Research Article

Encounters with Others: Student Growth through Fieldwork Studies in Rural Areas

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Universities in developed countries are required to develop educational programs that enable graduates from various walks of life to play an active role in various fields. Meanwhile, many rural areas of developed countries are in decline. Many rural areas have been trying to work with universities to solve regional problems. However, not all rural areas have universities. The present paper studies how university students from urban areas engage in fieldwork studies and how they mature through such an experience. The author interviewed municipal officials, professors, and forty young people who engaged in fieldwork studies. The findings show that the young people chose careers based on their fieldwork studies. Graduates often visit the engaged rural areas or other rural areas to participate in community activities. Some migrated or planned to migrate to rural areas and start their entrepreneurial businesses, having been impressed by rural entrepreneurs during their fieldwork studies. Rural areas benefited from working with such students, particularly residents' growing sense of civic pride. Thus, this paper suggests fieldwork studies in rural areas to revitalize declined rural areas with high population mobility.

Introduction

Today's universities in developed countries develop educational programs that enable graduates from various walks of life to play active roles in various fields. In the past, universities represented national culture and produced political and economic elites. Professors and students were allowed to have values that were alien to the secular world. Nowadays, higher educational enrollment has increased such that students can enter a university if they wish to study (Trow 2006). Government subsidies are no longer sufficient or allocated to all universities since the number of universities has become too numerous. Hence, for educational purposes and to stabilize their management bases, universities

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must now collaborate with local municipalities, companies, and other entities in their regions and produce workers for them.

Meanwhile, the rural areas of many developed countries are in decline. Some urban areas have become global cities, and some regions have developed the role of hinterland of global cities; many regions in rural areas are facing the adverse effects of population decline (Pallagst et al. 2014; Manzenreiter et al. 2020). In the framework of neoliberalism, individuals and regions are forced to compete with each other (Clark 2011; Hooley et al. 2018).

Feeling threatened by depopulation and competition, many regions have tried working with universities to solve their regional problems (Benneworth and Fitjar 2019). While it is difficult for universities to solve the long-term trend of regional population decline through research and development, it may be possible for universities to educate citizens who work and live in rural areas to revitalize such regions (Evers 2019).

Thus, clarifying how universities and regions can work together is an important issue from the perspective of higher education and considering the management of rural areas with declining populations. We should consider how students benefit from collaborative education between universities and rural areas. How do university students gain skills for employment and living in a neoliberal world based on competition, and how can they revitalize rural areas facing depopulation?

Theoretical Background

Students learn inside and outside university campuses. Universities send students to companies to conduct internships, and employees are involved with universities as working students in joint research projects. University programs also include learning about local regions. Students discover various issues about the region, propose solutions, and implement them. Learning outside university campuses helps students understand the reality of areas through experience, organically master what they learn in the classroom, and promote a sense of citizenship (Mooney and Edwards 2001). Depending on the collaborating partners and the expected educational effects, this learning process is described as community-based/engaged learning, project/problem-based learning, and service learning. All these approaches are collectively referred to as fieldwork studies (FWS), which emphasize students' experiences outside the university campus. FWS are available in geography, architecture, ecology, sociology, etc., where students walk and investigate in the towns and in nature. This leads to in-depth learning in each subject and helps students acquire communication skills, a desire to

volunteer, teamwork, a spirit of challenge, situational awareness, an understanding of human diversity, and the ability to find employment (Bringle and Steinberg 2010; Beatty et al. 2016; Carlisle et al. 2017; France and Haigh 2018; Pope 2018; Nakayama and Matsumura 2018; Peasland et al. 2019; Pope 2018; Nakayama and Matsumura 2018 Peasland et al. 2019; Otto and Dunens 2021; Hannibal and Robertson 2023).

A particularly promising educational effect of FWS is learning the importance of cooperation. Students cooperate not only with other students but also with residents of the study area. Although it is sometimes difficult for individual students to develop various projects to solve regional problems, through cooperation among students or with residents, students learn specific knowledge and skills and acquire the ability to see things from multiple perspectives, discuss with residents, and empathize with others (Kudo et al. 2018). Through collaborative education with local residents, students also increase their awareness of the need to promote sustainable projects in rural areas (Martinez-Campillo et al. 2019). Students who have participated in FWS also report high satisfaction with working with others to solve problems (Tuma and Sisson 2019).

The educational benefits of FWS are not limited to the short period of studies. Several reports have been made on students after graduation; statistical data analysis following graduates who had experienced FWS reported that participants were more prosocial, more engaged with helping others in need, etc. (Astin et al. 1999). The holistic development of students as citizens, both professionally in their fields of study and especially through the experience of working with others to overcome real-world challenges, has helped them in their current work and life (Lake et al. 2021). For the residents, FWS are an opportunity to promote cooperation with the university and solve problems through interaction with students and graduates. A sustained cooperative relationship between a university and a region benefits both parties (Ankrah and AL-Tabbaa 2015). Accordingly, FWS have prolonged effects on the students and the regions where they may live or work.

However, not all regions have universities. In regions with no universities, especially in rural areas with declining populations, many young people leave when they graduate from high school and are not likely to return in the future. Rural areas have few prospects to attract other young people to immigrate. Rural areas need to communicate to young people the appeal and attractiveness of living in their area. Therefore, an increasing number of regions with declining populations are seeking partnerships with distant universities in urban areas to acquire new knowledge, skills, and particularly highly qualified graduates. These partnerships have advantages for the universities: by

collaborating with distant rural regions, they can acquire knowledge, skills, and students from a broader range of areas.

Few studies have shown what effect FWS have in rural areas experiencing population decline and the students. It is important to show how learning in depopulated areas affects students and the regions pedagogically and from the perspective of regional sociology that seeks to promote rural revitalization by attracting young human resources.

Rural Development and University in Japan

We now introduce the cases of Japan's universities and rural areas. When viewed in large geographic segments, Japan's regional disparities in educational opportunities appear small compared to other OECD countries (OECD 2020: Chapter 4). However, when viewed in smaller areas, the regional disparities are severe. The outflow of young people in regions with declining populations is a serious problem because of the ability to move quickly within a small area of the country. Migration from rural areas to urban areas, especially to the Tokyo metropolitan area, is often observed when students enter universities and other higher education institutions. After graduating from high school, graduates must move from their natal areas to study further.

Low birth rates in urban areas are one of the reasons for the overall population decline in Japan (Masuda 2014). Young people in urban areas rarely move to rural areas, where well-paid jobs are scarce, and living conditions are often inconvenient. In urban areas, however, the prices of goods and land are high. Single people from rural areas may be satisfied with a small house in the city center. However, if they marry and have children, they must rent a relatively large house in the suburbs. Commuting from the suburbs is time-consuming. Infrastructure such as nurseries is lacking in urban areas and suburbs. Therefore, young people from rural areas can barely have families and raise children in urban areas. Thus, migration to and visits to rural areas have spread among some people (Zollet and Qu 2019; Klien 2020). However, only a few regions have successfully hosted migrants (Dilley et al. 2022).

In Japan, partnerships between universities and rural areas are expected to contribute to young people settling in rural areas (Horiuchi and Takahashi 2016). Many depopulated regions are experiencing crises over the exodus of young people as they leave to enter university. Students gain knowledge and understanding of the region they studied but are not likely to work or live in that region (Koyama 2020). However, students tend to become more interested in their own rural hometowns and other

rural areas after FWS, increasing the rate of employment there (Horiuchi and Matsuzaka 2022). Although graduates do not settle down in the region where they studied, they may visit after graduation or visit other rural areas (Horiuchi 2022).

This paper focuses on FWS in rural areas of the Kansai region of Japan. The Kansai region is centered in Osaka, Japan's second-largest metropolitan area after Tokyo. The number of international tourists to the region is as high as that of the Tokyo metropolitan area (Li and Katsumata 2020). However, the concentration of people in the Tokyo metropolitan area has led to a severe decline in the population of regions other than Osaka and the vicinity. Figure 1a presents the population density of each municipality in the Kansai region, showing that population density is high in Osaka and its vicinity but low in more remote areas, particularly in the north and south areas of the Kansai region. Figure 1b shows the "residual rate of high-school graduates", which is the population aged 15–17 in the denominator in 2015 and the population aged 20–22 in the numerator in 2020. Osaka and its surrounding areas attract high-school graduates and retain them in the area as university students or graduates. Although there are some exceptions in other regions, many young people move out after high-school graduation. The residual rates are also lowest in the north and south areas of the Kansai region of low population density.

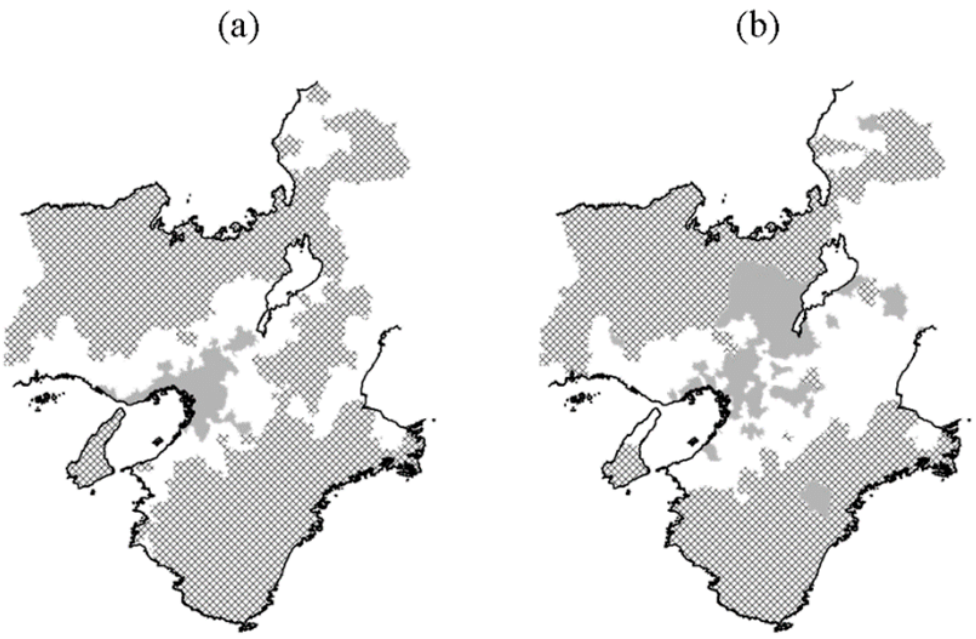

Figure 1. Municipalities in the Kansai Region. (a) Population density. Crosses indicate fewer than 300 persons/km^2, white indicates 300–3000 persons/km^2, and black indicates more than 3000 persons/km^2. (b) High-school graduate persistence rate. Crosses are less than 0.75, whites are 0.75–1.0, and grays are greater than 1.0.

Counterpart Communities

Between 2022 and 2023, the author interviewed officials of local municipalities in the Kansai region whose websites claimed to collaborate with universities. The municipalities are in the north or south areas of the Kansai region. Between 2022 and 2023, the author interviewed some university professors who conducted FWS with their students in local municipalities.

There are various expectations for the municipalities that accept university students. If a university is in the region, it is easy for local municipalities to collaborate with the university, including local companies and resident groups. It is expected that the university will conduct joint research and that graduates will find employment in the region. For regions without universities, partnerships with universities are largely developed by chance. In one municipality, an administrative staff member attended a study session on renewable energy and became acquainted with a university professor. Because they shared the same interest, students were later visited the region under the guidance of the

professor. Students learned about the potential of renewable energy and found their own activities in the region, which later became an FWS university course. In another municipality, a university professor visited a region for research and interviewed municipal officials, which led to guiding other students to the region. In another municipality, a university professor specializing in architecture became involved in the activities of a community development organization. The professor led the students on a research and educational trip, which became the catalyst for student activities in the region.

Initially, local municipal officials expected that hosting the students would transfer knowledge and skills from the university. However, as the professors began to accompany students to the region, the relationship with the students became more attractive. University students conducted FWS in the community and exchanged ideas for their own interests in meetings with residents. Although these interactions were intended to be a process of research and basic planning, the local municipal officials discovered that the process itself was highly appreciated by the residents, who found it satisfying and enjoyed interacting with the students.

In some cases, students are involved directly in the municipality's community development efforts, without guidance from professors or class involvement. One municipality has been promoting telework by taking advantage of its location deep in the mountains rich in nature. Students were involved in the project and built a shared house by themselves, and the local municipality supported the project in cooperation with local companies. The municipality was selected as a model region for the Japanese government's rural revitalization program, and the students play a leading role in community development, which is communicated on the local municipality's website.

Local municipal officials have various expectations of students. They want them to discover the region's charms from their perspective and interact with residents. In regions where universities are not located, especially in regions that are not tourist destinations, it is gratifying to have young people, including international students, come to the region. There is also an expectation that they will purchase local products. There is also a slight expectation that they will be interested in the region and might move there to find or create jobs, such as local officials. However, a local municipality official told us they would be happy if the students moves to one of the other regions and worked there, even if it is not necessarily in his region. One municipality is promoting community development through entrepreneurship among its residents. Residents have been working as teachers of university students on the significance of living in rural areas. Some students who visited the area

expressed a desire to return to their hometowns and start their own businesses. The local municipality official said that having such students visit their community was an inspiration to the residents as teachers.

Professors who dispatch students to rural areas are also aware of such expectations from the local communities. One university in a rural area welcomed students from around the country. The university has been educating its students to engage with residents in the declining population area during their four years of study. Another university positioned its educational objectives to encourage students to interact with adults in rural areas. Professors matched residents who wanted to share their work and life with someone else with students who wanted to learn in the region. This way, they have deepened their ties between the region and the university.

Graduates

Between 2022 and 2023, the author interviewed a total of 40 people; they included graduates who had been involved in FWS in depopulated areas as university students, and students who had been involved in FWS, were in their fourth year, about to graduate, and who had already found employment after graduation. The author made appointments for interviews through referrals from the official staff of local municipalities and university professors mentioned in the previous section. When appropriate, the author referred to the interviewees' materials on regional academic collaboration. Interviews were conducted online via zoom, recorded, and transcribed. All the interviewees were in their twenties.

The students' FWS activities are diverse, including helping with farm work in a mountain village and promoting the area to tourists; developing new food products using local specialties; renovating an abandoned house and turning it into a shared house to serve as a base for their activities; creating a promotion video to introduce local tourism resources and disseminating it on social network services; cooperating with a local broadcasting station as a disk jockey; becoming involved in the operation of a cafeteria for impoverished children; participating in and managing volunteer groups for disaster prevention and urban development; and making signs for local tourist resources to serve as a tourist attraction. Some of these activities were initiated by adults in the community and university professors, while students initiated others directly.

Interviewees engaged in FWS in this way and developed basic skills, such as discovering and solving local problems through interaction with a variety of people. The interviewees understand that the experiences are directly applied to their current or future jobs, and some used their FWS activities as a

self-promotion tool when seeking employment to companies. One graduate visited a village in an area with a declining population as a student and helped with farm work, conducted promotion activities for tourists, and conducted other FWS activities. After graduation, he continued to visit the community on a regular basis. For a city-born and -raised Osaka resident, he found the village to be like a second home. He now works at an office that promotes workcations. This requires him to negotiate with residents, but he can effectively use his experience of being involved in the region when he studied there. He even took the president of his workplace to a region he was involved with. Another graduate came to live in a region with a declining population and conducted FWS, managing a Marché for community development. He realized that community activities involve a variety of jobs and that people must be resourceful. He now works as a local municipality employee. New jobs arise occasionally. He is positive that his first job will be interesting if he tries it out, and this awareness was a major aspect of his experience in FWS community activities. Another graduate renovated a vacant house by herself and turned it into a base for her juniors' activities, who use it as a base to continue teaching local elementary and junior high-school students about the lives of urban university students. Although she was born and raised in Tokyo, she said that the region she studies in was a second home where she could be closely involved with people of various ages, which has helped her in her current job. She explained as follows.

> *I am now working in an office of urban development. I talk with landowners and residents to share our visions of what kind of community development should take place. I follow same approach of my FWS to community development, discussions in both rural and urban communities. I can apply the experience I gained at FWS to my current job.*

Graduates found interactions with residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in 2020–2021, to be meaningful. One graduate helped plan and manage a roundtable meeting involving residents as part of the FWS program for a government planning project. However, after entering the pandemic, the roundtable meetings went online. At first, he was perplexed, but he supported the roundtable meetings, which combined the advantages of online and face-to-face meetings, which allowed him to interact with community residents who were doing what they could despite the difficulties of face-to-face meetings. Based on the situation that emerged from these experiences—the unfamiliarity of older people with smartphones—he began to manage a smartphone course. Another graduate, whose student life was completely changed by the COVID-19 pandemic and who had mainly taken online courses and submitted assignments remotely, wanted to do something

spontaneous; thus, she joined the FWS, which was accepting a limited number of applicants. Although most activities, such as dialogues with residents, were conducted online, she could still participate in person and experience local issues in the real world. She has learned that she needs to interact with residents to make an appealing video. She intended to find a job in a store, and she explained the difference between online and real life as follows:

> *What is conveyed through news and SNS is different from what is conveyed by actually talking to people on the ground. There are things that can be felt and conveyed only in real face-to-face encounters. The unique power of human beings can only be conveyed in person. Nowadays, unmanned stores are increasing. However, there are things that can only be conveyed in person, and I don't think we should lose that.*

How do students understand the significance of engaging in FWS in rural areas with declining populations? In areas where there is a lack of manpower, adults in the community appreciate students becoming involved in activities such as community development and agriculture programs. Such activities fulfilled many graduates. However, they also understand that the actual number of days of their activities is limited and that it is not enough to make a significant contribution to the community. They understand that their activities were possible only because their professors, their seniors, and the local community had built a relationship of trust with them before they started their own activities. In a rural depopulated area, thanks in part to the activities of students over the years, the number of immigrants has increased, and young people are now living in the community, which makes the community happy. One graduate said she hoped to use this experience in her work, acknowledging her professor and seniors. Nonetheless, students could contribute to rural depopulation areas in a way that is difficult for other adults. The interviewees were aware of their activities' impact on the children in the regions. Two graduates remembered that when they had been children, university students from Tokyo came to their community and interacted with them, which they enjoyed. Thus, they decided to interact with children in rural areas when they became university students. Conversely, they were also concerned that the children they interacted with did not take pride in their community. In an effort to address this, graduates created free newspapers and held festivals in which the children could participate to contribute to children's developing civic pride in their natal areas. One graduate who engaged in FWS in rural area found the effects of university students on children as follows:

In rural areas, high school students have few opportunities to communicate with university students. During our FWS, we collaborated with high school students in rural areas. We university students found good points of the area, which would have changed the mindset of high school students. I think that this would let high school students who, after leaving their hometowns, would return to their hometowns in the future.

Many graduates now work in urban areas. Nature is abundant in rural areas, where people live a relaxed life. However, jobs are scarce. To enjoy working and living in the rural areas, knowledge, skills, and connections with urban area must be built. One graduate, now working in Tokyo, has a strong desire to return to her hometown. During her university studies, she participated in the FWS of a community development project in her rural hometown, where the adults in the community actively supported and adopted the opinions of the young people, and incorporated them into the community development process. She also learned through these community activities that she needed to work in urban area to contribute to her hometown. This was because the adults who supported her had also worked in the urban area. Another graduate of the FWS program coordinated international students visiting rural areas of Japan. She is currently working as a labor agent for foreigners in Osaka. She would like to return to her rural hometown in the future, but there are no jobs. She is considering starting her own business, such as an English conversation café. She considers her student community activities and her current job as experiences for this purpose. Some graduates have moved from urban to rural areas to work. One graduate moved to the rural area where she did her FWS and is working at a restaurant founded by a person with whom she was involved during her FWShe wanted to eventually return to her rural hometown, so she chose to work first in Tokyo and then in the rural area. She had learned practically that doing business in a rural area would be different than in Tokyo. She described her future plan as follows.

I would like to return to my hometown by the time I am about 30 years old. In my rural hometown, there were no attractive people that I could aspire to be like. But at FWS, I saw many cool adults, and they helped me. I want to emulate those adults so that I can be active in my hometown and show the kids what it's all about.

Some graduates plan to start their own entrepreneurial businesses in rural areas. In doing so, they are reflecting on the importance of cooperating with others, which they experienced during FWS. One graduate, who initially was employed as an office worker in an urban area, wanted to eventually start

his own business. He would have been happy to start a business anywhere, but he decided to do so in the rural area where he carried out his FWS because he thought he could leverage the relationships and experiences of the community he had been involved in. Another graduate wanted to start his own business from the time he first entered university, and through an introduction from his advisor, he started a haunted house business during his FWS. There, he learned that the adults in the community supported him and that there were many interesting adults. He now works for a fully remote company and teleworks while living in his rural hometown. He plans to start his own business in the future and prefers to live in a rural area with entrepreneurial adults. Another graduate, who once worked for a company in the urban area, later moved to the area where he was involved in FWS and started his own business, producing and selling shiitake mushrooms. He says the biggest challenge in starting a business is the isolation. Even with residents in the neighborhood, he cannot share the same values. Thus, he keeps in touch with his peers, with whom he worked during FWS, and others who are also starting businesses in other rural areas. He explained as follows.

> *Several times a month, friends from my student days come to visit me. People who have started their own businesses elsewhere also come here from time to time to think about new product development. The people at the town hall are also very helpful. In order to do business in rural areas, it is necessary to communicate with various people.*

Many graduates have been influenced in their values toward lifestyle and work through their experiences during FWS. One graduate was involved with immigrants of a similar age to himself in the area where he did FWS. These people's values influenced him to pursue his own lifestyle, not just money. He realized that working hard to earn money is not the only way to live and that there are other options. He now works for a nonprofit business in another rural area of Japan. Many graduates visit the communities they were involved with during FWS purely as a leisure activity. They say that spending time in the community while reminiscing about their FWS experience is a refreshing break from work. One graduate, who now works at a bank in her hometown, says that she often goes back to the community that helped her during her university days to visit. She described his lifestyle as follows.

> *I don't have to live in the region I have been served to visit. I saw people in my advisor's class who traveled back and forth between multiple communities. I thought I could be a model case like them. Even if I don't live there, I can still have connections with residents.*

Two of the graduates interviewed were on leave from work. One of them was dissatisfied with the overworked environment of his company in the urban area. However, he did not necessarily look back on his absences from work. He interacted with people in rural areas who were leading fulfilling lives beyond work. This experience seemed to have given him the feeling that it was okay to take time off if it was hard for him. Another graduate had returned to her parents' home after overworking at her company in the urban area, which took a physical toll on her health. She is now back in good physical condition. What helped her to recover was fresh food from rural areas. She had experienced farming during her FWS when she was a student. Now she is studying to start a business to convey the appeal of pesticide-free food. She explained her current feelings as follows.

> *When I was working in the urban area and my body broke down, I learned that food is very important. I realized that the pesticide-free vegetables I had learned about locally were very difficult to grow and very important for one's health. I would like to contribute to growing and promoting such crops in my future job.*

Discussion

The young people interviewed made use of their FWS experiences when they were university students. They were involved with local communities through sought-after activities that were expected to address the human resource shortages in the rural areas. If the interviewees remained in the university or urban areas, they could hardly have experienced successes and failures, and their experiences would not have been appreciated by the residents. When young people are on campus or living in urban areas, they can find people of the same generation whose stories are similar (Fisher 1982). Furthermore, in rural areas, they must talk to people from a wide range of generations, different from their urban experience. What one learns is important in education, but with whom one learns is also important. Rubinger (1982) introduced private schools in feudalistic 19th-century Japan. A wide range of people gathered to study regardless of class or place of origin. The students developed a national identity and became the driving force behind the Meiji Restoration. Likewise, the young people described in this paper worked not only with like-minded students, but also with adults in the community. What the young people learned there was the art of how to live in rural areas with a declining and aging population. In fact, only a few aspects of their activities as students contributed to the community. The graduates were aware of this fact after their experience as working adults. This is also an opportunity for them to realize their own growth from their university students' age. Through

FWS, the students discovered their hometowns, where they were accepted even if they had failed. These experiences, which are unique to rural areas have led them to their current jobs and lifestyles.

Many interviewees work in urban areas but often visit the rural areas where they had engaged in FWS. Some interviewees had worked in urban areas and then migrated to the rural area they were involved in. During FWS, they interacted with wonderful adults who were active as rural entrepreneurs, many of whom had worked in urban areas when they were young and came to rural areas after developing a certain level of competence. Some people in rural areas are active in economic and social activities. Such people tend to be those with previous outside experience who migrated to rural areas (Horiuchi 2019). The graduates had interacted with these people and gained positive feelings through visiting or living in rural areas. In this way, some interviewees applied their FWS experience to their entrepreneurial careers. They can be considered selfish tourists who use their experiences for their careers (Sin 2009). Residents of the rural areas accept such students, expecting that many come for their own interests, and some may migrate to the region to start their own businesses. Accepting such migrants would be positive for the area by increasing the number of migrants and improving the area's economy and society.

Hosting FWS students would be a welcome development, especially for a rural community with a dwindling number of university-age young people. Rural residents can rediscover the value of their society through interaction with students who come from outside (Collins 2019; MacDonald 2022). Senior residents were able to enjoy interacting with young people of university age, with whom they would not normally have contact. Students also had an impact on the elementary-, middle-, and high-school children in the area, who observed university students from urban areas engaging age in interesting activities using local materials. The children and adults realized that their communities have attractive events for university students; thus, they welcomed students who were actively involved in the community. This experience was a source of civic pride for the residents, which is the greatest achievement.

Both the students and rural residents benefit from FWS. The benefit for the rural residents is not necessarily the acquisition of young people who may settle in the area in the future. The benefit is to nurture young people who are aware of the negative effects of capitalism or neoliberalism, which is the fundamental problem behind the decline in the rural population. Students choose a way of life that will simultaneously revitalize the rural community by trying to solve the problem in their own way, and to nurture a community that welcomes such young people. The goal should be to grow the civic

pride of residents. From the perspective of young people, learning in such a way in the community will help them learn the spirit necessary to live in the coming era of a declining population.

Previous studies reported that FWS imparts various social skills to its graduates (Lake et al. 2021). In today's neoliberal society, each individual must contribute to the economy entrepreneurially, rather than being a cog in a large corporation as a bearer of the creative economy (Florida 2005). FWS in rural areas gives students options other than working for a large urban company. FWS fosters such economic drivers, promotes entrepreneurship in rural areas with declining populations and increases overall productivity. However, graduates' choices are not just to work, but to seek their own lifestyle. Graduates who were out of work were learning the significance of a lifestyle that is not just about working through FWS. They were developing not just to further their self-interest but also to grow prosocially from a desire to help the children and elderly in rural communities. Education is open for students to seek their own lifestyle and community rather than just to increase productivity. It would be possible to pursue social justice from the premise of neoliberalism through education (Hooley et al. 2018). We can assume it is an attempt to capitalize on the mobility enhanced by neoliberalism and to revive the relationships that mobility tends to destroy.

Of course, it is too early to draw such an upbeat conclusion from this paper alone. The students presented in this paper voluntarily participated in FWS and were highly motivated to learn. However, not all students are as highly motivated to participate in FWS, while many others do not participate in FWS at all. There is a concern that the gap between students motivated to experience FWS and those who lack such motivation will continue to widen. Furthermore, not all regions accept students for FWS. Even in the regions that accept students, students may become disillusioned if the region does not have entrepreneurial adults to influence students. The future challenge is finding opportunities for students to develop their communication and problem-solving skills and find ways to become involved in the community even if they lack these skills. Another challenge is to create a climate in the local community that welcomes the students. To achieve this, FWS needs to think more about diversity.

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