

Keynote Speech

Innovative Activities by Manufacturing Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in a Periphery within Japan

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Economic geographers have been interested in the spatial inequalities in different scales of a territory: from between nations at the global level to between streets in a city center. Japanese economic geographers have traditionally studied the spatial inequalities among regions within Japan. However, as economic disparity among regions in this country has decreased, this theme does not seem attractive for younger economic geographers.

However, the regional disparity within Japan should be reconsidered now. The Japanese government believes that many municipalities in peripheral areas are now in danger of disappearing in the not too distant future because of declining population, and it has implemented various measures to prevent this. However, these measures do not seem to have been successful as they have not evoked any endogenous motivation in the local people to vitalize their own hometowns. It is important for the people in peripheral regions and localities to carry out some innovative economic activities, which can make them more proud of and attached to their hometown. I introduce such innovative activities in Kyushu, a periphery located in southwestern Japan, on the basis of my own interviews with managers of manufacturing SMEs in this region.