

CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE AGENDA OF LONG-DISTANCE TRAILS

Yumiko Yamamoto

Kyoto University

What are long-distance trails?

- Long-distance trails are long routes for walking and hiking through mountains or highways.
- They do not necessarily lead to the top of a mountain.
- The first long-distance trail, “The long trail” was constructed between 1912 and 1930 in Vermont, in the United States.



- The numerous long-distance trails of the US are protected and managed as “National Trails” by the government.
- Similar trails have been popular in Western countries for a long time.

Japanese long-distance trails

Shikoku Henro

- A 1,200km pilgrimage route to visit 88 temples on Shikoku island.
- Originally, it had been a journey of worship or training
- It gradually became popular with the common people, and became a cultural attraction.
- O-settai is the custom to assist pilgrims, which has been believed to be a way to obtain the blessing of Buddha.
- It is continued today, often out of kindness, or out of respect for the pilgrims.



Kumano Kodo

- An ancient trail that links major sacred sites such as the Kumano Sanzan Three Grand Shrines, the Ise Shrine, and Mount Koya.
- In 2004, the area was registered as UNESCO World Cultural Heritage for a unique cultural landscape.



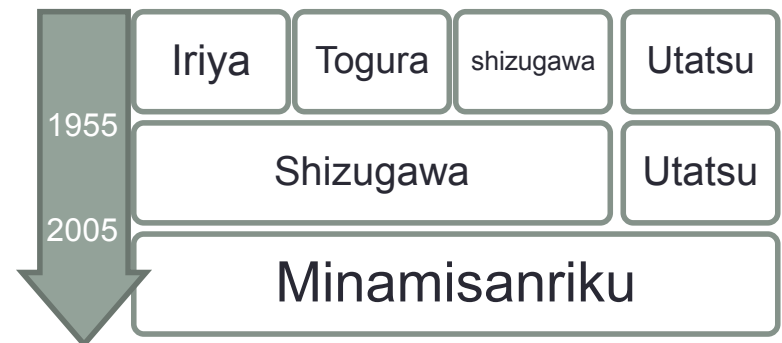
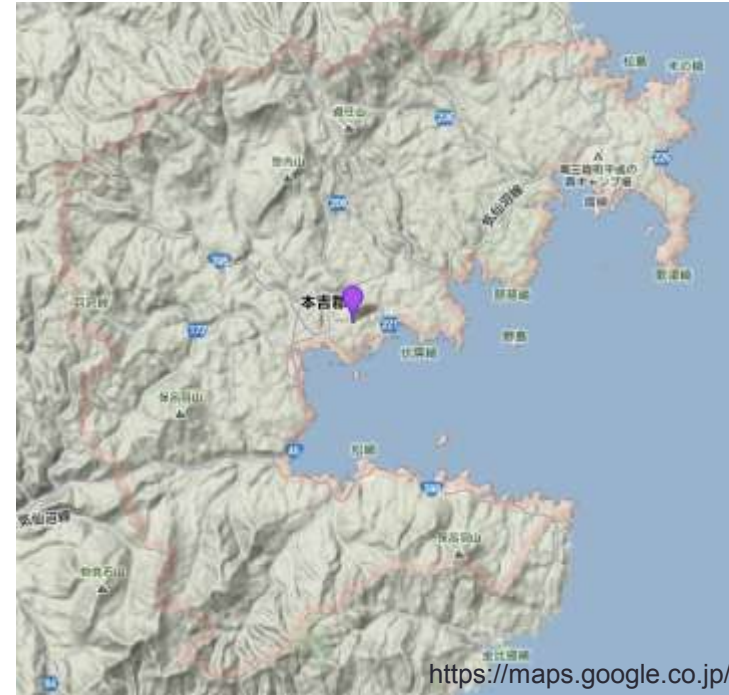
Michinoku Shiokaze Trail

- A newly rebuilt long-distance trail along the coast of the Sanriku Fukko National Park in northeastern Japan.
- It will link the regions affected by the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.
- One of the Green Reconstruction Projects planned by Japan's Ministry of the Environment.



Minamisanriku

- Located in Miyagi prefecture
- Area: 163.74km²
- Population: about 18,000
- One of the hardest hit by 2011 Tsunami.
- The total reported death in town is 618
- Surrounded by mountains and ocean
- A superb marine landscape of sawtooth (ria) coastlines
- Designated as Minami Sanriku Kinkasan Quasi-National Park
- A low birthrate, graying
- Depopulation
- Municipal mergers





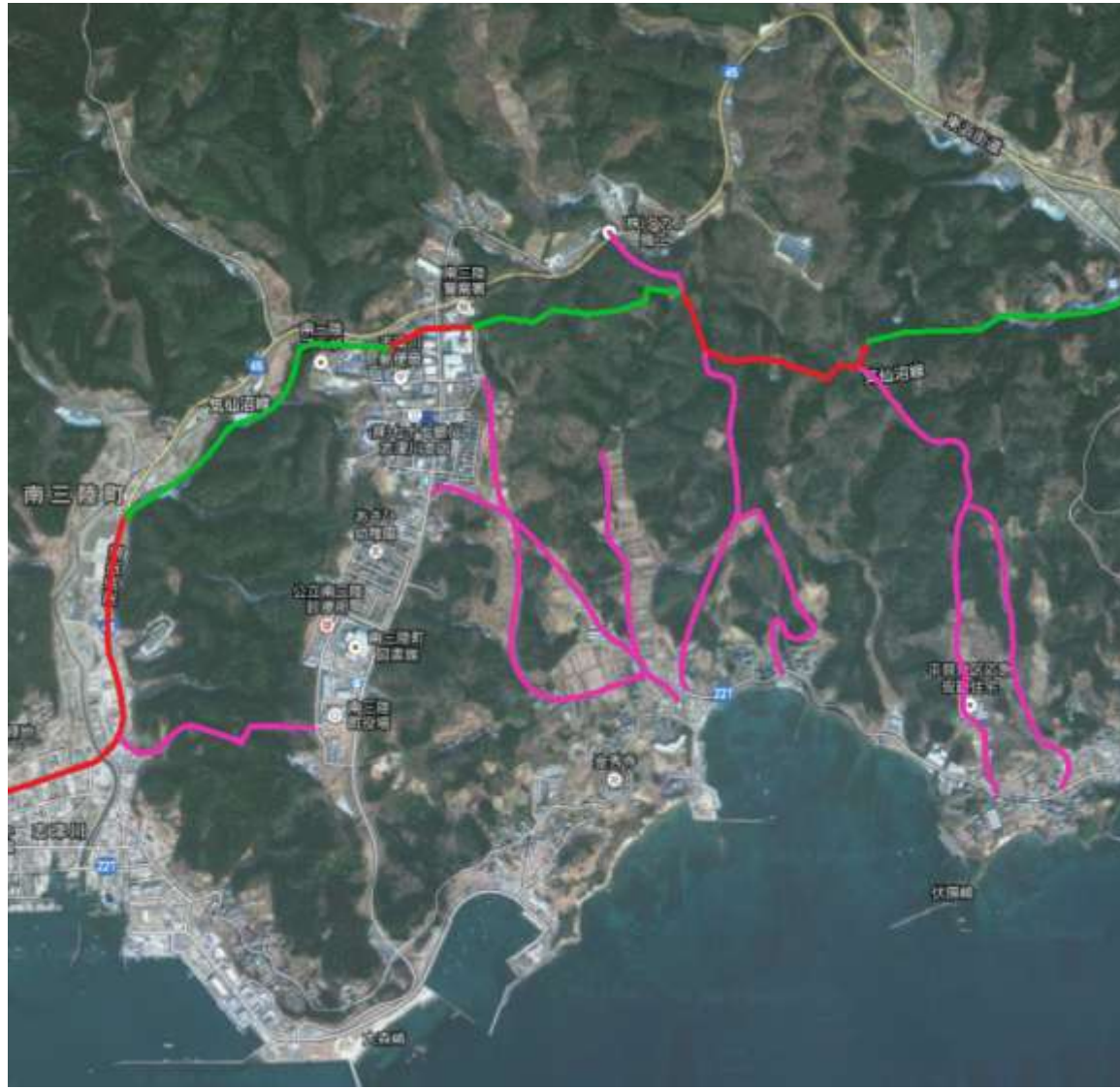
1913

1951

1976

1997

Existing trails in Minamisanriku



Why did trails become out of use?

- Most people transport by car
- People ceased to climb mountains to get timber and firewood
- Children have less opportunity to play in the mountain

Without
maintenances



Trails in good condition

Trails in bad condition

- It is difficult to walk because of windfalls and thickets.
- Many trees interrupt the view.



Trails as emergency routes

- When tsunami hit, many people walked up old mountain paths which had been out of use
 - To escape from the tsunami to a nearby hill.
 - To move from a temporary shelter to a safer one.
 - To visit family and friends in other districts.
 - To distribute relief supplies.
- Why did people walk?
 - People who use their cars to escape got stuck in traffic jams.
 - The coast roads became flooded, destroyed and impassable.
 - Many cars were carried away and gasoline was in short supply



It is important to keep mountain trails in good condition !

From interviews

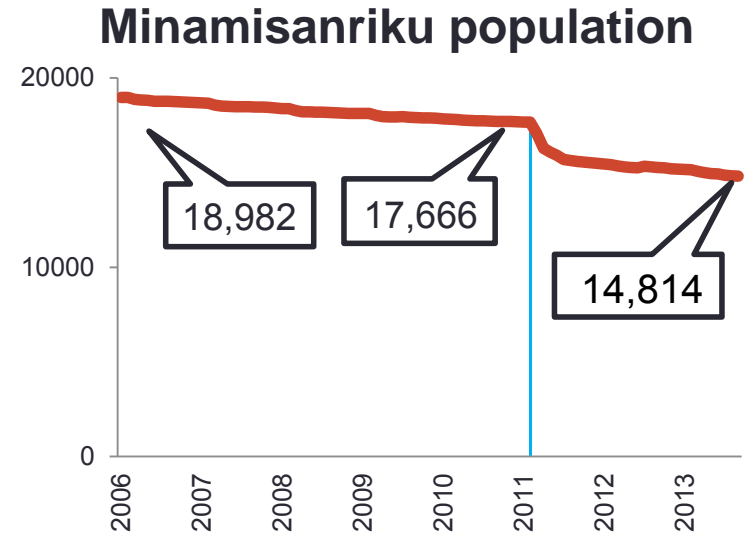
- Many legends, records, trails, names of some places such as “ohfune” (a large ship) and “nokoriya” (a valley that remained) have the vestiges of past tsunamis.



- As time passed, people became overconfident in the seawalls.
- Residents recognized the power of nature and the importance of evacuation routes.

From interviews

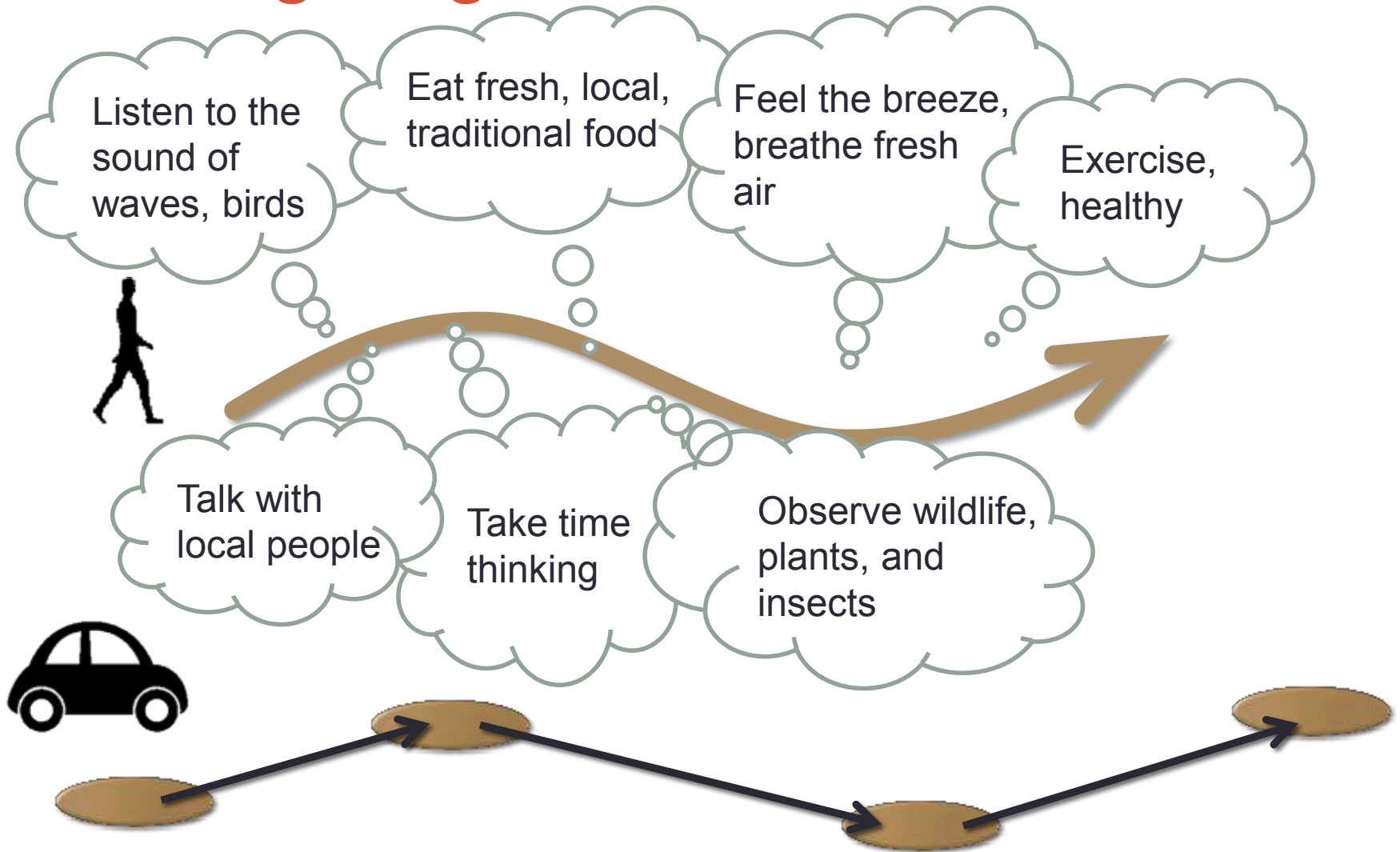
- Local residences are concerned about the population decline, especially of the new generation that will rebuild the region and pass on the local traditions.



- Many families broke up and traditional communities are disappearing.
 - Many people left the town in search of homes and jobs.
 - “Once people experience conventional city life, they won’t come back.”
 - In some villages, the religious association called “keiyaku-ko” was dissolved.
 - There are few opportunity to exchange opinions with each other in the new communities.

What can long-distance trail do?

Walking long-distance trails



What you can find in trails

Wild animals, birds, snakes, insects, snails, flowers, mushrooms, fruits, nuts, berries,...



Minamisanriku



Long-distance trail

ROUTE SETTING

- Local residences rediscover the attractiveness of their surroundings, and exchange opinions in workshops.



DEVELOPMENT OF TRAILS

- Cooperation in its establishment and maintenance leads to improved local social communication and networking.



<http://www.tohoku-trail.go.jp/files/20130717-2.pdf>

WELCOME VISITORS FROM OUTSIDE

- Visitors make local people aware of attractions in their town.
- Visitors spend on the local economy.



A serene sunset scene over a large body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright, shimmering path of light across the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds, some of which are partially illuminated by the setting sun. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a rocky shore is visible on the right side, with a small figure of a person standing on it. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and contemplative.

Thank you for your kind attention