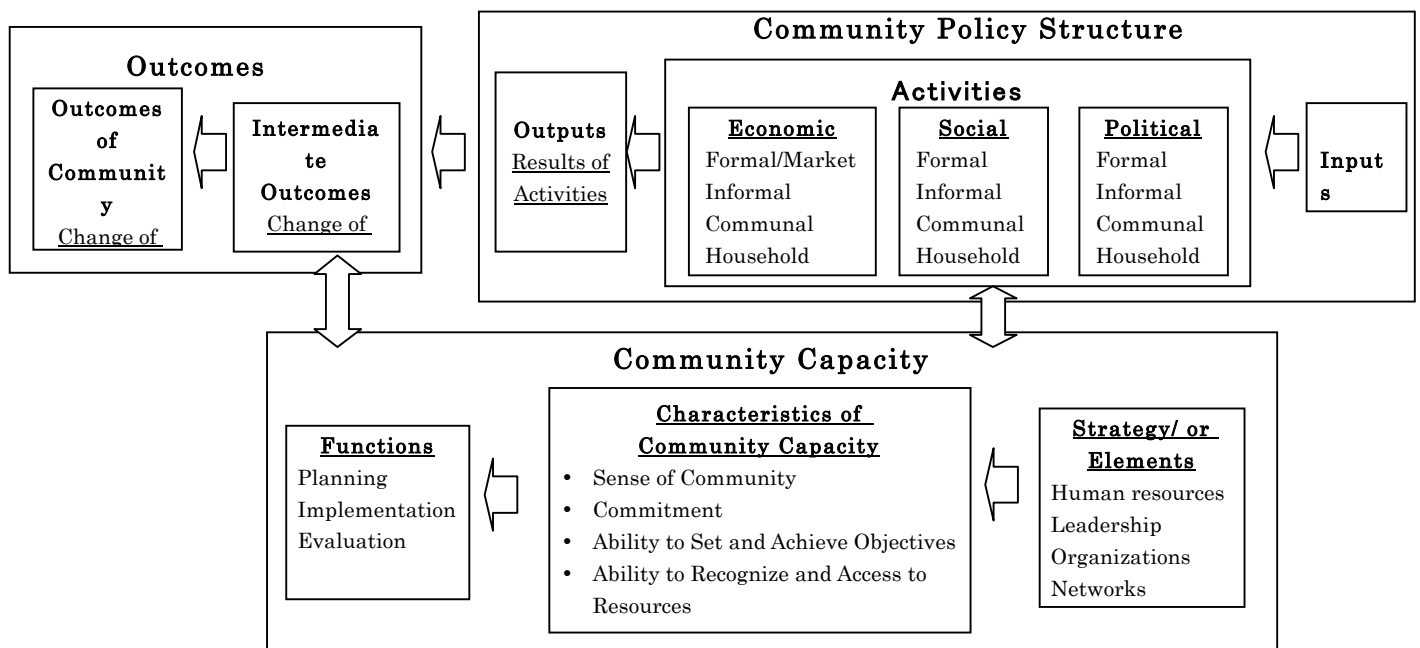
Source: Miyoshi & Stenning 2008

Community policy structure conceptualizes the economic, social and political aspects of life within the community. The model acknowledges non-economic aspects by incorporating social and political activities and allowing for the incorporation of informal (as well as formal) activities (activities might be agricultural production activities, community sports or specific

development initiatives, for example). The policy structure part of the diagram illustrates the process of community activities through a logical framework approach. These activities are conceptualized as processes that consist of inputs (human resources, funding, time), activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes (changes in target group/s), and end outcomes (changes in society).

The relationship between community capacity development and policy structure is interactive and continuous. Community capacity is a requisite for the successful planning, implementation and evaluation of community policy structures. Community capacity development is also often an outcome of community policy structure processes as they often result in changes in specific target groups and society in general. Likewise, the development of community capacity also leads to augmentation or changes in community policy structure as a community with a higher level of capacity will naturally pursue more value-added and sophisticated policy structures.

Networking, knowledge and community capacity development

This article discusses two knowledge processes that are highly related to, and may be promoted through, networking/social capital building strategies: knowledge creation and knowledge sharing. Knowledge creation involves the introduction or formulation of new ideas, information, technology, values/norms/beliefs, or processes in the community. This new knowledge may be created within the community through synergetic interactions between community members or through formal or informal contact between community members (individuals, leaders, organizations) with people, organizations, processes, information or technology beyond the borders of the community. Thus knowledge creation might be stimulated through employing both bridging and bonding social capital building strategies.

Knowledge sharing refers to the process of diffusion of knowledge created from the knowledge creators to the wider community of knowledge users and vice versa. The term implies a continuous dialogue or two-way process rather a one-way passing on or dissemination of information. It also implies recognition that all members are able to learn and likewise have something to offer in terms of knowledge, therefore, active participation is particularly emphasized (St. Croix 2001). Due to this and its fundamental basis of values and beliefs, it is inherently difficult to effectively share knowledge solely through text, documents or communication technologies and, although formal knowledge management also often involves strategies for storing and disseminating information and data, effective knowledge sharing is achieved best through informal, spontaneous person-to-person interactions (Davenport & Prusak 1998, p.89). Thus an important task for knowledge sharing is devising strategies to encourage better quality and increased quantities of these kinds of interactions, such as

community networking strategies focused on developing closer relationships (bonding social capital) within the community.

Figure 2 Networking, Knowledge and OV+OP
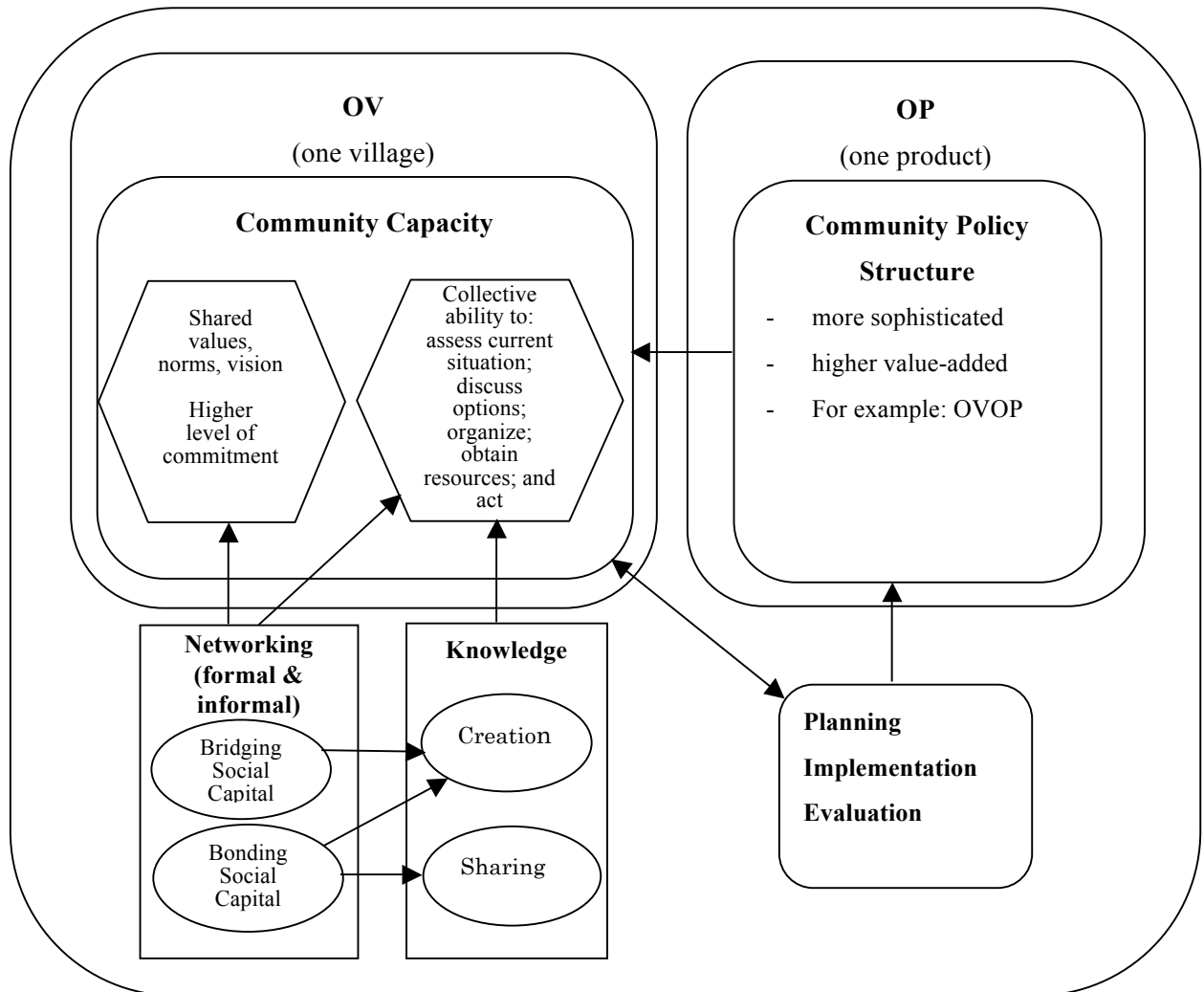
Source: created by authors based on Miyoshi & Stenning 2008

The relationships between social capital building strategies, community capacity development, knowledge creation and sharing, and implementing higher value-added community policy structures are summarized in Figure 2. The diagram also shows how OVOP can be conceptualized as the "one village" part of the equation referring to community capacity and the "one product" part to a community policy structure. Both are equally important, however, in order to successfully implement a more sophisticated community policy structure a certain level of community capacity is required. Community capacity development can be stimulated initially through networking (social capital building) strategies.

The introduction of strategies to build bridging and bonding social capital stimulate both community capacity development and knowledge creation and sharing. Networking that builds bonding social capital promotes knowledge sharing through increased face-to-face interactions and communication between community members as well as knowledge creation arising from the creative synergies of such interactions. Bonding social capital also directly impacts upon community capacity, particularly in terms of the creation of a shared vision, values, and norms and increased levels of commitment to the community. Building bridging social capital on the other hand is most likely to promote knowledge creation through the introduction of new ideas, values, products or processes into the community through outside contact. This kind of social capital also directly affects community capacity particularly in terms of access to external resources.

Improved knowledge creation and sharing resulting from networking contribute to community capacity development and therefore an increased ability to plan, implement and evaluate community policy structures thereby leading to the introduction of higher value-added community policy structures. Furthermore, conducting planning, implementation and evaluation activities contribute to further capacity development as may the outcomes of any new, higher value-added community policy structures introduced.

Observations in Oyama-machi

A summary of the networking strategies found in Oyama-machi and their subsequent outcomes in terms of social capital, knowledge and community capacity and community policy structure is provided in Table 1. The introduction of *Oyama Yuusen Housou* (OYHK - cable radio) into every household in Oyama constituted a bonding social capital building tool that brought the community leaders (Mr. Yahata, the Agricultural Cooperative, and the Town Administration) closer to the rest of the community. OYHK enabled community leaders to share their knowledge with every household in the community particularly in terms of values and vision, but also information. This resulted in common values and a shared vision and laid the foundation capacity for future community policy structures including the NPC movements. The radio also served as a tool for social capital building and knowledge sharing by encouraging participation in community activities and events, resulting in increased interactions between community members.

Ohayou (Good morning) Softball tournaments began as a bridging and later became a bonding social capital building mechanism resulting in both knowledge sharing and creation. The activity contributed to a stronger sense of community, levels of trust, and higher commitment levels in terms of community capacity. The increased interaction among community members spawned a number of endogenously formed community groups and

activities.

Establishing a formal sister city relationship with Megiddo region in Israel constituted a significant development of bridging social capital and through the yearly training sessions in kibbutzim resulted in both knowledge creation and sharing outcomes. The overseas training also built valuable bonding social capital by strengthening relationships between the trainees, many of whom would become future community leaders. Community capacity developed particularly in terms of able to critically assess the community's reality, organize, access resources, and act. Young Oyama farmers' kibbutz experiences resulted in the introduction of a number of important new community policy structures.

Table 1 Summary of Networking Strategies in Oyama-machi

Networking Strategy	Type of Social Capital Built	Knowledge Outcome	Community Capacity Development (CCD)/Policy Structure (PS) Outcomes
OYHK	<u>Bonding</u>: by informing residents of and encouraging participation in community events	<u>Sharing</u>: through increased person to person interaction; through leaders being able to diffuse their own values and visions for the community	<u>CCD</u>: creation of shared values & vision; increased sense of community and commitment <u>PS</u>: various successive policy structures including the NPC movements
Ohayou **Softball**	<u>Bridging</u>: opportunity for people from different neighborhoods to interact <u>Bonding</u>: increased quantity and quality of interactions between neighbors through being in a team of varying ages	<u>Sharing</u>: through increased person to person interaction and higher levels of trust <u>Creation</u>: through increased informal person to person interactions especially at the after game *Nomikai*	<u>CCD</u>: stronger sense of community; higher commitment <u>PS</u>: community groups; beer garden; cooperative insect spraying; buying a mountain etc
Sister city (and overseas study scholarships)	<u>Bridging</u>: by forming a relationship with a town and people in another country <u>Bonding</u>: through shared experience between small groups of trainees	<u>Creation</u>: by introducing new ideas into community from outside <u>Sharing</u>: by encouraging returned trainees to share their experiences and ideas with families and neighbors	<u>CCD</u>: ability to assess current situation; organize; obtain resources; act <u>PS</u>: new products (*enoki*); value-adding to produce; *Yattsu no Danchi* concept; community centers; *Seikatsu Gakkou*

Source: created by authors.

Conclusion

The introduction of strategies to build bridging and bonding social capital stimulate community capacity development and knowledge creation and sharing. Community capacity development involves an increased ability for knowledge creation and sharing and an improved capacity for successfully introducing and implementing higher value-added community policy structures. Likewise, increased knowledge creation and sharing contributes to both community capacity development and the introduction of higher value-added community policy structures. Furthermore, the introduction and successful implementation of higher value-added policy structures results in both capacity development and knowledge outcomes.

This paper explored these processes by looking at the development experience of Oyama-machi, an inspirational archetype of the One Village, One Product (OVOP) movement. The paper examined three social capital building (networking) strategies introduced to Oyama-machi prior to the introduction of the OVOP movement in Oita: *Oyama Yuusen Housou*; the *Ohayou* softball tournament; and an overseas sister city relationship including international community study scholarships. These strategies built bridging and/or bonding social capital, impacting upon community capacity development and knowledge creation and sharing and the subsequent successful introduction of higher value-added community policy structures such as new produce, agricultural processing, ways of conceptualizing community, new collective activities, as well as the OVOP movement later on. Encouraging the endogenous development of community capacity and increased knowledge sharing and creation through such social capital building strategies is highly recommended for communities wishing to introduce new higher value-added or sophisticated community policy structures such as the OVOP movement.

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