

Comments Sheet [FR1]

February 27, 2014

Title of the Project	Long-term Sustainability through Place-Based, Small-scale Economies: Approaches from Historical Ecology		
Research Term	FR1	Project Leader	HABU Junko
<p>General advice and comments of the PEC:</p> <p>The PEC noted strong progress in the research, in particular in collecting archeological data. This is a major achievement. There is, however, a pervasive view among PEC members that the integration of the teams and strands of work, with different goals, is a major challenge, especially in view of the short time frame. There does not seem to be an articulated methodology for bringing the strands together.</p> <p>The sharpening of concepts could be useful here. This includes terms central to the project conceptualization such as subsistence, sustainability, small-scale, range of exchange, locality, and the relation between food diversity and resilience. Coherent integration of the archeological work and the contemporary work ultimately will depend on the strength of the concepts used.</p> <p>Some members voiced lingering concerns about how to conceptualize contemporary small-scale economies (which are open systems) in the context of large food systems, national economies and globalization.</p> <p>It might be considered to invite one or two PEC members with relevant expertise to engage more with the project and provide in-depth advice.</p>			
<p>Reply</p> <p>We are pleased to hear that the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) evaluated the progress of our research in a positive manner. Below are our replies to the four main concerns expressed by the General comments from PEC:</p> <p>1. Integration of the Three Research Groups: Our project proposes that <i>diversity</i>, <i>network</i>, and <i>scale</i> are the three key concepts to understand the long-term sustainability of socioeconomic systems. This</p>			

theoretical framework will provide a conceptual link between the three research groups, enabling at the same time the sharing of the projects' core questions. Our main hypothesis is that a highly specialized subsistence strategy can support a larger community for a short period of time, but a decrease in subsistence and food diversity makes the production system and its associated community more vulnerable in the long-run. The first research group (*Longue Durée* Group) is testing our main hypothesis by making use of the unique long-term perspective offered by the archaeological data from northern Japan, California, and other parts of the North Pacific Rim. The second group (Contemporary Society Group) is aiming to identify, via interviews, surveys, and biological/chemical studies, the advantages and challenges faced by contemporary small-scale food producers (farming and fishing communities as well as indigenous communities) during and after the mid-20th century. This group will also discuss and evaluate the future of these communities in an increasingly globalized world. The third research group (the Implementation, Outreach and Policy Proposal Group) is a natural extension of several sub-projects of the *Longue Dureé* and the Contemporary Society Groups. It will provide concrete suggestions inspired from the research output, promote small-scale food production, and also identify environmental problems caused by large-scale production and solutions to mitigate these. In short, the activities of the three research groups complement each other from the research to the outreach/implementation stage of the project.

- 2. Sharpening of the key concepts:** Most of the key concepts are defined in our Year 1 report. For the purposes of this project, a “small-scale economy” is defined not solely on the basis of the absolute size of the economic unit, but rather in terms of the relative scale of food production within a given socioeconomic context. Our definition of small-scale economy addresses the range of networks that enable food production, distribution, and consumption in a given locality without precluding links to the outside economy. The importance of local autonomy based on place-based production and consumption (*chisan-chisho*) is also a key when studying the resilience of relatively small-scale economic systems. Resilience is defined as “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure.” Sustainability is defined as “the capacity to create, test, and maintain adaptive capability.” Food and subsistence diversity can be measured in multiple ways, but, in each sub-project, we will make it clear how diversity is measured and why a certain measure is more appropriate than the others in the context of the each sub-project.
- 3. Concerns about how to conceptualize contemporary small-scale economies (which are open systems) in the context of large food systems, national economies and globalization:** As indicated in our report, being connected in an open economic system is a different matter from the smallness of the scale of food production and consumption at the level of individual communities. It should also be emphasized that globalization is not necessarily a new phenomenon, and that past small-scale communities were also linked to the larger outside societies. The difference is the intensity and the speed of the linkage. Our preliminary results suggest that even in contemporary

societies there are practices and resource uses that are implemented at a local level without being directly converted to large-scale market economy. Our research so far has revealed that this is especially the case in Japan, where a large number of small-scale food producers are still active.

4. Invite one or two PEC members with relevant expertise to engage more with the project: We will be happy to do so, and we have started talking with several PEC members.