

Sustainable life and nature: living with and in the controlled nature

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Abstract: *What leads us to paying more attention to it? We investigate the forest near our institute with a local guide to cultivate our ideas.*

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1. Background

We still preserve an old culture of hunting and gathering, which can be traced back for fifteen thousands years. Satoyama is a Japanese word denoting a stretch of forest near village and can be seen as a heritage from the old culture. The woodland used to provide villagers with fuel, that is, the timbers collected there were used to cook foods, warm rooms, boil water for bath, etc. It also allowed them to hunt small animals and pick up edible weeds, mushrooms, etc. The woodland used to be indispensable part of life at least until fifty years ago.



2. Status

It has become increasingly difficult to maintain the woodland as the resources available there are not competitive compared with modern alternatives. You do not need to collect firewood because you can use electricity to warm up your rooms and gas to cook foods. Timbers can be imported cheaply from foreign countries. Less people hunt animals and the skill may not be inherited to the next generation. Only the elderly enter the woodland to pick up edible staff. The old culture is fading out.

3. Options

Should we allow the land to go back to the state of uncontrolled nature or reverse the trend towards old days? We would like to think of the issue and find out ways to make things better.

One can argue that we should not touch the forest as it disturbs the act of nature. It is not particularly true as the forest is most productive when human takes care of it. Assuming that we agree to maintain our old culture, for what are we continuing our involvement to the forest? One of the appealing claims is that the forest absorbs carbon dioxide, resulting in suppressing the progress of global warming. Another is that it teaches us of the eco-system, that is, the laws of nature. The former is the practical and economic value while the latter the idealistic and spiritual value.



4. Objective

No matter how we evaluate the forest, economical or spiritual, we are failing to maintain the old culture. With shrinking population in Japan, we are likely to lose our control on the forest rapidly. What leads us to paying more attention to it? We investigate the forest near our institute with a local guide to cultivate our ideas.

