

Chapter 3: Roles and Future Development of MLIT Policies

Municipalities, communities and businesses, if they want to stay vibrant, should take a number of steps as described in the previous chapters: assessing their strengths and weaknesses, discovering “hidden” resources, identifying resources of strategic importance, creating the target scenario and setting goals, and diverting such resources to achieve these goals. Achieving vibrant communities and businesses is a major goal for Japan. The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT) should support these initiatives through its policies.

MLIT implements a wide variety of policies while pursuing the best mix and role-sharing among different entities concerned—local governments, residents, businesses, NPOs and others—for each policy issue. These policies are designed to respect the individuality and diversity of these entities while assuming that they conduct their activities on their own initiative. MLIT, for its part, needs to establish partnership with these entities and take a flexible and integrated approach to making good use of their innovative initiatives.

Section 1. Roles of the public, community and private sectors

1. Various forms of role-sharing

[Raising the awareness and stimulating the initiative]

The case studies suggest that community development initiatives are originated from a number of entities, including: voluntary groups of people interested in community development; local governments; and community development councils established with the encouragement of local governments.

Local governments offer financial and other support for initiatives by the community and private sectors. Some initiatives are prompted by the policies, blue prints or support measures that local governments put forward regarding regional development. There are some cases where the development of an expressway network has promoted local residents to review their community development.

Integrated improvement of a river and the townscape



In cases where the public sector has launched a community development initiative, it tries to involve the community and private sectors and encouraged them to play increasingly larger roles as the initiative progresses.

As the case studies suggest, initiatives by the community and private sectors and municipalities are sometimes prompted by basic policies, blue prints or support measures that the central government put forward regarding regional development. In other times, they are prompted by initiatives by other areas.

In the business sector, economic reform and other changes in government policies, regulations and procurement often serve as a catalyst for the development of new technologies and products. The public sector sometimes supports corporate partnerships and cooperation between industry and academia by providing necessary information.

[Securing and developing human resources]

Leaders in community development come from diverse backgrounds. In other words, people’s backgrounds are not necessarily relevant to be such a leader. And they are not always natural leaders either. Rather, they often learn to be a leader in the on-going process of community development. Some entities even train community development leaders.

The public sector supports human resources development by such means as offering professional advice.

An advisor in action



Businesses should also give priority to training their employees. Using external human resources is a viable option to that end.

[Setting goals in light of individual characteristics and qualities, implementing the initiative, and sustaining efforts for improvement]

A community development initiative involves activities by numerous entities, including the public, community, private and NPO sectors.

The public sector supports initiatives by the other sectors by such means of providing funds, improving public facilities concerned to boost their impact, and establishing regulatory ordinances. These initiatives may take the form of activities using public facilities, refurbishment of homes and shops, or business start-ups.

In the private sector, businesses usually conduct market research, work out plans, and set goals all by themselves. In some cases, however, they work with the public sector to conduct R&D or market research. Procurement by government entities or certification by public entities may boost public confidence in new technologies and products developed by businesses.

2. Role-sharing principles

[Between the public and other sectors]

Ownership is the key to success in the end.

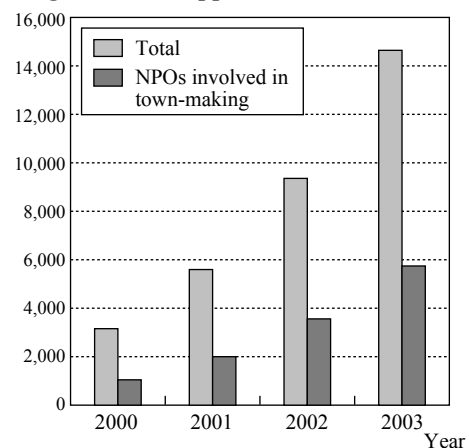
It is therefore necessary to ensure ownership on the part of the community, private and NPO sectors. The private sector, in particular, is supposed to involve itself in community development as a key local player. The public sector, on the other hand, is required to facilitate, work with, or support initiatives by other sectors.

The private sector is expected to stimulate potential demand and take advantage of such business opportunities, or cultivate new markets and create new values for customers. The public sector, for its part, needs to create a market environment conducive to private business activities and try to maximize market potential, while providing infrastructure and service that market cannot offer, establishing rules and regulations on such aspects as safety, the environment and convenience, and monitoring compliance. Furthermore, the public sector should help cultivate markets for innovative R&D and goods and services in increasing demand. The central government should play a leading role in providing necessary support to municipalities, communities and businesses that operate on international levels.

As the case studies suggest, the sphere between the public and community sectors is expanding, and NPOs are expected to play an intermediary role between the two sectors.

The public and other sectors should work together to create an atmosphere for voluntary and active involvement in community development.

Changes in the number of organizations with the government-approved NPO status



Source: Compiled from the Cabinet Office's website on NPOs (<http://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/>)

[Between the central governments and local entities]

It is important that community development is led by local communities, businesses and municipalities with their ingenuity and on their own initiative. In other words, their ownership is the key. The central government supports their initiatives in light of their implications for other areas, Japan as a whole, or even other countries.

The central government provides major support if community development initiatives are in line with its policies. When it works with local governments and others, the central government is required to put their innovative initiatives to good use.

Community development and business activities are greatly affected by national rules and regulations on such aspects as safety, the environment and convenience, as well as those on the development of key transport networks—including expressways, Shinkansen lines, airports and key ports—on the national or even international levels. The future of flows of people and goods among metropolitan areas, other countries, and areas and regions of the country, as well as the future of markets in Japan and abroad, holds a key to the success of local communities, municipalities and businesses. For these reasons, the central government is required to play an important role in two major tasks. One is to ensure a level playing field for local communities, businesses and municipalities to compete in creativity, ingenuity and wisdom. The other is to develop physical and social infrastructure conducive to business even from an international point of view, including a safe and high-quality environment for living.

The central government encourages cooperation and partnership among municipalities and other entities. Such cooperation and partnership may be bolstered by appropriate role-sharing at the regional or even national level.

Efforts to build cooperation and partnership at the international level should be led by the central government, which should also play a leading role in creating internationally competitive environments and making necessary arrangements regarding international standards.

At any rate, the central government is committed to working with local entities to create a social environment conducive to initiatives aimed at developing vibrant communities or businesses.

Section 2. Building partnership with municipalities, local communities, businesses and NPOs

[Partnership with local communities, businesses and NPOs]

MLIT believes that community development should be based on partnership between the public sector and the community, private and NPO sectors. Based on this belief, the ministry encourages these three sectors to participate in—and provide input to—the processes of developing and implementing all kinds of policies regarding community development.

Open café on the pavement



A meeting of “public transport advisors”



MLIT is committed to reflecting the views and comments of the private sector and the people in the processes of policy formulation and market monitoring to promote innovation and fair competition by the private sector. In fields that cannot be fully addressed by the market, MLIT establishes appropriate rules and regulations, provides necessary support, and solves problems in partnership with other stakeholders concerned.