

**Creating High Well-being Local Communities  
: Learning from Moyainaoshi and Jimotogaku in Minamata,  
Japan**

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# Overview

- Increasing interests toward “well-being”
- Development path of the Post-WWII Japan: Pros and Cons of high economic growth system
- Some findings from research on subjective well-beings
- Creating high level well-being local communities: Learning from Minamata
- Concluding remarks

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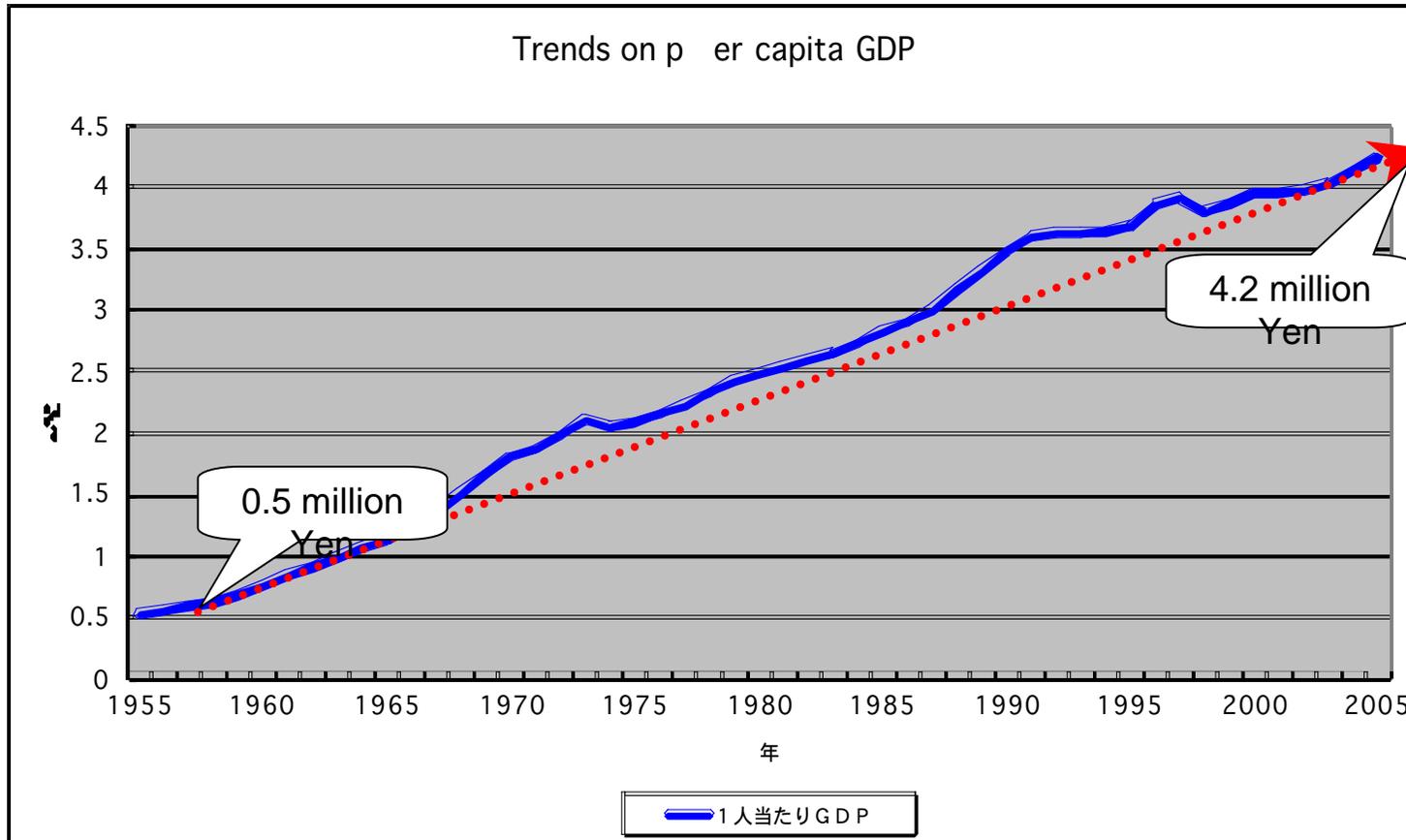
## Interests toward well-being

- Happiness survey by the Japanese government in 2010
  - 6.5 points out of 10 (on average)
  - Women > Men
  - 30's higher and older groups do not increase the level of happiness.
- Expanding interests toward well-being
  - Global project on social progress by OECD
  - In September 2009, the report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress was published.
  - Why recently we have seen the increase in interests toward well-being or well-being scores for social development and progress?

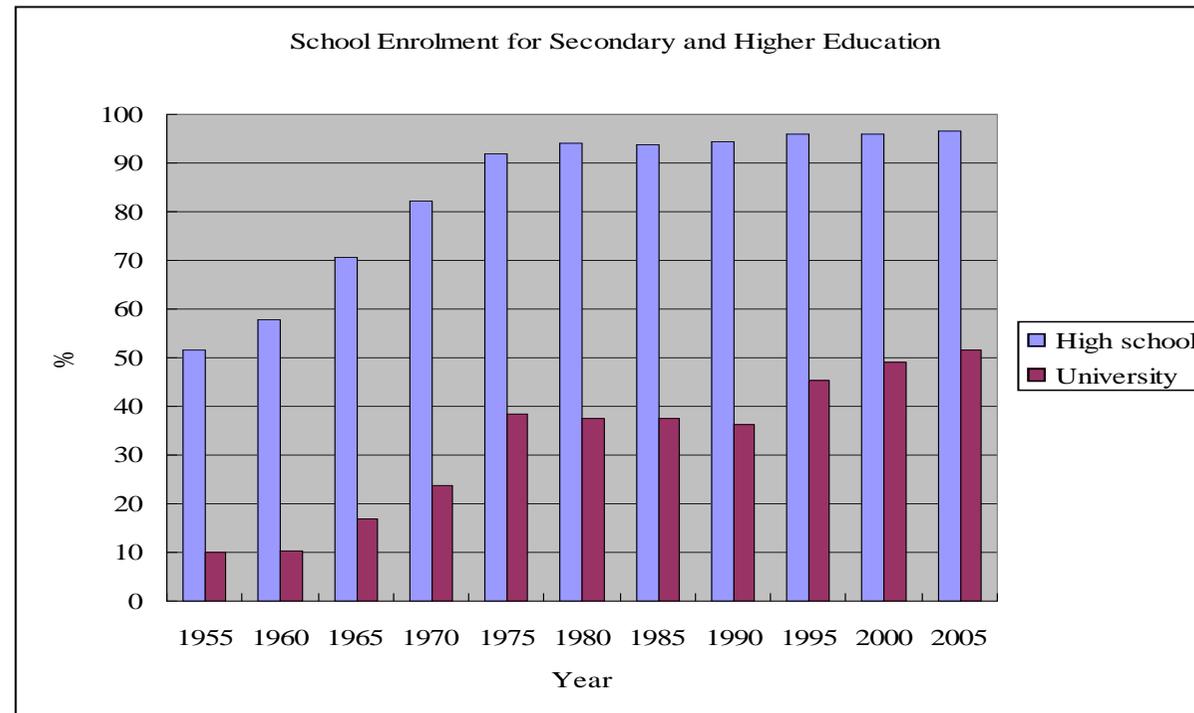
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# Economic growth in Japan



# Education (School enrollment rates in Japan )

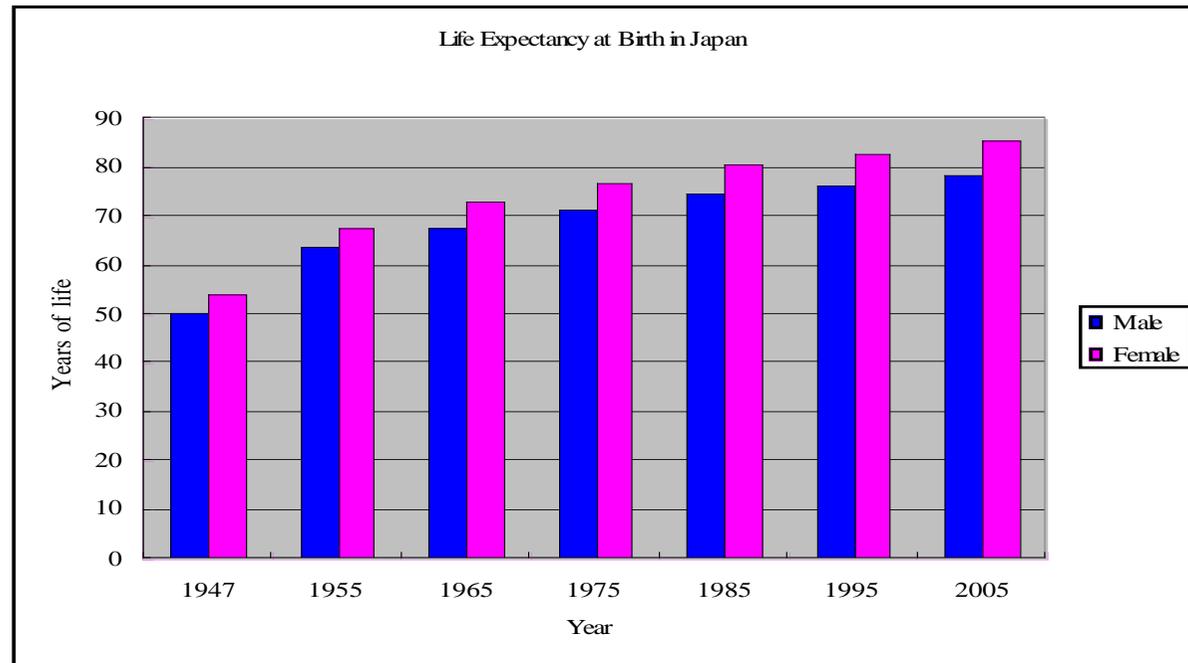


(Data Source: *Basic Surveys on Schools*, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

Higher secondary and tertiary education

➔ School Enrolment Rate (SER) for University From 10% to 50%;  
SER for High School from 50% to more than 95%.

# Health (Life expectancy at birth in Japan)



(Data Source: *Life Table*, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare)

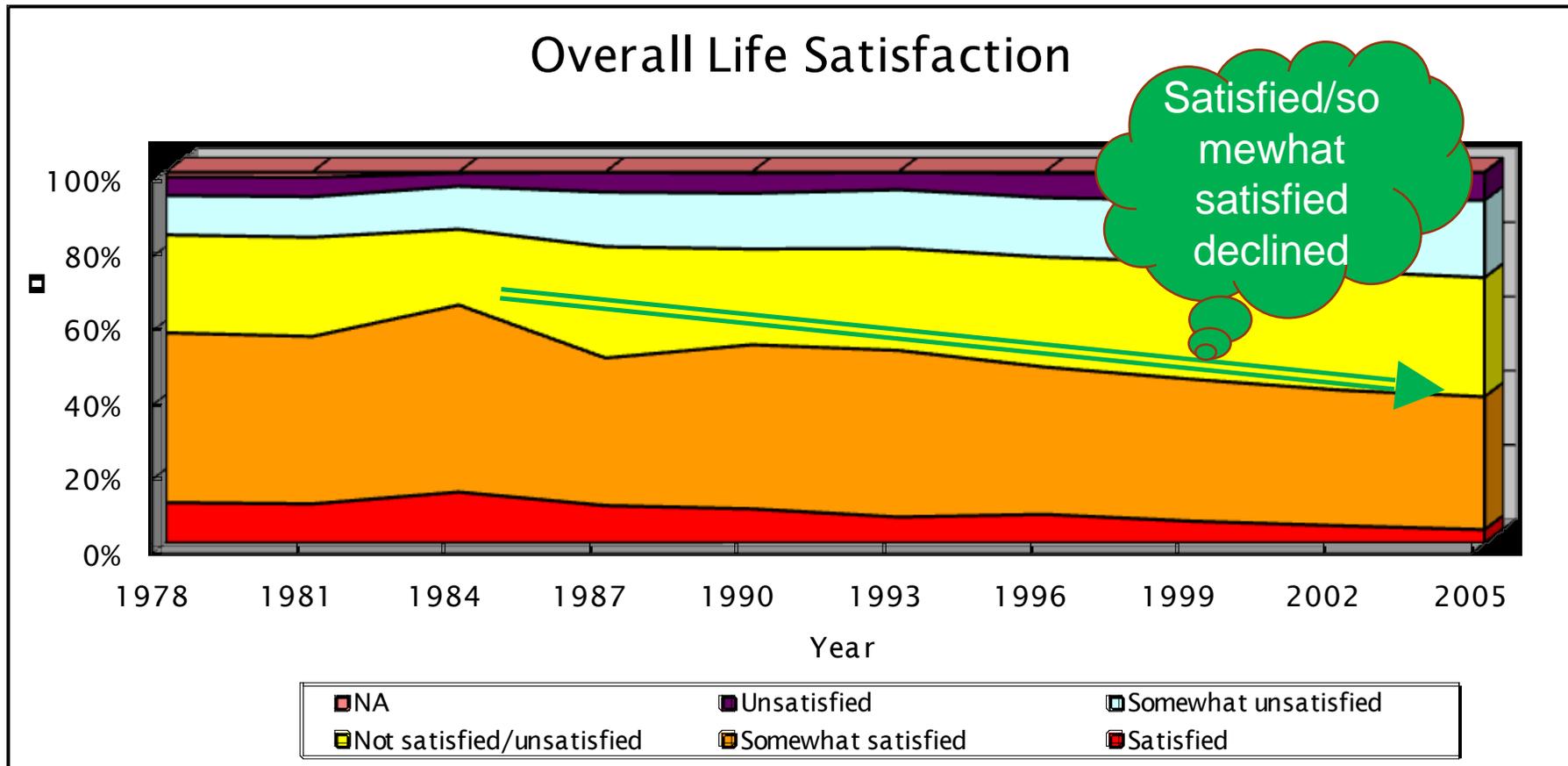
Health condition and system improved

Expected longevity has been upward-trend.

Male: 50.1 yrs (1947) → 78.6 yrs (2005)

Female: 53.9 yrs (1947) → 85.5 yrs (2005)

# Trend on overall life satisfaction



Data source: National survey on people's life preferences and styles.

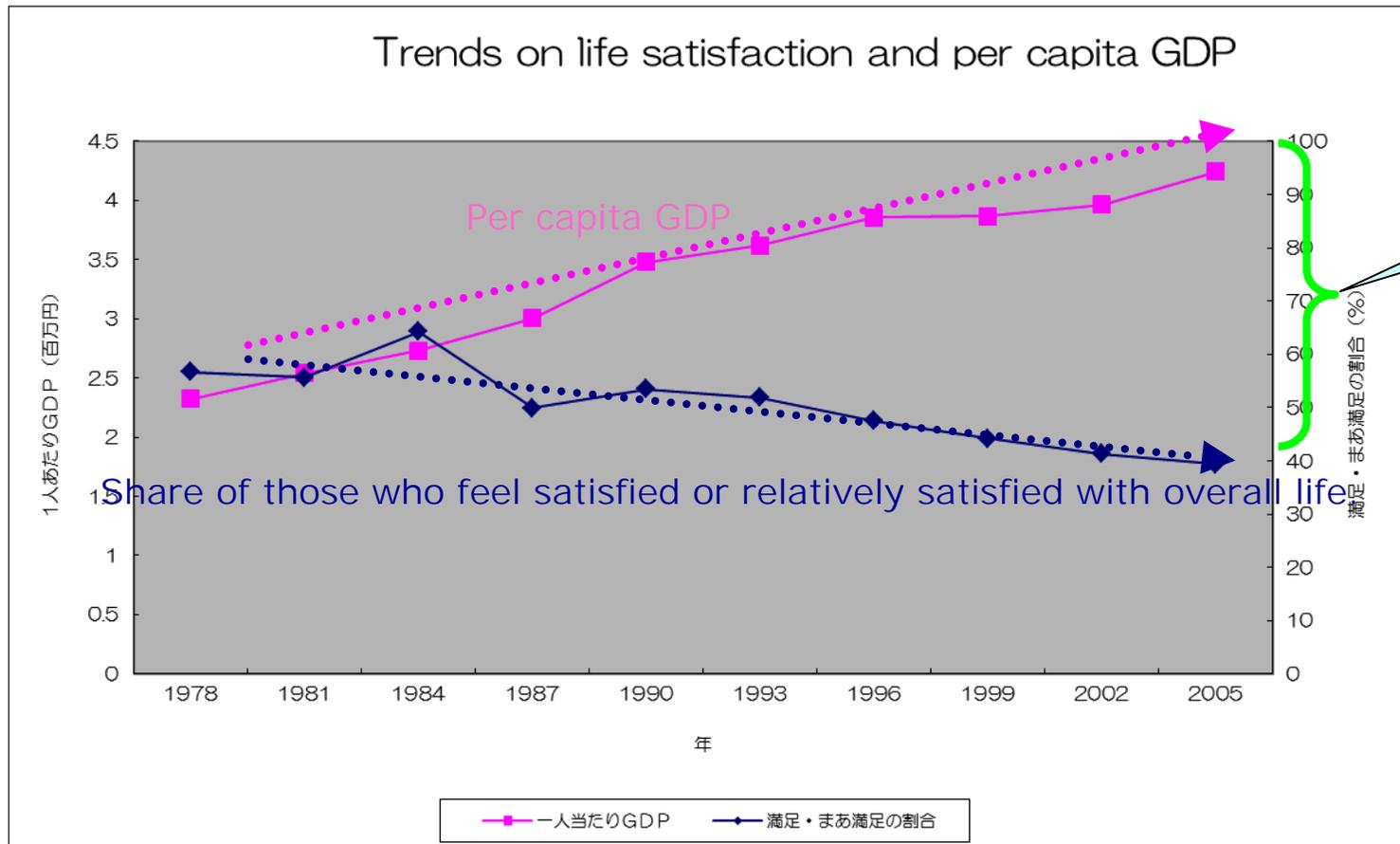
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# Research on Subjective well-beings/happiness

- Correlation between income increase and happiness increase is not guaranteed. Rather, income gains become harmful after the income level surpass some income level. (Happiness paradox)
  - ➔ This implies that income is needed and increase happiness until it fulfills one's basic necessities. However, with the increase of income, people feel pressed to compete others to be a winner as if it would bring him/her happiness.

# Happiness Paradox



# Research on Subjective well-beings/happiness

- With work or without work makes a significant impacts of one's happiness.
- Elements of happiness include good social relationships (with family members, with friends and neighbors, colleagues, etc.), and health, and life knowledge and life-skills.

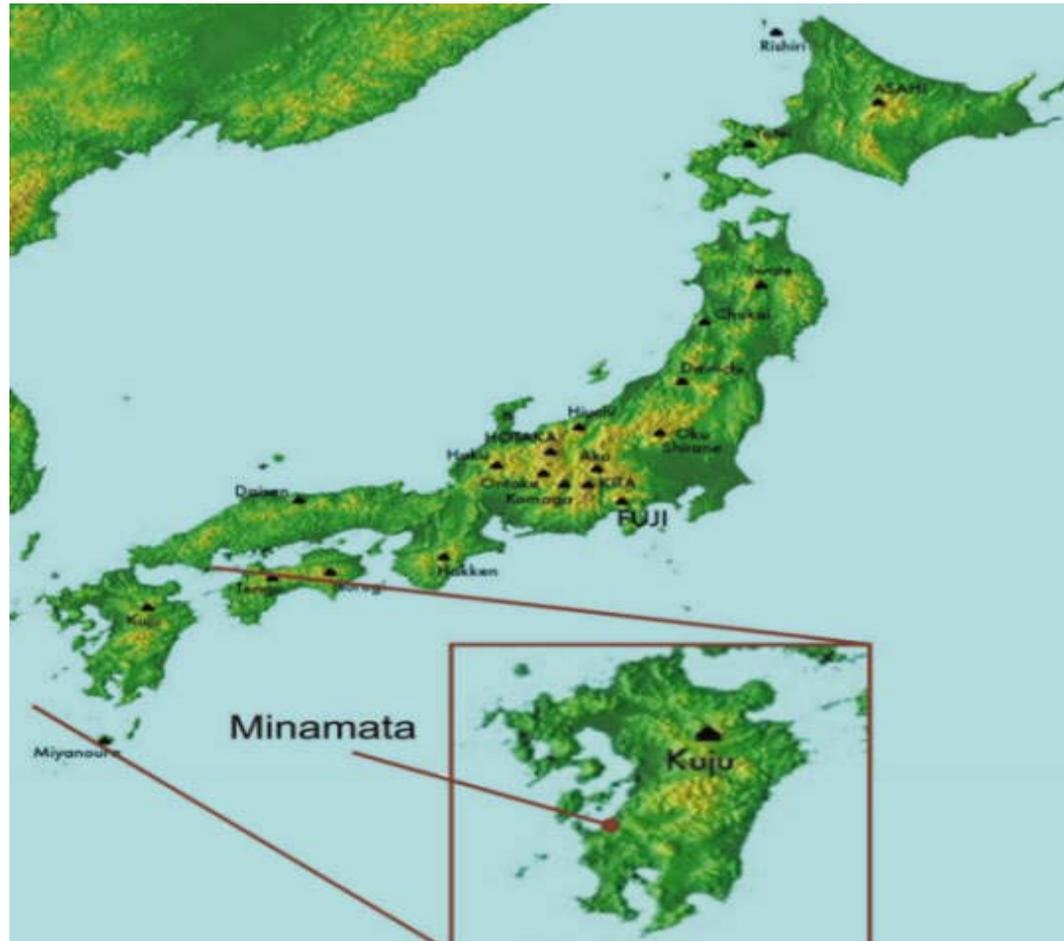
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# Creating high level well-being local communities: Learning from Minamata

- Industrialization incurred severe environmental problems
  - Four major pollution problems in Japan and the Minamata was the worst case.
  - Important to look into paradigm shift in development path of Minamata

# Minamata, Kumamoto in Kyushu

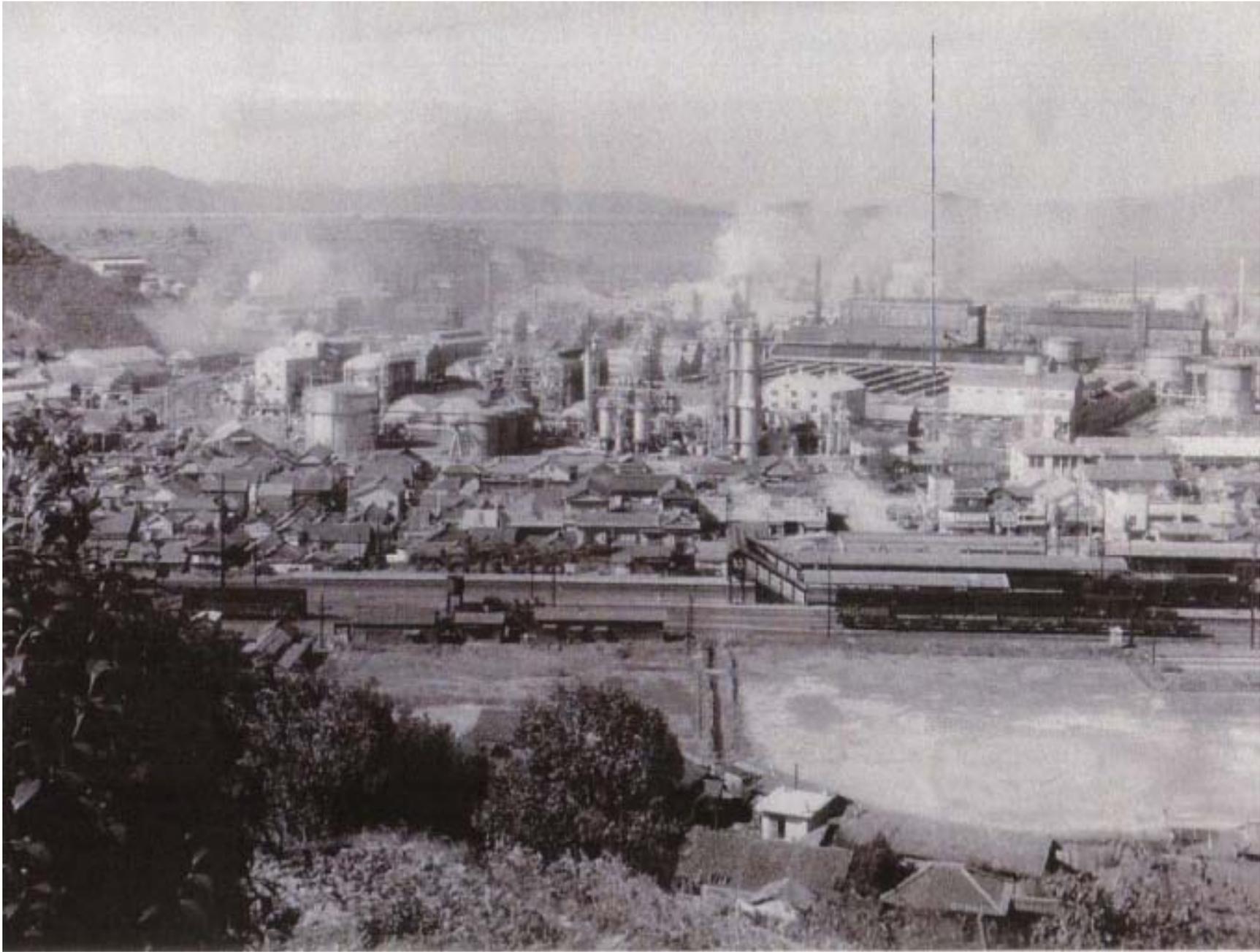


# Background

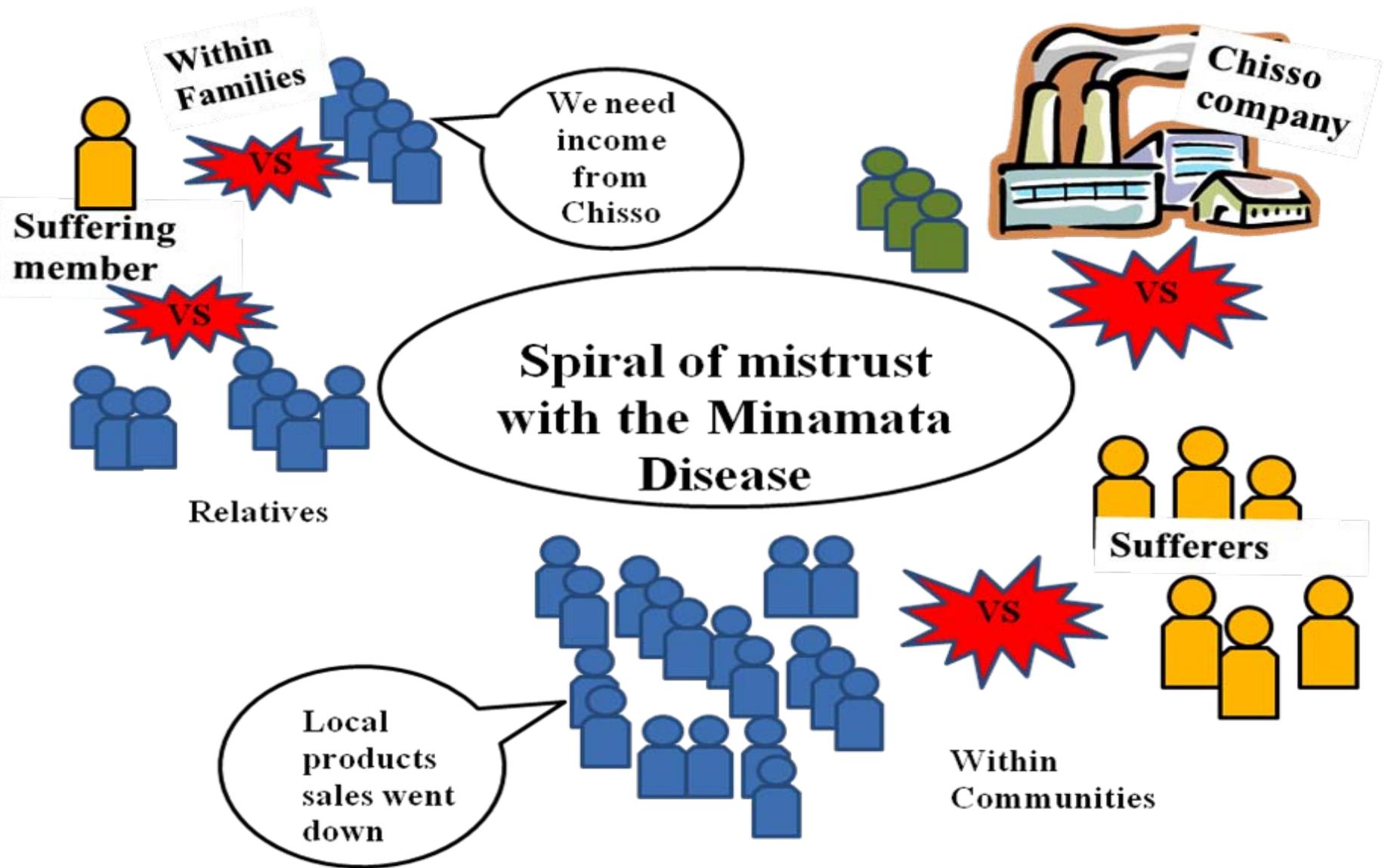
- Minamata
  - Received benefits of industrialization by Chisso factory (1908)
  - Jobs in the modern sector in a rural town



Local residents (especially those who were poor) welcomed the big modern factory (chemical fertilizer)



# Conflicts, social divisions and isolations



## Turn-around of local community's development path

- Completion of the 13 year long pollution prevention project (reclamation work of the contaminated sea beds and fish)
- Started some movements from prefecture government, city government and local people to think of Minamata's future.
- Yorokai-Minamata was formed and it started local resource mapping action.
- Setting a vision to be a model environmental city.

## Change in local government

- From the 1950s to the early 1990s, government – central, prefectural and city governments – did not assist much for those who suffered from the Minamata disease. Rather, they did not stop expansion of the Minamata disease problem in the 1950s and 1960s (they could have done this).
- In 1994, Mr. Yoshii Masazumi was elected as the Mayor of Minamata-city and he delivered a historic speech at the memorial ceremony for the victims of the Minamata disease, which was attended for the first time by the Environment Agency director-general and the Kumamoto Prefecture governor soon after he became the Mayor.
  - Apology toward the victim
  - Proposal for collaboration to rebuild Minamata communities together such as MOYAINAOSHI (solution for dialog and collaboration)

# Moyainaoshi

- Mr. Yoshii's speech was totally different from those by predecessors.
  - His message was contrition and apology, and he stated that the city's past actions on Minamata disease had been mistaken and proposed *a solution for dialogue* as Japanese people did in the old days to solve a problem at the community level. This made a huge impact over the course of the Minamata disease issues.
- To restore good social relationships among people, between communities, and environment and people in Minamata. (MOYAINAOSHI movement)

## Practice based on Moyainaoshi spirit: mending social ties in Minamata

- From citizen's participation to government's participation
- Model environmental city
- Jimotogaku

## Environmental actions in Minamata

- **Environmental Meister in Minamata** – key persons in environmental management and healthy food production
- **The city assisted action by Voluntary Women's group** to reduce waste at home and at shops
  - community currency
- **Eco-business industrial zone**

## What is Jimotogaku?

“Jimotogaku” is an approach of community development born in local communities of Minamata in mid-1990s. It focuses on existing local resources, including nature, history, custom, and people, and facilitates community people’s initiative to utilize those resources. “Stop asking for what we do not have, let us start from finding out what we have” is a principle of Jimotogaku. It also emphasizes collaboration among “Soil and Wind” (community people and outsiders) to find out what the local communities have and how to utilize them through interaction as a form of community walk, which enables sharing views over local resources between local guides and visitors from outside. Jimotogaku aims at building confidence on community lifestyle and enhancing autonomy in design and implementation of local development. (Yoshimoto 1995 and 2008)

# Kagumeishi, Minamata



Very few visitors came to this village before Jimotogaku was introduced.

↑ 熊本市

↓ 鹿児島県

## Kagumeishi before Jimotogaku introduced

- De-populated rural village: young people left for cities for jobs
- Local people believed in this as their fate in modernization process

## Creation of a revitalized community by Jimotogaku

- Some people worried about their future and went to the city office for government assistance
- **Suggested “Minamata City Vibrant Community Ordinance”**
  - Local environmental agreement: the rules agreed on by residents regarding the preservation of the local environment in day-to-day life
- The whole village as a living museum concept
  - Local people’s autonomy enhancement
  - Mutual learning method: locals and visitors (insiders and outsiders)

# Local Curator of A WHOLE VILLAGE AS A LIVING MUSEUM



Curators guide visitors in the village.

Kagumeishi



Local temple



Water Station



Storage house Bee Keeping Boxes



# JIMOTOGAKU

Curator's Rule of Thumb: NEVER SAY  
'there is nothing particular in this village.'

→ search for local resources by visitors' (outsider) lenses.

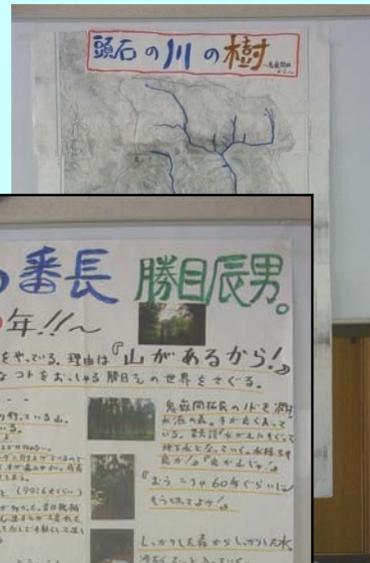


① Survey



② Analysis

③ Report by Mapping



④ Feedback: Mapping given to the curators

## More people visited

- **Over 3,000 people visited(2004-2008)**
  - In the early stage of Jimotogaku, took advantage of the Minamata disease, which brought many experts and officers to the city
  - Brought them to rural communities
- Not only in Japan **but from overseas as well** through programs like JICA training programs
  - Tanzania, Zambia, Kenya, Brazil, Thailand, Nepal, Laos, Vietnam, Uganda, Australia, Indonesia, Columbia, etc.

## Jimotogaku's impacts

- **Local people discover local resources** and develop new social ties among them.
  - Increased income
  - Community fund
  - Increase in ties with visitors
- Local initiatives, economic, social, and environmental, have started in the village.
  - Love their own village and proud of being in the village
  - **Building up self-confidence and creative and positive mindset to their own communities and lifestyle:  
CULTURE OF LOCAL AUTONOMY**
  - **Prize by the government for revitalized rural communities**

## Learning from Minamata's case

- Pursuit of economic prosperity and economic growth at the national level does not guarantee the enhancement of people's well-being.
- Focusing on key elements of people's well-beings to improve people's happiness and hope.

## Learning from Minamata's case

- Local people' engagement and action for co-habitant with nature (ecological thinking)
  - Collaboration and cooperation within communities
  - Intention to listen and respect what others perceive.
  - Communication and social dialogues
  - Ideas for local economic vitalization based on local environment, culture and tradition.

# Change in development approach

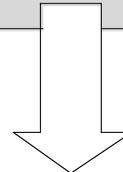
## Conventional approach

**Goal :** Economic power, high standard living

**Policy :** National economic growth ,  
social infrastructure development

**Indicators :** GDP, School years, expected life years

**Actor :** Central government and experts



## Alternative approach

**Goal :** Capability-minded development,  
higher well-being society

**Policy :** Generating social ties, employment  
generation, minimum life security

**Indicators :** HDI, GNH, Well-being indicators

**Actor :** Cooperation by local government & people