

Is There Any Hope for “Kamaishi”? :
The Regeneration of a Former Company Town

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the theme, method, and outline of a general regional research project (Hope Studies Kamaishi Research) on Kamaishi City conducted by the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo in 2006 and to present the results up to this point. Through this research, we would like to consider the theme of regional regeneration in an area with a declining industry, which has become a major issue in recent years in Japan.

What situation arises in an area where the local society has been built based on its relationship with a core company, when the core shrinks? What kind of social networks can be built without relying on the core company? These are important issues when considering the future of former company town communities or regions in post-industrialization.

In order to approach this practical issue, it is necessary to conduct research and studies that aim to uncover or raise issues, in addition to research to simply understand the present situation. For that purpose, we have focused on the “social phases of hope.” If we define “hope” as a concrete vision of the present or the future, then a consideration of the “social phases of hope” is directly related to a consideration of the meaning that people ascribe to their life, as well as a consideration of the direction of changes in society. We believe that this focus on “hope” has the potential to lead to the discovery of new possibilities in the region and thus can help to hypothetically describe a way toward regional regeneration.

In consideration of these issues, we chose Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture, which has been known as a “steel town” since the late 19th century, to be the actual region for research. In making this choice, we looked at the industry, history, and territory of the region. When examining the issue of what effect the change of the industrial structure and its accompanying change in the regional community have on the state of the hope of individuals, the existence of an industry that can function as a core is important. When considering “hope” as a continuous and long-term future vision, sometimes inherited from generation to generation, an industrial region with an old history is preferable to a newly industrialized region. Further, in view of the intent of the study to extract various hypotheses in order to make visible the seemingly fuzzy object of “hope,” it seems preferable to examine not a big city with a large population size and geographical extension but rather a small or

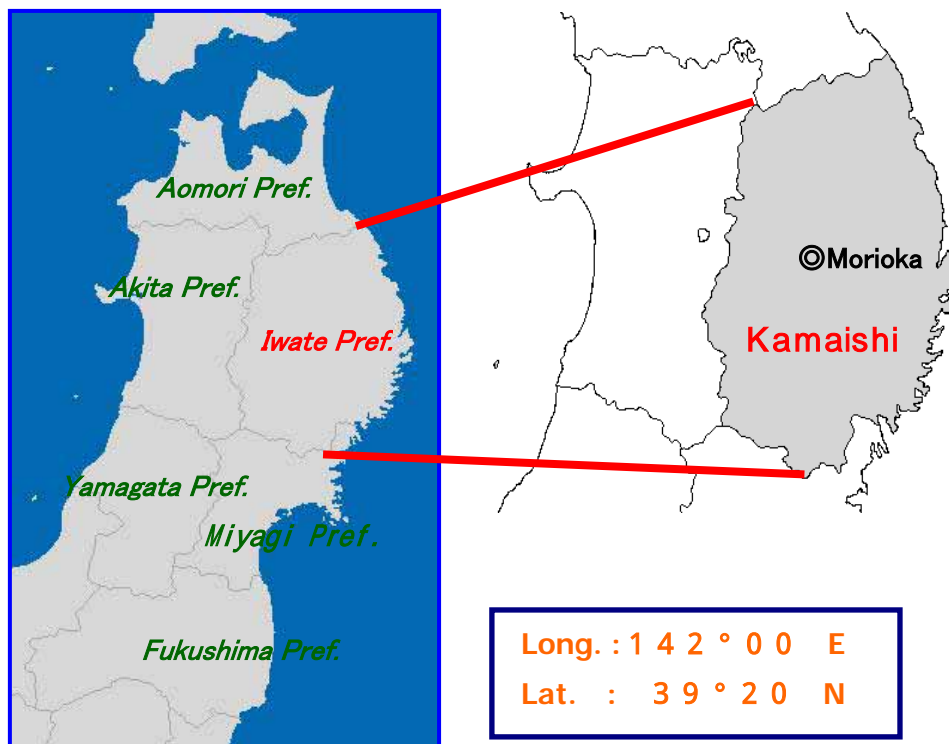
medium sized city, and to conduct a general regional study with a high intensity. The choice of such a region was also necessitated from the standpoint of the funds and human and material resources available to us. Considering the above conditions, we found Kamaishi City to be suitable as a study region.

2. Kamaishi Region

(1) Location and Geography

Kamaishi City is situated in the south-eastern section of Iwate Prefecture, at the center of the Sanriku Coastline (Figure 1). Taking advantage of the good natural harbors found along this ria coastline, the fishing industry has played a significant role in its development. Kamaishi City is also famous as the birthplace of Japan's modern steel industry, thanks to the magnetite mine in the Ohashi area. From the late 19th to mid 20th century, Kamaishi was one of the centers of heavy industry in Japan.

Figure 1



Mountainous terrain runs all the way to the coast, and there is relatively little flat land. The central portion of Kamaishi City is situated in the Unosumai

and Kasshi river basins and the nearby mouths of the two rivers. With an area of 441 square kilometers, Kamaishi City's population now numbers approximately 48,000. ¹

(2) History of Industries

(a) Development of the Iron and Steel Industry: From the Mid 19th Century to the 1950s

From the time of the construction of the first Western style blast furnace in 1857 by Oshima Takatou, a famous iron engineer in Tokugawa Japan, until the middle of the 20th century, the Kamaishi region was one of the leaders of the modern steel industry in Japan. In 1950, Kamaishi Steel Works merged with Fuji Steel Works, which had been established after the split of Nippon Steel, and supported Japan's postwar reconstruction. In 1960, during the golden age of Kamaishi Steel Works, it had over 12,400 workers and accounted for 36 percent of employment in Kamaishi City (see Table 1). Thanks to the prosperity of the steel works, the population of Kamaishi City rose rapidly, with the population exceeding 90,000 in the early 1960s.

Table 1 Population Trends and Number of Employees in Kamaishi; 1955–2005

Year	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Population of Kamaishi City											
Current population	81,006	87,511	82,104	72,923	68,981	65,250	60,005	52,484	49,447	46,521	42,987
Younger generation (under 13 years old)	30,812	30,514	25,102	18,868	16,751	14,797	12,290	9,085	7,298	6,111	5,229
Ratio of younger generation	38.0%	34.9%	30.6%	25.9%	24.3%	22.7%	20.5%	17.3%	14.8%	13.1%	12.2%
Elder generation (over 64 years old)	2,684	3,012	3,505	4,087	5,077	6,354	7,569	8,729	10,568	12,297	13,411
Ratio of elder generation	3.3%	3.4%	4.3%	5.6%	7.4%	9.7%	12.6%	16.6%	21.4%	26.4%	31.2%
Working population	30,251	34,546	32,920	32,394	30,621	29,354	26,690	23,850	23,605	21,422	18,954
Employees of manufacturing and mining	10,952	11,448	10,039	8,931	7,489	6,533	5,913	4,934	5,067	4,670	3,942
Number of employees in Kamaishi Steel Works	7,945	12,438	10,540	9,818	8,831	6,693	5,163	1,350	1,058	618	147
Direct employment	7,945	8,372	6,692	5,176	4,299	3,361	2,592	1,350	1,058	217	147
Indirect employment	—	4,066	3,848	4,642	4,532	3,332	2,571	—	—	—	—
Employees loaned to related businesses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	401	—

Source: Matsuishi 2003, Tanozaki 1985, Tokii 2007, Kamaishi City 2005, Kamaishi City 2007, Kamaishi Steel Works 1986, Nippon Steel 2005

(b) Decline of the Iron and Steel Industry

However, with the restructuring of the steel industry which began in the 1960s, the Kamaishi Steel Works began to be buffered by the waves of rationalization. Due to large scale reshuffles in 1963 and 1968, leading to the

¹ Source: Iwate City's website, <http://www.city.kamaishi.iwate.jp/english/overview.htm>

relocation of a total of 1,678 people from the Kamaishi Steel Works to Tokai Steel (Nagoya Steel Works), and the rationalization of large-scale production facilities beginning in 1978, the workforce of the Kamaishi Steel Works dropped rapidly (Kamaishi Steel Works 1986). The total number of workers, which had stood at over 12,400 in 1960, had fallen to about 3,300 by the time of the closure of the large-size section steel factory in 1980 (Table 1). When the last blast furnace was shut down in 1989, leaving behind the wire rolling mill alone, there were 1,350 workers, and this number fell further to only around 150 workers as of 2005. Consequently, the share of Kamaishi Steel Works in the total working population of Kamaishi City is only 0.8 percent. This is a completely different world from the golden age of Kamaishi Steel Works, when the share was 36 percent.

(c) Decline of the Fishing Industry

Fishing, which was another main industry of Kamaishi since the early modern period, also experienced the decline of the deep sea fishing and offshore fishing industries due to the oil shock and the establishment of the 200 nautical mile system beginning in the 1970s and the consolidation/reorganization into fish farming and coastal fisheries starting in the 1980s. The number of the workers in the fishing industry of Kamaishi City as of 2000 was 1,169, accounting for 5.5 percent of total employment and 29.7 percent of self-employment. Its ratio in the total number of workers is small but the fishing industry provides large employment opportunities among the self-employed (Kase 2007, p. 2).

(d) Depopulation

The actual resident population of Kamaishi City was over 90,000 in the beginning of 1960s, during the peak of operations at the Steel Works. During the contraction of the operations of the core enterprise that took place in the 1980s, however, the resident population of the city declined at a pace of more than 1,000 a year from 65,250 in 1980 to 54,339 in 1990, the year after the first blast furnace ceased operation, adding up to a decline of more than 10,000 in one decade (see Table 1). The population decrease continued subsequently, with the resident population standing at 42,987 in 2005. Further, the main reason for the population decline was a decrease among the young (14 years old or younger). This age group population fell from 12,390 in 1985 to 5,229 in 2005, meaning a fall of 57.5 percent in 20 years. On the other hand the ratio of the elderly, meaning those aged 65 years or older, has continued to rise, reaching 31.2 percent in 2005. Today, nearly one out

of three people in Kamaishi City belong to the aged.

(e) New Industrial Regeneration

In the meantime, the value of steel shipments, which at one time accounted for not less than 90 percent of the value of shipment of the manufacturing industry of Kamaishi City, lost its top position to the machinery industry in 2000 (see Table 2).

Table 2 Output of manufacturing industries in Kamaishi City; 1960–2005

Year	foods	iron & steel	metal goods	machineries	others	total
1960 value (¥million)	1,533	27,643	25	58	706	29,941
ratio	5.1%	92.3%	0.1%	0.2%	2.4%	100.0%
1974 value (¥million)	8,861	73,128	495	482	7,308	90,275
ratio	9.8%	81.0%	0.5%	0.5%	8.1%	100.0%
1981 value (¥million)	15,668	77,143	708	277	15,075	108,870
ratio	14.4%	70.9%	0.7%	0.3%	13.8%	100.0%
1990 value (¥million)	15,706	37,267	1,803	874	16,979	72,629
ratio	21.6%	51.3%	2.5%	1.2%	23.4%	100.0%
1995 value (¥million)	14,710	29,438	4,229	22,481	21,037	91,895
ratio	16.0%	32.0%	4.6%	24.5%	22.9%	100.0%
2000 value (¥million)	9,349	24,348	5,273	33,780	20,769	93,519
ratio	10.0%	26.0%	5.6%	36.1%	22.2%	100.0%
2003 value (¥million)	7,032	30,408	8,532	27,126	14,207	87,305
ratio	8.1%	34.8%	9.8%	31.1%	16.3%	100.0%
2005 value (¥million)	7,739	47,422	244	30,620	13,731	99,757
ratio	7.8%	47.5%	0.2%	30.7%	13.8%	100.0%

Source: Kamaishi City2005, Kamaishi City 2007, Matsuishi2003

Note: The manufacturers who under 3 persons were excluded.

The top three manufacturing industries by number of employees in Kamaishi in 2005 were general machinery (36.1%), food (17.4%), and electric machines (10.9%), with the steel industry (3.9%) ranking fifth following plastic manufacturing (7%) (Kamaishi City 2007: table 62). Thus, in the 2000s it became impossible to call Kamaishi simply a steel town. This should be seen in the context of efforts in the 1990s to attract companies to achieve a transformation from a company town. These efforts were successful, and the value of shipments for metal products and machines grew rapidly from 1995. Judging from the value of shipments of the manufacturing industries, it is clear that the existence of newly invited companies compensated somewhat for the rapid decline in the total value of shipments due to the decline of steel. The ratio of the steel industry, however, started to increase again around 2003 due to the upturn in the industry in general and the higher added value of products, reaching 47.5 percent of the total value of shipment. As the value of steel shipments increased, the total value of shipments, which stood at 87.3 billion yen in 2003, also recovered to 99.8 billion yen in 2005. Although the presence of the steel

industry in the community economy declined drastically in the realm of employment, it can still be seen in the realm of production. Thus, Kamaishi today is in a process of regeneration as a town of steel and machinery as far as the manufacturing industry is concerned.

3. Hope Studies Research in Kamaishi

(1) Argument

As we saw above, Kamaishi's experience from the high economic growth period to the beginning of the 2000s was characterized by a steady decline. Kamaishi today is at a stage where it is finally seeing signs of regeneration. The precise aim of the present research is to find a way toward the regeneration of local communities that have experienced such setbacks. In a dramatically changing economic environment, how have the people of Kamaishi tried to regenerate their local community and economy? In the process, what did they think and how did they behave? And what kind of hope is there in present Kamaishi? The theme of the Hope Studies Kamaishi Research is to reveal the past and present of "local hope" through a consideration of these issues. As an approach to these themes, we mobilized researchers from the general areas of social science, including law, political science, economics, sociology, and history. In doing so, we tried to make the best possible use of the diversity of the research and study methods dealing with the same subject based on the common interest of examining the history and present situation of the "social phases of hope" in the Kamaishi area. We also tried to conduct each research project not as independent research on the history and the present situation but as a part of a nationwide research/study, in order to make it possible to compare the results with the national trend. The present Kamaishi Research was not envisioned to be a simple area study but to be one with the final aim of formulating a hypothesis concerning the "social phases of hope."

The reason this theme was adopted is that our research was planned as part of a joint research project called the Social Sciences of Hope (dubbed "hope studies," with Yuji Genda as the principal researcher), being conducted at the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo, from FY2005 to FY2008. Let us now explain the concept of "hope studies."

(2) Hope Studies

The Social Science of Hope is a joint research project of the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo, under which a number of researchers from different disciplines, including law, political science, economics, history, and sociology, using their own research methods, are working together to analyze the “state of hope” in modern Japan. The observation, from a variety of angles, that the social distribution of “hope” among socioeconomic strata has been growing increasingly unequal in recent years, suggests that it is a problem that cannot be overlooked. However, the “social disparity of hope” has never been demonstrated to exist. Moreover, if we look back at history, we see that the feeling of being at an impasse – a symptom of a lack of hope – is not necessarily a recent phenomenon, but rather something that has repeatedly reappeared as a social trend. Therefore, in order to correctly grasp the social conditions of “hope” today, in addition to conducting contemporary research and data analysis, a proper historical analysis is also necessary. Of course, even in the same time period, there is great diversity in the perception of hope between individuals, between regions, and between socioeconomic strata. Thus, rather than trying to gather data on people’s “hope” from a vague mixture of regions, we decided to narrow our research down to one clear region.

(3) Feature of Hope Studies Research on Kamaishi

Needless to say, as a premise for thinking about this theme, we must elucidate the socio-economic structure of the region of study and in the present Kamaishi Research, individual researchers have spent a great deal of energy for that. However, we tried to adopt the angle of finding a path toward “hope” in the study area in question as one of the approaches of the individual research. Here lies the biggest difference with past research on Kamaishi with the aim of following the rise and fall of a company town.² If this focus on “hope” leads to the discovery of new

² The Kamaishi region is a very valuable research subject because: (1) it was one of the few heavy industry areas in Japan before the industrial revolution and (2) it experienced the whole process beginning from the formulation, to decline and regeneration, of a company town. These characteristics of the community of Kamaishi have drawn attentions from many researchers. Among such researches, Shinmei and Tanozaki’s joint study is important, as they conducted panel research concerning the social structure of Kamaishi City every 20 years beginning in 1958 (conducted in 1958, 1978, and 1998) (Tanozaki 2007). The aim of their research from the outset was consistently to grasp the structure of social circulation of an industrial town, Kamaishi City, from the three

“signs of hope” in the Kamaishi area and, as a result, leads to the discovery of a hypothetical path toward the “regeneration of hope” in local areas, we will be able to say that the present study has achieved its goal.

4. Outlines and Results of the Kamaishi Research

(1) Outlines

We organized the Kamaishi Research in November 2005 as a general regional research project with an interdisciplinary social science perspective. One of the defining characteristics of this research project is that a variety of researchers from different disciplines, including law, political science, economics, history, and sociology, using their own research methods, are working together to analyze the “state of hope” in one particular region, in an attempt to understand the social significance of hope, both historically and in a contemporary setting. Starting from this point, we have decided to focus on the following two research issues: (1) an inquiry into changes in hope among various socioeconomic strata due to the long-term process of restructuring of the core industry (i.e. the Kamaishi Steel Works, Nippon Steel Co.), and (2) a multifarious examination of “the rebirth of hope” in a company town such as Kamaishi where the local society and economy are undergoing changes. Based on this, we divided the project into the following five research groups, and conducted research on two occasions in 2006 (July and September) on the Kamaishi region.

(1) Kamaishi Steel Works, Nippon Steel Co. Research Group

- a. Kamaishi Steel Works, Alumni Research Group
- b. Technical Skills Transmission Research Group

(2) History and Culture Research Group

(3) Social Research Group

- a. High School Reunion Survey Research Group

aspects of economy, politics, and society (Takemura 2007). They pointed out that people in the Kamaishi region experienced a rapid collapse in the period from 1958 to 1978 of the social relationships which had been built based on the core enterprise, and they have been searching for new social relationships from 1978 to 1998 while confronting the issue of “community regeneration” (Kato 2007).

b. Legal Perception Research Group

(4) Regional Promotion Policy Research Group

a. Industry Research Group

b. Fishing Industry Economy Research Group

c. “Administration and Citizens” Research Group

d. Environmental Policy Research Group

(5) Local Politics Research Group

From 17 to 20 July 2006, 15 researchers participated in the first field survey. At that time, we made the final preparations on our surveys, selected interviewees, and conducted several pilot studies, including round-table talks and archival research. Then, from 24 to 30 September, 26 researchers and 6 assistants participated in the second round of our field research, in which we conducted intensive interviews, documentary research, and surveys. We interviewed 136 people, the highest number of interviewees of any general regional research project carried out by the University of Tokyo’s Institute of Social Science since 1952 (the 1952 project was the “Comprehensive Social Situation Survey on Communities as the Basis of Japanese Society,” conducted in Goko Village, Nitta County, Gunma Prefecture).

(2) Results

As we reported on the results of each individual’s field research at interim report meetings and public symposiums, the history and the present situation of the Kamaishi area and its issues gradually started to emerge.

(a) Role of Networks

Seen historically, the Kamaishi region, while having the appearance of a company town, has continued to feature a complex relationship between the local community and the core company involving both dependency on and opposition toward one another. In particular, in the process of the contraction of the Kamaishi Steel Works beginning in the latter half of the 1960s, there was strong tension between the city government and the company. However, since the shutdown of the blast furnaces during the process of rapid contraction of the Steel Works, the city of

Kamaishi and Nippon Steel Corporation have cooperated by working to diversify the city's companies and offices and setting up new enterprises.

Since 1973, Kamaishi City and the Nippon Steel Corporation have succeeded in inviting 26 companies, and 13 of them were still operating in the city as of August 2006. The number of the employees of these companies as of 2006 was around 2,000, corresponding to the number of the employees at the Kamaishi Steel Works of the Nippon Steel Corporation in 1988, immediately before the shutdown of all the blast furnaces. In that sense, the efforts to attract firms in order to maintain employment can be said to have succeeded to a certain degree.

On the other hand, however, it is impossible to ignore the fact that half of the companies brought in at such effort ended up withdrawing a decade or so later. In the 2000s too, it can be said that a "repetition of invitation and withdrawal" continues. Another problem that has emerged is that because individual companies were invited one by one, with an emphasis on the creation of employment, the inter-industry relations among companies or between them and local companies are weak, leading to weak networks among companies in the region. A look at the industrial categories of the 25 companies invited since the 1980s shows a wide variety consisting of textile (1), foodstuffs (1), electronic parts (7), general machinery (2), tool and die (3), metal (7), and chemical (4), with no mutual relationship except for the companies in the metal industry invited at the initiative of Nippon Steel Corporation. It is undeniable that this lack of inter-industry linkages was one cause for the low survival rate of the invited companies (Tsujita 2007b). It should be noted, however, that although since 1996, when the direct involvement of the Steel Works in the invitation of companies decreased and the invitation activities of the city of Kamaishi took center stage, the survival rate of the companies locating in Kamaishi has grown rapidly. The reason seems to be that, based on the lessons it learnt in the first half of 1990s, the city began to gather information carefully on its own before inviting companies. Furthermore, full-fledged efforts are now being made toward the formation of networks between companies and research institutions or among companies, based on the premise of a clear future vision for an eco-town initiative, creating some hopeful future prospects (Nakamura 2007).

Incidentally, many of the invited companies cited as their reason for locating in Kamaishi "the high-quality workforce that does not mind a three-shift work system or time-and-energy intensive manufacturing" and the existence of "industrial infrastructure" centered around a 24-hour port (Nakamura 2007). These

are resources that were accumulated during the long history of Kamaishi as a “steel town” and can be seen as a “gift from Nippon Steel.” Based on this industrial infrastructure, since the beginning of the 2000s, a transformation of the industrial structure from a “steel town” to a “town of steel and machinery” has been proceeding. Now, with a new industrial structure with the machinery industry as a key on the horizon, there is a need for Kamaishi to expand its area of networking to the midland of Iwate prefecture (Kitakami area), where the machinery industry is flourishing. A widening of the networking is also crucial in order to vitalize not just the manufacturing industry but also the service industry, including tourism and commerce (Kikkawa 2006). Since the beginning of the 2000s, entrepreneurs who carry out original corporate activities have emerged in Kamaishi (Nakamura 2007). Many, however, have little contact with one another in the region and operate in networks that are outside (Tsujita 2007a, Kikkawa 2007). In this sense as well, connections between networks inside and outside the region, along with the formation of networks within the region and expansion of networks, will be a challenge for the promotion of industry in Kamaishi.

As with the relationships between companies, there are challenges for the formation of an autonomous network of social relationships and relationships among various community organizations in Kamaishi, and as a result, the city government may have a relatively large role to play. During the heyday of the Kamaishi Steel Works, there were disparities between its employees and other people in terms of standards of living and lifestyle, to the extent that people called it “segregation.” These characteristics, which are typical of company towns, disappeared rapidly in the process of decline of the Steel Works. However, no new social relationship has emerged to replace it (Kato 2007). According to a survey of the residents, people living in Kamaishi have less involvement in voluntary organizations than do those in other cities of the same scale, and in conflict resolution there is a tendency to rely on families and the city government rather than legal experts or specialist organizations (Sato 2007). For the Kamaishi community, which has built social relationships around the nexus of a huge entity, the Steel Works, the rapid decline of its influence may have brought a dilution of the social relationships.

The formation and organization of various resident networks, however, has been an integral factor in community vitalization in Kamaishi in terms of nurturing people to take charge of area development. Under a situation where individuals and companies that are eager to perform social activities and corporate activities are

isolated from each other (Kikkawa 2007), the city government is taking great pains to organize them. One of the reasons for the large role of the city government in community regeneration of Kamaishi found throughout the various researches conducted as part of this study could be sought here.

(b) A Common Sense of Hope

Under a situation where individuals and organizations are isolated from one another, there is a limit to their ability to form a common future vision, i.e., hope, that can be shared by the entire community. It is possible for two distinct city images and future visions for a “town of factories” (by attracting companies) and a “town of nature/environment” (tourism) to exist independently of one another among the citizens, and it is difficult to find any organic relationship between the two at present. It will be a major challenge to integrate these two images and create a new “culture” (Ohori 2007). The idea of wide-area tourism development proposed by Takeo Kikkawa is noteworthy in that it includes both industry and nature. Kikkawa’s idea is to make Kamaishi a tourist spot by combining its rich marine resources and industrial tourism resources such as the industrial heritages (Hashino furnace remains, the Iron Historical Museum, Kamaishi mine, etc.) and the Kamaishi wide-area wind farm, on one hand, with the “Sanriku coast brand” of marine products, which has already gained a certain reputation, and Tono folklore in order to make Kamaishi a tourist spot. Within this project, the JR Kamaishi line (Hanamaki-Tono-Kamaishi), which was the model for Kenji Miyazawa’s novel *Ginga Tetsudo no Yoru* (Night on the Milky Way Train), has become an important railway line as it connects points within the wide-area tourism development region. Creating a narrative for the tourism resources centering around the Kamaishi line (Ginga Tetsudo) and establishing a “Ginga Tetsudo brand” could make a great contribution to the development of tertiary industry in Kamaishi (Kikkawa 2006).

In addition, taking full advantage of the “Sanriku coast brand” for marine products will require maintaining the local fishing industry, and it will be a challenge to join together the hopes of the fishing population and those of the industrial and tourism sectors. Even among the fishing population, however, there are clear differences in future vision depending on age group and type of fishing operation, showing that it will not necessarily be easy to gain shared hope even among the members of that community (Kase 2007). The problem seems even more daunting considering the sharp antagonism between the fishing population and those involved in the industrial sector concerning coastline development. On the

other hand, various points of agreement have recently been found between the fishing population and those involved in tourism, as full-fledged efforts to develop ecotourism have begun. These activities will be able to play an important role in the “Ginga Tetsudo brand” by incorporating cooperation with Tono, one of the national bases of ecotourism, into the plan. In that sense, people involved in the tourism industry must become intermediaries between the fishermen and manufacturers in the pursuit of “shared hope.”

It is noteworthy that Takayoshi Uekami, who carried out a questionnaire and interview survey of city council members, who are responsible for local governance in Kamaishi, concerning policy issues and elections, found at least that the city assembly members shared a common consciousness on issues concerning policy challenges (Uekami 2007). In the Kamaishi City Assembly, he found that “securing employment” and “industrial promotion” were seen as the most important issues for Kamaishi regardless their political affiliations or attributes. It is interesting to note that the blow to the local economy and society from the contraction of the core company led to the formation of a nonpartisan position in support of community revival, resulting in a softening of political confrontation.

Thus, in Kamaishi today, at least the final goal of area reinvigoration is shared by various social organizations. It can be said, however, that a consensus has yet to be reached on the concrete measures necessary to achieve it and the concrete features of the future vision.

(c) Corporate Identity vs. Local Identity

In addition to the hopes of the local community as a whole, as discussed above, the individual hopes of people living in the Kamaishi region or people born in Kamaishi are now being analyzed as part of the surveys on Nippon Steel alumni, history and culture, and school alumni associations. Here, we will present some of the results of these surveys.

First, two approaches have been taken to examine the Kamaishi Steel Works of Nippon Steel, which was once the core company in Kamaishi: a survey on job changes and hopes of former workers and managers using the oral history method, and a survey on the transmission of technical skills at a wire factory. In the former, we have focused on the issues of transfers to Tokai (Nagoya) in the 1960s and rationalization based on the medium-term production structure plans since the end of 1970s, and are searching for the state of hope among these workers and managers in the period of decline of Kamaishi Steel Works. As a result, we have

developed the hypothesis that the workers who maintained a consciousness of being members of the Kamaishi Steel Works (a form of local community) since before World War II, recognized anew during the processes of reorganization and rationalization that they were members of the corporate society of Fuji Steel or Nippon Steel, and went on to reconstruct their hopes accordingly. According to the research carried out by Hiroyuki Aoki, the rapid contraction of the Kamaishi Steel Works was carried out without much disorder thanks to a sharing of “organizational hope” by labor and management (Aoki 2007).

The purpose of the history and culture survey is, through an examination of the issue of how the people living in Kamaishi have understood their town’s past, to make projections about the formation of local identity in Kamaishi in the future. Our investigation of the diverse history and culture of Kamaishi has the potential to give important hints for considering the theme of “sharing hope” in the Kamaishi area, as mentioned earlier. From the research conducted at Kamaishi Commercial High School, it was found that with the memories of Kamaishi’s past prosperity fading, many high school students have views concerning the future that cannot really be called positive. It can be said that behind this lies the problem that although Kamaishi has a historically unique culture as an industrial city, this culture is not utilized at present and is not connected to future development.

Finally, the purpose of the questionnaire survey of high school alumni associations [High School Reunion Survey] is to follow graduates of four high schools in Kamaishi, looking at items such as geographical movements, career path and family formation, feeling of satisfaction about current life, the existence or lack of hope, and feelings and expectations about Kamaishi, etc., with the purpose of analyzing the relationship between patterns of geographical movement and job and family, feeling of satisfaction about current life and the existence or lack of hope, and the process of formation of hope about the area. Concretely speaking, the researchers sent postcards to about 12,000 graduates of the four high schools in Kamaishi, with graduation years chosen in intervals of several years, asking them for their consent to receive a questionnaire. In January 2007, questionnaires were distributed to those who had given their consent. At present, the questionnaires are being collected and analyzed.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, we presented an outline of the Hope Studies Kamaishi Research, describing the purpose of the research, study organization, history of the research, and tentative results. As a result of our examination of the history of Kamaishi area from the past to the present, using “hope” as a keyword, we have gained the understanding that when considering the formation of “local hope,” the following issues are important: (1) reorganization of the local identity in accordance with changes in the social and economic situation, (2) the sharing of hope (future vision) in the local community, and (3) the formation of networks as a foundation for hope.

In an area where the society was long centered around the relationship with a core company, what kind of situation arises after the core company goes into decline, and what kind of social networks can be built without relying on it? This is an important question when considering the future development of former company town communities or regions in a post-industrialized stage. In the case of the Kamaishi region, the social relationship weakened in the second half of the 1980s because the core enterprise entity, the Nippon Steel Kamaishi Steel Works, went into steep decline, leading to the loss of the axis upon which the community relied while simultaneously reacting against it. Thus, the local government was unexpectedly thrust into playing the core role in the rebuilding of networks, and since then its role has continued to expand. However, various social networks such as inter-company networks among newcomer companies, between newcomer companies and local companies, and between local companies, along with networks between citizen organizations and among citizens, networks between citizens and companies, etc., are still in the process of formation.

In carrying out the study, it has become apparent that for the formation of such networks, the issue of “sharing hope” has enormous significance. For a local community, having a certain local identity and future vision (hope), and forming an agreement toward them, can help integrate various networks in the area in an organic way and pave the way for the revitalization and regeneration of the area. In a former company town community like Kamaishi, both of these tend to be vague. During this study as well, Ken Ohori made the interesting observation that among both citizens and companies, there is no unified image of “what kind of community Kamaishi is.” For example, the policy of planning local development around industry by attracting factories, and the policy of planning local development around the natural environment through tourism are being pursued, at least in present Kamaishi, based on opposing city images that are independent of each

other. Although it seems possible to integrate these two policies with a proper methodology, the path there has not yet been discovered.

What Shigeki Uno calls the “rediscovery of the local tradition” is a way to overcome the split in the city image and to create a shared local identity and future vision (Uno 2007). The Eco Town Initiative promoted by the city of Kamaishi could play an important role as a new future vision. There are naturally, however, more than one solution to this question. Our hope is that, diverse opinions will arise from an examination, through various angles, of the results of our comprehensive study on the history and the present situation of Kamaishi. We will be happy if through our work, the social science discussion concerning local hope can deepen, contributing to the improvement of the severe situation that local communities face today.

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