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Questioning Metronormative Power against LGBTQs in Rural Japan

- Queering and Reimagining Rural (Just) Sustainability in Japan -

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Adviser: Associate Professor Mayumi Fukunaga

Co-Adviser: Professor Masahide Horita

Shotaro Kawabata 47-186808

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ABSTRACT

“Rurality” is tricky, and yet it has attracted people’s interest. It has been mythologized as a space where people and nature interact with each other in a harmonious manner. It is oftentimes supposed that the rural local level plays a significant role in implementing sustainability efforts. It is also where thorough contextualization is in particular pursued. When considering sustainability and the interaction between society and the environment, we cannot avoid passing by the discourses and experiences around rurality.

It has been pointed out that queer people, especially in Japan, have generally been excluded and “erased” from ruralized discourses. Contemporary researches have taken various approaches to study the relationship between gender, sexuality, space, environment, and society; and yet there are a few efforts done in the Japanese context. This study approaches the rural queer issue in Japan through an aspect that is significant in Japanese rurality, farming background.

Since this area of research needs more exploration, the research questions addressed in this paper are:

A) What is the structural and normative mechanism which alienates queers in Japan

from realizing livelihood in “rural” areas?

- B) How do their lived experiences show the role of gender and sexuality in transition to sustainable local community and sustaining rural queer identities in Japan?

Based on the data collected through key-informant and semi-structured interviews via the network expanded on snow-ball sampling method, the insights newly drawn from this research are that: 1) the alienating mechanism is not limited to discourses; 2) the observed elements of rurality point to different sources of the rural queer struggles; and 3) their strategies have been woven in the complexity of their lived rurality. The purposes of this research are: to confront metronormativity by depicting the practices rural queers make; to shed light on the mechanism that makes them imperceptible both discursively and materially; and to show an example of the role of a sexuality and gender lens in considering sustainability issues. This research contributes to the series of efforts in bridging the gap between rural queer studies, rural studies in Japan, and sustainability studies.

Keywords: *rural queer, gender, sexuality, LGBT and social sustainability, LGBT and local, power*

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I argue that a multi-layered institutionalization of heteronormativity and cisgenderism deprives rural queer people in Japan of access to Japanese rurality. This also harms the sustainability of rural queerness in Japan, which potentially further damages the capacity of rural communities in Japan. To clarify this point, in this paper, I will specifically explore the following questions: A) What are the structural and normative mechanism which alienates queer people in Japan from realizing livelihood in “rural” areas?; B) How do their lived experiences show the role of gender and sexuality in transition to sustainable local community and sustaining rural queer identities in Japan? For the first question, the heteronormativity and cisgenderism in the process of realizing rural livelihood will be revealed, by drawing their imaginaries of Japanese rurality, the norms that dominate these spaces, and their strategies to live through these spaces from their lived experiences. For the second question, this paper will add the insights recontextualized in Japan, adding to the previous research done on rural queer issues. Since the previous research left open the localized possibilities of the role of gender and sexuality, in this paper, I will try to situate this question in Japan, and explore the localized possibility to this question. This paper is based on the scope of just sustainability, which argues that “justice and sustainability are intimately linked and mutually independent, certainly at the problem level and increasingly at the solution level.” (Agyeman et al., 2003, p.3)

1.1 Just Sustainability

Before getting into this paper's argument, the dominant scheme of sustainability needs to be revisited to show the worldview in which this paper lies, though I recognize that there have been numerous reviews and discussions about sustainability (Mebratu, 1998; Agyeman et al., 2003; Jerneck et al., 2011; Spangenberg, 2011; Farley and Smith, 2014; Fukunaga, 2019).

A significant turn in sustainability conception was made in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The introduction of this framework clarified both (1) that the so-called developed countries also need to reflexively review their governance (Fukunaga, 2019); and (2) that social inclusion has been clearly incorporated in sustainability framework as rearticulated in leaving no one behind principle (UN General Assembly, 2015). The problem is the perceptibility: whether a certain group can be constructed as existing to be incorporated into the ones that are currently left behind. The large part of this sovereignty seems to be reserved dominantly for the authority, not those who are at stake.

This paper recognizes the difficulties and possible problems in giving essential labels to certain groups of people, and yet critical analysis is still valued in this paper in order to critically observe the power structure. About the politics of sustainability, Fukunaga (2014) shows how sustainability has governmentality and functions to reorder the various politicized issues at different levels. According to Fukunaga(2014), sustainability enables

and activates environmental and social reformist narratives that are re woven no matter what level (i.e. national, local etc) the story bases itself on. As this process is highly compatible with essentialism, the process also draws the line between how, what, and who are to be sustained; and not. Fukunaga (2014, pp.81-86.) prescribes critical perspective gained through ethnomethodology to this, because it requires the researchers both to reflect on their positionality and to be aware of the power structure. Edward (2018) too, who studies queer farmers and sustainability, seems to be aware of the governmentality of sustainability and its connotations of heteronormative “reproductive futurism.” (Fujitaka, 2019, p.107) To overcome this, Edward prescribes something more queer, which argues for “sustainability for its own sake.” (Edward, 2018, p.8) That is “premised in this moment (Edward, 2018, p.9)”, and “decoupling of the long-entrenched idea that one needs to either see positive future results or fear negative future reputations in order to provide a rationale for behavior(Edward, 2018, p.9).” To consider *what is left behind* comes with this tricky characteristic which is also seen in Plummer’s (2005) struggle between critical humanism and queer theory.

According to many scholars, gender and sexuality issues have not been properly engaged with in mainstream Japanese society (Muta 2006; Akitsu et al., 2007; Iwashima, 2012). As conceptualizing localized sustainability cannot avoid encompassing the cultural context it is in, we need to be careful whether the fruit of the conception serves only for a

particular group of people, which will jeopardize the achievement of just sustainability.¹

This paper's interest is whether this encompasses heteronormativity and cisgenderism. Given that the local level attracts the attention as implementation of sustainability takes place at this level in many cases (e.g. Action Plan for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Socio-ecological Productive Landscape (Satochi Satoyama)(Ministry of the Environment, 2010)), how the ruralized and particularly localized implementation of sustainability can accompany gendered and sexualized norms is focal. What is currently happening is the conceptions, such as Satoyama, are mobilized to intervene and redesign Japanese ruralized areas (Fukunaga, 2014) without reconsidering the frameworks and structure that culturally support Japanese rurality (Lindström, 2017). These interventions, which possibly lacks consideration concerning gender and sexuality, have the possibility just to reconstruct, and thus enhance, heteronormativity and cisgenderism, which will jeopardize just sustainability of Japan as well as that of rural queer people in Japan.

1.2 Sexuality Matters for Just Sustainability

The effort in reimagining the relationship between queerness and sustainability is done increasingly. For policy implementation, sexuality issues are increasingly related to sustainability development goals. Poku et al (2017) takes up the efforts for and obstacles

¹ Justice itself is a contested arena of discussion, and yet this paper stands on the belief that contextualized justice can be pursued as seen in the effort by the previous research (e.g. performative justice) (Jamal and Hales 2016, p.177).

against LGBTI² social inclusion in African continent in relation to SDGs. They argue that tackling issues concerning LGBTI opens the pathways to achieving SDGs, and show how each sustainable development goal is related with LGBTI issues (Poku et al., 2017, p.437). Stonewall International (2016) also launched a report on the relationship between LGBT and SDGs, and warns that the violence against the sexually non-conforming population needs to cease, for which appropriate policy implementation is required.

For environmental sustainability and sexuality, the critical insights the lens provides and the sexualized knowledge concerning the environment are increasingly pointed out (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010; Keller, 2015). To the question “how queer (sustainable) farmers’ lived experiences illuminate the role of sexuality in the transition to sustainable agriculture” (Leslie, 2017, p.748), Leslie provides an insight:

The lived experiences of queer farmers illuminate the heterosexism embedded in sustainable agriculture. (A queer perspective (...) illuminate how key aspects of our food system are organized by sexuality. (p.768)) At the same time, the promise of queer sustainability lies in the creative ways that queer farmers have turned the challenge of overcoming heterosexism into alternative path in work, home, and family. Queer farmers’ strategies for building socially fulfilling livelihoods should serve to emphasize

² LGBTI stands for lesbian, gay, bi(sexual), transgender, and intersex. LGBT, LGBTQ (queer and/or questioning), and the other relevant terms can be used interchangeably depending on the historical, social, and/or political context. In this paper I will use “queer individuals”, for which reason will be described in 2.1.

(1) the importance of the social sustainability of farmers to the burgeoning sustainable agriculture movement, which needs to more effectively recruit and retain farmers, and (2) the limits of the heteronormative institution of the family farm to organize food production, which constraints who farms and how they access land. Thus, a broader transition to sustainable agriculture may be bolstered by reaching out to current and potential queer farmers and adopting queer perspectives for reimagining relationships between family and farm. (Leslie, 2017, pp.765-766)

The need is recognized. The effort in bridging the gap between sustainability and sexuality is happening. What is lacking is the local recontextualization of these arguments, which are largely absent in Japanese context.

1.3 Demand for Rural Queer Studies in Japan

Some might argue that Japanese culture and queerness do not match with each other, and thus it is a form of cultural imperialism. I argue not. It is both reflected on the social demand of rural queer studies, and the cultural analyses done in the past already (Sunagawa, 2015a; 2015b). In this section, I will focus on the former.

Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2019 launched an online campaign “#MessageHome(#地元届けこの想い)”, for which people tweet messages to non-urban towns with a hashtag

ahead (Tokyo Rainbow Pride, 2019). This can be understood that there is a social understanding that the rural settings are generally delayed compared to the “developed” urban.

Furthermore, considering rural queer issues in Japanese context significantly relates to sustainability issues in Japan, or so increasingly is narrated. Ishi (2016), from Nikkei BP Marketing Strategy Institute, took up LGBT as the key to rural revitalization, referring to the news that Nara signed up for International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association. Though this trend welcomes and encourages LGBTQ travelers, their presence is limited within the realm of good consumer and inbound traveler. In other words, it is not assumed that they would actually live in these rural settings. Japan Alliance for Legislation to Remove Social Barriers based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (2019) makes a list of “difficulties” the sexually non-conforming population in Japan typically face against. The list has a section labeled as “(i) the others (Local/Communities).”

1.4 Statement of Problem and Structure of This Paper

Despite what has been discussed, heteronormativity and cisgenderism are not considered to the sufficient extent to reimagine rurality, sexuality, gender, and sustainability in Japan. For example, Human Security Forum launched in 2018 the Human Security Index of Japan (Human Security Forum, 2018). The numbers for the ninety-one indicators were

the secondary data which were obtained through national census in Japan. However, these data sets do not have certain attributes concerning sexuality, such as sexual orientation (OECD, 2019), and thus the voices of LGBTQ are absent. In addition, the “rate of unmarried male” is nominated as an indicator to show “the rate of those who cannot get married to someone else for economic concerns” (Human Security Forum, 2018, p.6), possibly showing the existing heterosexual male-dominant norm. Despite this, the research concludes that the prefectures such as Toyama, and Fukui, mark high score in human security (Human Security Forum, 2018). The same report emphasizes a need for indices customized to Japan’s needs to monitor progress in achieving SDGs.

To reimagine and address this gap, in chapter 2 of this paper I will first review the relevant literatures from queer studies, geography, rural queer studies, and agricultural sociology. In this paper, I will provisionally provide the following three approaches seemingly taken in rural queer studies: essentialism, normativity, and rurality-revisited. Then, the literatures both on gender and Japanese rurality and on rural queer studies in Japan will be reviewed. It will be clarified that the rurality-revisited approach is absent in rural queer studies in Japan. Taking this approach relying on the “rural” space appearing in their discourses will both allow this paper to protect the interviewees by anonymizing the data, and to explore the material world through their lens. Furthermore, the fact that the rurality-revisited approach has not been done means that the normative and structural

mechanisms have not been explored, which possibly leads to the lack in resilience as the mechanisms keep encouraging certain people to leave. This will be shown by the end of chapter 2. In chapter 3, research questions and methodology will be explained. In this paper, I mainly use the key-informant and semi-structured interviews, using snow-ball sampling method. In the same chapter, how the data was analyzed will also be shown, which are life history analysis, and critical thematic analysis. Chapter 4 is the overview of the key-informant interview, where the way I have gained the gist of the target (i.e. rural queer people in Japan) is mainly introduced. Given the blueprint of the situation surrounding rural queer people in Japan, the interview guide was updated for the following interviews. Chapter 5 is the overview of the semi-structured interview data. This will be necessary to contextualize the analyses provided later on. Chapter 6 is the analysis and discussion of the data. Section 6.1 draws on the life history analysis where their strategies to cope with, survive, and confront heteronormativity and/or cisgenderism in their own environments will be shown. Section 6.2 shows the elements of rural imaginary the interviewees referred to, with them unaware of their significance, which shows their struggle with rural identity. Section 6.3 draws on the experienced patterns of manifestations of heteronormativity and cisgenderism, which have particular implications concerning rural governance. Section 6.4 comprehensively analyzes what is discussed in chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studying the rural queer requires a review of literatures from various disciplines as it requires an interdisciplinary approach. In this section, the literatures from queer studies will be visited.

2.1 Queer Studies

The word “queer” used to be strongly associated with “odd”, “abnormal”, and “not ordinary.” It was historically a term used to devalue and discriminate against non-conforming sexualities and genders (Kikuchi et al., 2019, p.1). According to Kikuchi et al. (2019, p.1), non-conforming sexuality in this context refers not only to homosexuality; but also expressing femininity or masculinity that is socially considered unacceptable; and distancing oneself from, and actualizing lifestyles apart from, the dominant imaginaries founded upon “intergenerational succession”. In this sense, the word “queer” had been used as a discursive tool for humiliation. In other words, it confronted those with non-conforming sexualities and/or genders to force them to assimilate into the dominant way of being. In 1980s, however, the word “queer” experienced the drastic changes of the meanings attached to itself through the social movement against cisgenderism³ and heteronormativity⁴. Overall, it became an umbrella term for non-conforming sexualities and

³ Cisgenderism refers to the ideology that delegitimizes people’s own understanding of their genders and bodies, dichotomizing and hierarchizing trans-gender and cis-gender.

⁴ Heteronormativity is the ideology, institution, and system that favors heterosexuals, and oppresses queer (Robinson, 2016).

genders as some “positive” meanings came to be associated with the term⁵.

Queer studies as an academic discipline emerged and grew with this background⁶.

Though it is hard to give a systematic review of queer studies⁷ since diverse approaches are taken in this academic field, Kikuchi et al.(2019, pp.4-6.) point out that there are at least two strands to queer studies. The first strand, the study of “queer”, takes “queer” as an umbrella identity term loosely binding those who identify themselves as having non-conforming sexuality and/or gender, and thus it studies self-identifying queer people. Kikuchi et al(2019), however, warn that taking up non-conforming sexualities itself does not necessarily define the research as queer studies, given the political history of the term. More importantly, the second strand, queer perspective, enables the researchers to critically view the norms, phenomenon, and institutions that hierarchize a certain way of being (i.e. the sexual majority which is cisgendered and heterosexualized), especially concerning sexuality and gender, over the other. From this point of view, heteronormativity and cisgenderism are considered as the set of institutions and norms that forcefully directs people’s behavior, lifestyles, and frameworks to see and experience the world (Kikuchi et al., 2019). Additionally, queer studies have also discussed and criticized how systems such

⁵ This is not to say that the term queer’s painful history diminishes. Kikuchi et al (2019, p.3) state that the structural “scar is carved” onto it, so some people are quite careful about using this term. Refer also to Shimizu (2013).

⁶ Shimizu (2013, pp.316-317.) further explains that the following are the focal points of queer politics and studies: influence of deconstructionism, and the rebellious attitude well represented in the slogan “we are here. We are queer. Get used to it.”

⁷ Systematic review of queer studies sounds oxymoronic. Queer movements bring what are labelled as deviant to light to claim against the privileged, instead of assimilating to and submitting to the mainstream. For example, refer to Kikuchi et al. (2019) and Kawaguchi (2010).

as meritocracy, capitalism, family values, and gender inequity, can also be negatively intertwined with heteronormativity and cisgenderism. Kawaguchi (2010, p.196) shares the idea that queer studies as a discipline overall question the injustices founded upon heteronormativity. Based upon this, he also warns that there is a tendency to overlook the stratification within queer people. Cisgender male homosexuality also tends to be studied more than the other sexualities (Maekawa, 2019).

Though the literatures concerning queer studies have described their queer lived experiences, the norms, and the institutions concerning sexuality and gender, it is also widely pointed out that these studies concentrate around urban settings (Sunagawa, 2015a; 2015b; Gray et al., 2016; Sugano, 2019). Bell and Binnie (2004, p.1807) even argue about how “sexual ‘others’ are conscripted into the process of urban transformation and by turn how city branding has become part of sexual citizenship agenda.” The power against non-conforming sexualities and genders also works spatially. The following sentence from Gray et al. summates it well: “The rural queer lacks visibility not only because of local hostility, but also because the absence of visibility is required as a structural component of metronormativity⁸” (Gray et al., 2016, p.13). Studying the rural queer itself is therefore part of this new academic field as well as activism.

⁸ For the definition, refer to Subsection 2.3.2.

Both “rural” and “queer” have a broad range of definitions and discussions⁹, and thus it is almost impossible to give this academic field a unified and comprehensive definition. Furthermore, this diversity derives from the different epistemologies the scholars of this interdisciplinary field use. This leads also to the diversity concerning what rural queer studies essentially inquire: what space is, how space is influenced by people and vice versa, and what queer is. As a subsection of queer studies, following Kikuchi et al. (2019), in this paper, I will interpret that the rural queer study should be that of “queer” and taking a queer perspective, in order to critically analyze the dominant power structure. In approaching the merger of space, gender, sexuality and identity, the rural queer literatures need to be reviewed. Some are more interested in space, and the others are more interested in identity and their lived experiences. Before reviewing the rural queer literatures, however, the overall discussion concerning the dynamics of rurality-urbanity will be visited first, in order to solidify the bridge between queer studies and studies concerning rural/urban dynamics.

2.2 Rural/Urban

Johnson, who studies the history of the rural queer in America, touches upon the dynamics concerning how certain knowledge is forgotten whilst the others remain mainstream, citing Kinsey’s report (1948, cited in Johnson, 2013, p.2).:

⁹ There is an overall tendency among queer studies and sexuality studies literatures that cis-gender gays are more likely to be studied than the other sexualities and genders (Maekawa, 2019). The review and insights provided in this paper also shows the same tendency.

In their 1948 study *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, sex researcher Alfred C. Kinsey and colleagues observed rather nonchalantly that “ranchmen, cattle men, prospectors, lumbermen, and farming groups in general” were widely known to engage in same-sex sexual activities. These are men who have faced the rigors of nature in the wild, Kinsey explained. They live on realities and on a minimum of theory. For Kinsey, saying that these men lived on realities and a minimum of theory meant that they tended to sidestep the thorny issue of the relation of sex and identity in favor of a somewhat less troubled and troubling pragmatics of pleasure.

What is mentioned above, concerning rurality and sexuality, can still sound new today. Johnson is trying to make a point that heteronormativity was introduced for legitimizing nation-led governance through modernization, for which heteronormative ideologies were employed. Heteronormative assumptions were not a priori existence. According to Johnson (2013), in this process, these knowledges concerning the rural sexuality were politically undermined.

Some would argue that the rural/urban dichotomy is oversimplification, and thus it is becoming increasingly difficult to legitimize its use in academic settings. In this paper, I will adopt Halfacree’s conceptualization of space, which allows us to follow the path Halberstam (2005) paved, concerning the politics of rural/urban and sexuality. Halfacree

(1993) shows that there are mainly two ways to define rurality and urbanity: descriptive, and socio-cultural. Both of them have critical limitations, and thus Halfacree (1993) suggests another way to look at space. Descriptive definition relies on the socio-spatial characteristics the target space is considered to hold. It relies on empiricism and believes that “the correct selection of parameters” would precisely capture the facts concerning rurality and urbanity (Halfacree, 1993, pp.23-24.). His criticism against this goes to its arbitrary selection of parameters, and concludes therefore that it is more of expressing what the researchers (want to) see in the rurality/urbanity framework than of precise depiction of the land (Halfacree, 1993, pp.24). Socio-cultural definition “assume(s) that population density affects behavior and attitude”, because “people’s socio-cultural characteristics vary with the type of environment in which they live” (Halfacree, 1993, pp..24-25). Though the character and arguments vary among the studies adopting this approach, this approach is overall criticized for its geographical determinism, “whereby human behavior and character is determined by the physical environment” (Halfacree, 1993, p.25). Though this approach has contributed to conceptualize the rural-urban continuum (or non-dichotomic relationship between rural and urban), it overall fails to capture the complex interaction between human, society, imaginary¹⁰, and environment, all of which are not distinct from each other.

As the abovementioned history shows, the seemingly chaotic and ambiguous

¹⁰ In this paper, imaginary is understood as the set of values, institutions, norms, and symbols that enable people to imagine and access their social whole (Yamamoto, 2009; Nerlich, 2015; Ingraham and Saunders, 2016)

characteristics of rural/urban dynamics discouraged researchers so that they would abandon the framework (Halfacree, 1993, p.28). Halfacree (1993, p.29), however, argues that “the rural and its synonyms are words and concepts understood and used by people in everyday talk.” The concepts also exercise power to shape the world people see and experience. In this paper, I will extend and interpret Halfacree’s approach that it is also related with how policies and institutions are built so that some issues are hierarchized higher than the others (Fotaki, 2010). Therefore, building upon social representation theory, Halfacree argues that researchers need to pay attention to the complex power relations between actors and concepts. Even though it is almost impossible to give static definitions to the concept empirically, paying attention to the contested definitions of space (rurality/urbanity) enables researchers to examine how people are guided and constrained both spatially and discursively. As spatial terms are oftentimes employed politically as well (for example, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, 2019), the urban/rural spatiality still plays its effect. The “professional and scientific” definitions of rural/urban can now be considered as arbitrary as lay discourses, though their definitions have allowed the researchers to deal with the complex problems concerning rural/urban dynamics technically and apolitically (Halfacree, 1993, p.31). Halberstam’s theory (2005) is the trial of bringing back the politics on the table by looking at the norm, metronormativity, following Halfacree’s approach to space.

As this section has shown, how we see the space already directs what we see. Since the complexity of the dynamics still plays its effect, which means its political and social influences are being mobilized both at political and everyday-life levels, researchers are currently required to take an approach that allows them to delve deeply into its discursive and spatial complexity. As rural queer studies lie in the merging point of this complexity and sexuality, how the literatures have tried to bridge the gap needs to be reviewed. From the next section, the rural queer literatures will be reviewed to provide an understanding how they have discussed the merger of this and sexuality.

2.3 Rural Queer Studies

In this paper, these literatures will be reviewed, following the three provisional categories: essentialism approach, normativity approach, and rurality-revisited approach.

2.3.1 Essentialism approach

One of the important characteristics of rural queer studies is its interest in the power relations. Early research seems to be interested more in the consequences of this power structure. Essentialism approach has revealed the negative consequences disproportionately distributed amongst non-conforming sexualities and genders, assuming their identity as rural queer somewhat strategical-essentially. Oftentimes in this approach, what makes up

rurality is left unquestioned.

Cody and Welch (1997, p.51) interviewed 20 “rural gay men” in northern New England. They thematically analyzed their life experiences, and found nine particular themes that appeared in the interviews: “early awareness of difference, internalized homophobia, positive aspects of rural living, negative aspects of rural living, positive family of choice, compulsory heterosexuality, isolation, current life partner, and family censorship.”(Cody and Welch, 1997, p.51). They discuss that some of the findings such as “negative aspects of rural living”, and “isolation”, are congruent with their anecdotal reports concerning rural gay’s hardships, though they also found the items that are incongruent such as “positive aspects of rural living.” Particularly about this, they conclude that:

the strong preference for the benefits gained from a rural life (were) stated by these gay men, even in the face of equally being able to describe the drawbacks of being gay in a rural area. In effect, many of these men are trading off what they lose, specifically as gay men, by living in this area for other “quality of life” assets. [...] [H]owever, there was the sense in what they said that they would eventually value returning to a rural area. In this study, the gay men delineate reasons for where they live that draw upon aspects of their personalities and values not specifically related to their being gay. This

holistic description offers evidence contrary to the popular myth that eventually all gay men migrate to a city, preferably New York or San Francisco. (Cody and Welch, 1997, pp.65-66.)

In recruiting the interviewees, they utilized the advertisement on four regional mainstream newspapers and eight regional gay or gay-friendly newsletters. The advertisement read as follows:

Volunteers for Sexuality Study: Two gay male researchers seek volunteers for study of the life experiences of rural gay men in Northern New England. Confidentiality assured (Cody and Welch, 1997, p.55).

Though the insights drawn from their research were significant at the early stage of rural queer issue discussion, in this research, the definition of rurality was left unquestioned. They seem to rely on the assumed rurality in New England. As seen in this recruitment letter, rurality is understood as a part of their identity, or a component that shapes their identities.

Kazyak(2011) conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 30 rural gays and lesbians. The result shows how the “rural” gays and lesbians negotiate the cultural narratives concerning the construction of their sexual identities which have been formulated

around urbanity. Kazyak used LGBT networks, some of which are state-wide, to recruit the “individuals who identify as “gay” or “lesbian” and who either are currently living or had grown up in a “small town, the country, or a rural area.””(Kazyak, 2011, p. 565) Kazyak’s study site was focused on the rural Michigan and Illinois.

Hain (2016) studies the discourses shared on a certain online media (i.e. YouTube channel The It Gets Better Project) and what empowering functions it can have for the queer people. According to Hain (2016), this online media features various self-identified queer people, who are underrepresented on mass media, such as those who have rural backgrounds. Oftentimes, rural queer people are considered (to feel) isolated. Online media such as this, enables these queer-identifying individuals to witness other queer individuals having particular backgrounds whom the audience can relate themselves to. That also allows them to access to the discourses shared amongst these collective identities. The collectivity here is not homogeneity, but the diversity affiliated with shared identities, and thus the audience can find the ones that they can especially relate to. That can also enable them to retell their own stories, which is one way for them to address their own traumas. Given what metronormativity enables us to critically view, which will be discussed later on in this paper, representing the underrepresented is significant. In this paper, I will take Hain’s approach as taking rurality as part of their identities, or a component shaping their identities. Yet, the diversity of rurality remains unquestioned.

2.3.2 Normativity approach

There are studies which reveal the normative mechanism (i.e. hierarchization) behind urban/rural in relation to, and intersecting with, sexuality and gender. They mainly try to approach and deconstruct the discourse around urban/rural frameworks. Johnson (2013) provides the historical analysis concerning gender and sexuality in rural America, and describes the normalization process of heterosexuality. According to Johnson, the diversity of sexuality used not to be strictly hierarchized, but the American government employed a series of heteronormative institutions to “modernize” and govern its citizens. The spatial characteristics brought somewhat different impacts especially to rural America. Through these historical descriptions, Johnson emphasizes the following two points. One is that normalizing discourses are not empirical descriptions of “normal” individual experiences, though it can significantly reshape how people make sense of and describe their experiences and reality. It can powerfully make people forget about certain knowledge, though it cannot erase and change realities. Another is that the transformation was brought about nationally, rather than rural areas were particularly remade into a certain idealistic city’s image. The rural America experienced, not the particular remaking of rurality, but the national transformation (i.e. heteronormalization), which enfolded urban/rural imaginaries (Johnson, 2013, pp.3-4.). It can be said that what Johnson tries to do is subvert and disturb

the dominant discourses (or dominant absence of discourse) concerning sexualities that are shaped around urban settings by retelling the history from a queer point of view. Johnson's historical analysis reveals that the characteristics, which are currently considered as queerness, widely existed also in rural areas, which questions and disturbs today's heteronormativity and metronormativity.

Metronormativity was coined by Halberstam (2005). Metronormativity, overall, is the travel and spatial norm concerning queerness. The norm demands queer people a predetermined flight from a small town where they go through surveillance and is narrated conservative and oppressive; to the city where there are sexual freedom, communal visibility, and self-actualizing gay ghettos (Herring 2010, pp.14-17). Sugano (2019, p.126) argues that this is oftentimes coupled with the narrative of fleeing their hometown, and thus family, and finding alternative communities in urban settings that they feel part of. Dominantly, a one-way trip is presupposed, and thus no return is imagined (Halberstam 2005; Herring 2010). Herring (2010) developed the concept, queer anti-urbanism, based upon metronormativity. Queer anti-urbanism supposes that gay mainstreaming (who are usually imagined as white, middle or upper-class, homosexual men) occurred because constructing their identity and social status successfully got tied into consumerism and urbanism. This led to the opposition movements to liberate the other queer individuals who were left oppressed and silenced, even in urban settings. One of these movements took the

form of anti-urbanism, which Herring describes by analyzing historical documents and community journals. It can be said that the imaginaries of urbanity here are conjoined with capitalism and consumerism, (whilst those of rurality are with hometown,) and thus this movement brought the anti-capitalism savor. Herring's work is essentially the endeavor in shedding light on the hidden voices of the queer by retelling the history of queer anti-urbanism, which contributes to deconstructing the hierarchy between urbanity and rurality.

It can be said that metronormativity is interrelated with the new homonormativity. According to Robinson (2016, pp.1-2.), the homonormativity describes the norm to favor:

a political strategy used within sexual minority communities that reinforces heteronormative institutions and mores (Dugan, 2002). Sexually marginalized individuals can stake a claim for their rights through asserting that gay and lesbian individuals are just like their heterosexual counterparts, except for their same-sex attractions and partnerships. Sexual minorities seek these rights through consumption practices, monogamy, marriage, domesticity, and reproduction. Because certain institutions and relations are valued more within the dominant society, sexual minorities strategically seek advancement and acceptance within these particular institutions (...) over other more radical arenas(...). These strategies limit the rights that sexual

minorities can gain, since they are still framed through particular heteronormative institutions. Therefore, some scholars see homonormativity as dividing LGBTQ communities. Those sexual minorities who can or do assimilate into heteronormative structures and conform to the congruent gender roles receive more rights and privileges than those who do not or cannot assimilate.

With the “new” ahead, the homonormative political strategy ends up supporting and reproducing both heteronormativity and neoliberalism (Moriyama, 2017). Under this norm, the dominant image of queer people is oftentimes reduced to that of cisgender gay men who are oftentimes white, middle to upper-class, fashionable, and knowing what and how to consume in a cool and wise manner. Under the new homonormativity, heteronormativity is unquestioned, supported, and reproduced particularly by depoliticizing this dominant image of queer individuals (Shimizu, 2013; Moriyama, 2017). They are represented as good fellow consumers who teach how to be ‘cool’ those who would like to achieve self-actualization through consumption (and they are typically imagined as cis-gender, and heterosexual) (Shimizu, 2013).

Though Halberstam (2005) mentions that metronormativity would provide transnational and translocal implications¹¹ concerning queer and society, Herring (2010,

¹¹ As LGBTQ movements have needed to be adapted and recontextualized in each locality, translocal implications have been discussed (Kazama and Kawaguchi, 2010; Thoreson, 2014).

pp.26-28.) warns that there are mainly six dangers in applying metronormativity without contextualized consideration. Vulgar ruralism should be carefully avoided since the arguments relevant to metronormativity might reinforce the urban/rural binary and present rural as more authentic or hostile. There is also a danger of conflating the rural with regionalism. Though Herring admits that studying metronormativity would provide beneficial implications for regionalism, it is noted that bringing autonomy back to regions (decentralization) and disturbing urban/rural dichotomy should be considered separately. Danger of homogenizing cities should also be noted. There are various politics and conflicts even inside and across cities (racial, socio-economic etc) as well. The definitional contours of metronormativity can grow static, which stifles the art and effects of the concept. Thus, it has to be both sensitive to the history, and flexible. On the other side of this coin is the danger of neglecting transnational movements as well as the urbanities of the other nation-states. The theory must be sensitive to the cultural and historical contexts. It should also be noted that this whole concept has been developed with urbanized habitus. As can be observed, and as Herring states that this theory was formed via interdisciplinary processes, flexibility and sensitivity are the constantly emphasized aspects when basing one's argument on this theory.

Additionally, erasure of rurality in queer studies is oftentimes pointed out in metronormativity and rural queer studies literatures (Edward 2018; Sugano 2019). This can

explain governments' ignorance, both at the national and local levels, toward sexuality issues in non-urban settings. In this paper, I interpret that this academic interest resonates in queer development studies as well. The following two tendencies are criticized in this academic field (Mason 2018). Representation of the queer is largely absent in development industry, which feeds into the heteronormativity amongst development practitioners. The acceptance of, or tolerance¹² toward, queer people is considered as the indicator of development, which locks the possibility of queerness into a developed/underdeveloped dichotomy. The latter point suggests that there should be room for negotiating alternative ways that are locally contextualized, in order to realize and sustain contextualized queerness (Sunagawa, 2010). In this context, the relativism that serves injustice concerning sexuality is intolerable. It has been pointed out that some argue against the LGBTQ movement led by Western society since it is a new sort of imperialism against the underdeveloped countries (Thoreson, 2014). Queer development studies try to fight back against this injustice both by positioning queerness in development discourses and decoupling queerness with colonial developmentalism.

2.3.3 Rurality-revisited approach

Knopp (2007) reviews the arguments concerning queer and feminist geography in

¹² Possible oppression through tolerance has also been pointed out (Kazama, 2019)

order to show the similarities and differences between them. In doing this, Knopp(2007, p.52) emphasizes that materiality is discursive and the discursive is material. As metronormativity deconstructs and reveals the hierarchized power structure in relation to space, sexuality, and gender, it is necessary to shed light on how people live through this.

The interpretation taken in this paper is that what Herring (2010) and Halberstam (2005) try to do is the problematization of injustice and inequity concerning space, gender, and sexuality; meaning that the deconstruction of this conceptual structure per se is not the ultimate goal¹³. Rurality is essentially conglomeration of diverse gazes such as “work, home, and family (Leslie 2017, p.765)”, whilst being the elusive counterpart of urbanity. At the same time, it is supposed to hold some regional specific essences, which makes it just one of the (“rural”) regions that can be compared with and to the other (“rural”) regions. In theorizing rural queer theory, Keller (2015, p.158) pays careful attention to the tendency of queer theory that it lacks “groundedness in the real material situations of queers in the world.” Keller (2015) argues that bridging rural studies and queer theory will contribute to fill this gap¹⁴. The literatures reviewed in this section share the similar interest, and try to approach this relational aspect of rural spatiality by introducing certain essences. What is typically mobilized is farming.

¹³ This, of course, does not mean deconstruction of the dichotomy is unnecessary.

¹⁴ For queer theorists’ efforts in bridging the gap between materiality and discourses, refer for example to Ingram (1997; 2010). For renegotiating spirituality, religion, and queerness, refer for example to Asaka (2019). For renegotiating cultural identity and queerness, refer for example to Dave (2011). For generally bridging environmental discourses and queer, refer for example to Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson (2010).

Leslie conducted participant observation, and interviewed 30 queer and heterosexual “sustainable farmers¹⁵ (Leslie, 2017, p.747)” in New England, U.S. Drawing upon rural queer studies, feminist ethnology, and relevant studies, Leslie examines the sustainable farming, which is by and large associated with family farm, and its embedded heteronormativity. To do that “demands (...) an exploration of alternative conceptions of farm families, homes, and workplaces” (Leslie, 2017, p.748). Leslie mentions that the approach taken in the research is about “queering” sustainable agriculture and “sustaining” queer farmers, both important for the future of agricultural and *rural*¹⁶ communities” (Leslie, 2017, p.748). Leslie’s foremost research question is “how queer farmers’ lived experiences illuminate the role of sexuality in transition to sustainable agriculture”.

The main points addressed by Leslie are as following. Firstly, queer farmers struggle to address microaggressions due to the “relationship-based nature of sustainable agriculture (Leslie, 2017, p.765).” Queers experience heterosexism in the form of microaggressions anywhere, but queer farmers’ (and of course the other farmers’) access to social and environmental capital heavily relies on the local bonds which are relatively more intensive than the other contexts. Leslie (2017, pp.765-766) discusses that:

Rural and perceived rural heterosexism can diminish queer people’s desire to farm. It is

¹⁵ Leslie admits that the interviewees’ “farms varied in sustainability, (but) all aligned with Forsell and Lankoski’s (2015) core characteristics of alternative food networks” (Leslie, 2017, p.754)

¹⁶ Emphasis placed by this paper’s author.

difficult to know how many nonfarming queer people would otherwise choose to farm, but are deterred by their perceptions or experiences of rural or agricultural heterosexism or hegemonic masculinity. Given this dilemma, it is particularly important finding that most farmers did not encounter the overt heterosexism they expected. [...] However, these [relationship-based farmers'] ties typically put the onus of confronting heterosexist acts on queer and gender queer, rather than on heterosexual and cis-gender people. Queer sustainable farmers were constrained in confronting heterosexist remarks when they rely on the offenders for economic and environmental sustainability.

What is particularly important about this remark is; by introducing the agricultural and material angle to look at rurality, sustainability, and sexuality; that it succeeds capturing the nuance of the intertwined power exercised on them as rural queers. It succeeds in subverting metronormalized imaginary of queers by depicting the currently atypical images of queers, whilst pointing also at the underrepresented experiences of the injustices felt through their bodies.

Secondly, the “elements of sexuality and gender concerning farming” can explain certain reasons why queer farmers farm. In other words, farming is made up also with subsistence jobs to which gendered and sexualized meanings are attached. Finally, the heteronormative patterns in land acquisition posit difficulties on queers (Leslie, 2017,

p.749). Regarding their ways of acquiring land, Leslie describes the different approaches: 1) inheriting from family; 2) buying land from, or gaining land as a gift from, some non-profit organization¹⁷; or 3) utilizing queer farmers' communities. Option 1 to access land depends on how accepting their family of origin is. When they need to choose option 3, they particularly need to start from building friendly relationship with the other queer farmers, or being employed by queer or queer-friendly farm owners (e.g. mentor, apprenticeship etc) (Leslie, 2017, pp.763-765).

Leslie's interviewees were recruited through queer farmer events, farmers markets, CSA farms, and the network got expanded by snow-ball sampling method. In this research, Leslie assumes rurality as the part of sustainable agriculture and vice versa (Leslie, 2017, p.754). I find the following Leslie's remark important (Leslie, 2017, p.765):

My research should serve as a reminder not only to urban-focused LGBT advocates that many queer people lead socially sustaining lives in country but to sustainable agriculture advocates who make heteronormative assumptions about farm families.

Given that movements concerning either/both sustainability or/and queerness have not happened in Japan at the same scale as in the U.S., presumably it is hard to argue that "many" rural queer people in Japan are leading sustainable lifestyles. Yet, the focal point

¹⁷ One particular example focused on the paper was that some of the interviewees consulted a non-profit working on lesbian separatist movement. In this sense, this way to acquire land is assumingly possible in particular to this geographical and socio-historical context.

made here applies to Japan as well.

Edward's (2018) research lies in this spectrum. The researches done by Wypler (2019) and Leslie (2019) also lie in this spectrum, and yet these seem more interested in the agricultural aspect than rurality.

2.4 Rurality, Gender, and (Absence of) Sexuality in Japan

As the scholars such as Herring(2010), and Halberstam(2005) argue, the power structure concerning the intersection of rurality-urbanity, gender, and sexuality needs locally and/or regionally specific insights. Since this research targets the inequity in Japan, what have been discussed in this spatial context need to be reviewed.

The lack of the literature about rural gender in Japan has been widely pointed out (Amano 2001; Akitsu et al., 2007; Watanabe, 2009; Hara and Ōuchi, 2012; Ōuchi and Hara, 2012; Iwashima, 2012; Nakamichi, 2012). Despite this gap, the number of literatures about gender and rurality in Japan seems to gradually increase when including the rural women studies. Amongst them, the literatures, which try to take gender perspective, point out that rural sociology in Japan has generally overlooked the gender-related norms and their dynamics especially within household (Akitsu et al., 2007; Watanabe, 2009; Hara and Ōuchi, 2012; Iwashima, 2012; Nakamichi, 2012).

Akitsu et al.(2007, p.5) recognize that gender studies are not designed to apolitically

and “value-neutrally” study the socially-constructed categories of men and women, and that is exactly why Japanese rural studies need to incorporate gender perspective. Studying gender needs to be critical, because it is essentially required to reveal the entirety of the system, which bases itself on gender dichotomy of women and men, and thus disproportionately distributes goods and bads amongst the agents. They compare their approach of gender perspective to another approach taken in rural woman studies. They cite Amano’s work(2001, pp.15-16), and mention that Amano did not employ gender perspective on purpose, because¹⁸

Rurality in Japan is made up with various cultural, social, and historical components; such as headfamily(honke 本家)-branchfamily(bunke 分家) relationships, landowner-peasant relationships, same-sex/gendered seniority system, political interests and the other customs. All of these are interwoven into the rural system. There are essentially other problems about Japanese rurality that need to be approached without the gender perspective. Therefore, gender approach can be necessary, and yet it is just one of the ways to approach rurality in Japan.

In response to this, Akitsu et al. (2007, pp.5-6.) argue that¹⁹

¹⁸ Translated by this paper’s author.

¹⁹ Translated by this paper’s author.

The gender-based power relations in rural Japan ranges from the one within household, local associations for local governance (jichisoshiki 自治組織), associations having religious backgrounds (i.e. communities centered around shrines and festivities), to socioeconomic systems represented by J.A. It is surely important to examine each of these in its details, and yet these rural customs build upon intertwined components of the local livelihood. Revealing one by one of the details will not necessarily transform the intertwined system. Gender perspective is necessary to reveal the dynamics and complexities of these particularly complex system, which has been penetrated to the tip end of the society.

It is safe to say that the abovementioned comment refers to the system of Japanese rurality including familial bond(ie イエ) and local bond (mura ムラ)²⁰ (Matsuoka, 2011; Tsutsumi, 2015a; 2015b). Akitsu et al. continue to state that “what Japanese rural gender studies should aim to tackle is finding and subverting fallacies of the presumptions based on the gendered system, by which it tries to support transforming rural Japan” (Akitsu et al., 2007, p.6). This does not necessarily mean to destroy Japanese rurality, but to reimagine Japanese ruralities. Tsutsumi (2015b) also explains the tendency seen in rural family studies that the reimagination of family, regional society, and wider society is currently pursued.

²⁰ In this paper, I understand that, though this historical path influences the construction of Japanese rurality, modernization also affected how familial bond and gender has been reconstructed, being reduced to an ideologized nuclear family (Muta, 2006). The changes and diversity of regional and temporal differences are also important (Akitsu et al. 2007; Matsuoka, 2011). Following Akitsu et al.(2007), however,in this paper, I believe that recontextualizing rural/urban in Japan with gender/sexuality perspective is necessary to bring the minoritized voice to light.

Regarding gender mainstreaming and policy implementation in rural Japan, Hara and Ōuchi (2012, pp.12-13) criticize a series of policies for not contributing to improve the gender inequity in rural agricultural villages as much as they were expected. Numerous policies have been implemented; starting from Mid-term Vision about Women and Agricultural, Mountainous, and Fishery Villages ²¹(nōsan gyoson no josei ni kansuru chūchōki vision 農山漁村の女性に関する中長期ビジョン) in 1992; Basic Act for Gender Equal Society²²(danjo kyōdo sankaku syakai kihon hō 男女共同参画社会基本法); Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas Basic Act(syokuryo · nōgyo · nōson kihon hō 食料・農業・農村基本法) in 1999; and the following policies concerning promoting women’s participation in society by the technology penetration institute(fukyū kikan nado wo tōshita josei no syakai sankaku suishin 普及機関などを通じた女性の社会参画推進); promoting Farm Family Management Agreement(kazoku keiei kyōtei no teiketsu sokushin 家族経営協定の締結促進); and supporting rural start-ups led by female entrepreneurs(nōson josei kigyō no shien 農村女性起業の支援)²³. Though these policies have contributed to positively change the general image about the rural women to some extent, the statistical numbers of “female” farmers²⁴ stagnated (Hara and Ōuchi, 2012, p.13).

²¹ Translation given by this paper’s author

²² Translation provided on Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office’s website (Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office 2019). However, the nuances coming with the Japanese term 男女共同参画社会 (its literal translation would be society where both men and women participate) has been criticized against (for example, refer to Muta 2006).

²³ Translations for all of these given by this paper’s author.

²⁴ Only 18.3% of all primary memberships of Japan Agricultural Cooperatives (J.A./農協正組合員), and 5.7% of seats at agricultural committee (農業委員) are occupied by “women” as of 2011 (Hara and Ōuchi, 2012, pp.12-13). The original data were obtained from Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (2011).

Iwashima (2012) further points out the problematic aspect to these policies designed for improving rural women's lives. Iwashima analyzes the discourses shared amongst the Task Force of Rural Lifestyle Improvement (seikatsu kairyō fukyū in 生活改良普及員) during 1950's and 1960's, and argues that they ended up prescribing gender essentialism to improve the lowly received rural women²⁵'s social position. Although this has improved their quality of life instrumentally, it ended up failing to question issues related to gender role. That normalized the imaginaries and institutions which lock rural women into the housewife's position, and thus into a new gendered productive class. Akitsu et al.(2007) also points out the reductionism of gender observed in rural women studies, as some of the literatures just point out the economic inequity between men and women. Though the economic issues such as unpaid labor done by women within household, represent their economic difficulty, it should be noted that it is just a manifestation of injustice, deriving from the wider gender-based system (Akitsu et al., 2007, p.3). Watanabe (2009) also mentions that the knowledge produced by rural women studies concentrate around those who are married, and thus the situations surrounding rural women not in a marital status are largely understudied. The same tendency is observed in policy implementation as well, such as Farm Family Management Agreement. Based on my review, the literatures about sexuality, and sexual and gender norms in rural settings are absent, which itself could

²⁵ In this case, rural women mainly refers to those who are in a marital status, which leads to another structural issue that rural women not in marital status are underrepresented in Japan.

indicate the heteronormalization and cisgenderism surrounding Japanese rurality.

There is little existing research on the subject of the rural queer in Japan. These literatures refer mainly to *chihō*(地方) as rurality. Volume 43(16) of a journal, *Gendai Shisō* (Contemporary Philosophy), features LGBT. Papers by Sunagawa (2015a) and also by Yamashita (2015) are affiliated under the category “Reimagining it from Rural/Local Point of View”. They both do not particularly problematize spatiality. However, by sharing the experiences of queer networks in Iwate, Yamashita’s reportage (2015) discusses how difficult it is for LGBTs in Tohoku to secure privacy since their old acquaintances occupy their sphere of everyday life. Yamashita²⁶ also compares city to Iwate, in which sense this can be interpreted as the comparison between urban and rural queers. Yamashita sees differences in less networking opportunities for LGBTs in Iwate, less transportation to local central cities in Iwate, and normalized gender-based conservatism associated with fewer seats in the municipal assembly occupied by women. Despite this, Yamashita (2015, p.99) also warns that the rural/urban dichotomy is not as clear-cut as it is oftentimes imagined.

Inspired by metronormativity, Kawaguchi (2016) conducted semi-structured interviews with those LGBTQs²⁷ living in a non-urban area (*chihō chūkaku toshi* 地方中核

²⁶ Yamashita also mentions how sexuality has not been considered in relation with regional resilience against disasters despite the interrelationship between these. For instance, the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 revealed how household-based management of temporary houses, evacuation centers, and public housing during disaster recovery period, excludes those who do not have access to this system. (Yamashita 2015, p.99)

²⁷ Kawaguchi interviewed two lesbians, two gay or bi-sexuals, and a person questioning whether they are gay or MtF transgendered. All of these identity categories rely on their own self-identification (Kawaguchi 2015, p.77).

都市). He mentions that the studies targeting lesbians and gays in Japan also tend to concentrate around urban areas. He provides the following social conditions as the supports in legitimizing his use of metronormativity perspective in Japan: (1) the urban municipalities such as Shibuya, and Setagaya, started issuing special partnership certificate to same-sex partnerships²⁸; (2) media representation of gay men increased and the image somewhat resembles the patterns seen in the Western society; (3) despite (2), some non-urban municipal parliament members still make anti-LGBTQ statements; and (4) based on representation seen on mass media, the presence of LGBTQs is increasingly related to rural revitalization in Japan (Kawaguchi, 2016, p.74-75). Based on the interview data, he found out that they were not necessarily isolated, and desperate about hiding their sexual identities from their family and/or the local communities to different extents, as was usually associated with Japanese imaginary of queers. Despite the lack of the infrastructure, information, and communities for queers, such as the internet communities, they somehow found out a way to survive, such as coming up with some vague sexual identity (e.g. “self-proclaimed bisexual²⁹(Kawaguchi, 2016,p.87)”). By tackling the imperceptibility of non-urban queers in Japan through depicting their experiences, Kawaguchi tries to subvert the metronormative imaginary of queers in Japan.

²⁸ As of 8th of October, 2019, 617 partnerships have been registered and observed, and 27 municipalities in Japan have started issuing partnership certificates, and yet their legal rights are not equivalent to the case if they had a marital status. (Nijiuro Diversity, 2019)

²⁹ Translated from jisyoun bai 自称バイ

Sugano (2019), also inspired by metronormativity, takes up queer movie festivals held in four non-urban places³⁰, analyzing: (1) how these spaces influence the process in producing and constructing local queers' individual and collective identities; and (2) what sort of relationships these spaces build with the regional societies. According to Sugano (2019, pp.110-111.), these queer movie festivals are open to anyone, and have some relationships with the local society. These festivals are named after the name of the town (e.g. Aomori International LGBT Movie Festival). This also indicates the urban/rural differences experienced especially by rural queers, since they do not have to mention locality otherwise. These names indicate that the urban cities such as Tokyo, and Osaka, are put in comparison to these remote areas. Sugano argues that these festivals bring to light the SOGIESC³¹ issues in rural settings where the issue tends to be overlooked, whilst they also do not jeopardize rural queers' security as the space is queered so that anyone can come and watch the movies there no matter what sexuality they are.

As reviewed in this section, Yamashita generally follows an essentialism approach. Both Kawaguchi and Sugano seem to follow a normativity approach. By depicting the lived experiences of non-urban queers, or by depicting the dynamics of safely transforming

³⁰ Their ethnographies were conducted at Aomori International LGBT Movie Festival (青森国際 LGBT 映画祭); Ehime LGBT Movie Festival (愛媛 LGBT 映画祭); Kagawa Rainbow Movie Festival(香川レインボー映画祭); and Osu Nijihiro Festival(大須にじいろ映画祭) (Sugano 2019, p.130). These translations were given by this paper's author.

³¹ SOGIESC stands for sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex(-ual) characteristics (ARC International et al., 2016).

spaces in terms of sexual politics, they seem to successfully disturb the metronormative imaginary to some extent. However, the rurality-revisited approach seems to be absent. As shown in 2.3.3, this approach has the potential both to reveal the “groundedness in the real material situations of queers (Keller, 2015, p.158)” and to subvert heteronormativity and metronormativity by depicting the diverse experiences of rural queers. It can be also stated that there is still extra room to be explored, concerning the structural and normative mechanism which alienates queers in Japan from realizing livelihood in “rural” areas, in addition to the discursive aspects that the literatures done in Japan have already pointed out.

Following Halfacree (1993), how rurality manifests and imposes itself on rural queers are complicated, and thus can only be understood if its dynamics is approached. By taking the approaches seen in the rurality-revisited approach, I believe that the intersection of rurality, sexuality, and gender is understood at the richer and fuller extent.

2.5 Tricky “Rural” Conceptions in Japanese

Up to the previous section, this paper has made it clear that rurality still dynamically plays its social and political effects on what people experience, how they are directed, and how they see them. These effects are differently and disproportionately imposed on diverse people, and thus understanding their experiences through the rurality-revisited approach leads us to more appropriate and optimal reimagining of rurality, queerness, and

sustainability in Japan.

Having said that, rurality in Japanese is quite tricky. Again, coming from rural queer studies background, the purpose of this research is to hear the voices that are hidden, assuming the gained insights will lead us to consider why rural queerness and some of the rural policies are stagnated, and that further contributes to reimagining sustainability of rural queerness and rural communities in Japan. To do this, the complexity of Japanese conceptions surrounding “rurality” will be visited, and the necessity of this paper’s temporal reliance on the urban/rural conception will be ensured.

The word “rural” can be translated into various Japanese words such as “nōson 農村”, “den-en 田園”, “inaka 田舎”, “chiho 地方”, less frequently “chiiki 地域”, and so forth. These Japanese words can be translated into the English word rural(/ity) and also different English words (Shinwaei Daijiten Dai Go Han, 2008). Drawing from Japanese rural sociology literatures, the following aspects seem to be typically analyzed in relation to rurality particular to Japanese conceptions: agricultural community, diversity amongst regions, regionally-specific multi-layered governance, and decentralization against the national central government (Shōji 2009; Kudo, 2012; Matsumiya, 2012; Nakamichi, 2012; Yamauchi, 2012; Yamazaki, 2015). Some also mention that the history of Japanese rurality developed, based upon the villages that spontaneously grew out of familial and local

bonds³² (Shōji, 2009; Yamazaki, 2015). It can be assumed that agriculture, farming, and their synonyms contribute large part in constructing the images of rurality³³ in Japanese according to Takahashi and Nakagawa's questionnaire-based discourse analysis (Takahashi and Nakagawa, 2002). For these literatures, *nōson* is dominantly used. In everyday conversation, though this needs more of analysis following academic procedures, it can be said that Japanese speakers also tend to interchangeably use the word *inaka* 田舎 and *chihō* 地方 with the images shown above depending on the context; though *inaka* can connote the lack of usefulness, sophistication, and diversity (Meikyō Kokugo Jiten, 2010).

It is also generally understood that it has become increasingly difficult to define and examine rurality in Japan as modernization and urban sprawl unfolds (Fuji, 2007; Hasumi, 2007). As Hasumi (2007) points out, rurality in Japan has experienced drastic changes since world war II. Though rurality is constantly exposed to the risk of urbanization, rural cultures partially remain to a different degree depending on the specific area. Japanese rurality has also attracted some scientific and political desire for intervention (Hasumi, 2007). Combining this background with Herring's warning against conflating anti-regionalism and criticism against metronormativity, the ultimate purpose of this paper is to reimagine queer rurality in Japan. It has become also increasingly difficult to rely solely on the primary industry as occupation in defining rurality, and yet paying particular

³² This mainly refers to natural village conception (Shizenon/自然村) (Yamazaki, 2015, p.37)

³³ The specific word they used is “*nosonzo*/農村像 (Takahashi and Nakagawa, 2002, p.143).”

attention to this aspect of rurality is still considered significant as the farming population tend to be embedded into the locality so that they can secure their access to resources (Akitsu et al., 2007).

The different conceptions surrounding Japanese rurality are used to emphasize the diverse, dynamic, and different aspects of it, and yet it is also true that these conceptions are oftentimes interchangeably mobilized at policy implementation (Hara and Ōuchi, 2012; Headquarters for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan, 2015; Lindström, 2017; Yūki and Kuroda, 2017; Tokyo Rainbow Pride, 2019). In short, the intertwined characteristics per se concerning Japanese rurality should be approached as making up the dynamics. Given this, in this paper, I will temporarily leave the possibility of the usages of the words open, and will analyze the rural queer issue, assuming that “nōson 農村”, “den-en 田園”, “inaka 田舎”, “chihō 地方”, and “chīki 地域” refer largely to rurality dynamics in Japanese.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion: Research Gap Rearticulated

Through reviewing the literatures, this paper has shown that rural queer issue itself has been largely absent which caused the erasure of queerness from rurality in Japan. The existing researches have been typologized into three categories: essentialism, normativity, and rurality-revisited. The need for the rurality-revisited approach has been clarified. Up to

this point, the reviewed literatures are written and done in the sphere of the world where English is the dominant language, and thus the literatures done and/or written in Japan concerning rural queers have been revisited. There are still only a few, but especially the need of rurality-revisited approach in Japanese context has been clarified. Given the diverse and complex words surrounding rurality in Japan, and its increasing disappearance influenced by modernization and urban sprawl, I recognize that detailed analysis into the differences amongst the terms will be necessary in the future. However, as the concepts are oftentimes interchangeably used and mobilized, affecting people's everyday lives and politics, in this paper, I will assume that it can be justified to analyze these different words as they feed into the dynamics concerning rurality in Japan and rural queers' experiences.

Previous studies on rural queers in Japan have contributed to subverting metronormative assumptions by depicting their coping strategies and lived experiences. However, by adding the farming perspective onto these literatures, the structural and normative mechanisms that make them exercise the abovementioned strategies and the other strategies need to be explored.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

As reviewed thus far, the structural and normative mechanisms that alienate queers in Japan from rurality can be understood to a richer and fuller extent by taking the

rurality-revisited approach that has not been taken. Taking rurality-revisited approach, in this paper, I will try to explore and address the following research questions:

- A) What is the structural and normative mechanism which alienates queers in Japan from realizing livelihood in “rural” areas?
- B) How do their lived experiences show the role of gender and sexuality in transition to sustainable local community and sustaining rural queer identities in Japan?

As this has been explained, for the second question, the previous research (Leslie, 2017; 2019) shows an insight, and yet it needs to be recontextualized in local contexts as the other researches point out (Halberstam, 2005; Herring, 2010).

To answer these research questions, key-informant interview and semi-structured interview were employed. The interviews were done in Japanese language. Whenever it was possible, I also employed field observation, and informal interview as well. Given the lack of previous research, I needed to gain the overall imaginaries concerning rurality and sexuality shared in the queer communities. Therefore, I first conducted key-informant interviews with the staff members of non-profit organizations working on LGBTQ issues in Japan. The organizations were purposefully selected. For I need to anonymize the interviewees, I cannot go into the details. However, these organizations participated as a

panelist in some event or symposium on the topics such as rurality (as in *chihō*, *jimoto*, or *nōson* 地方、地元、ないし農村) and LGBTQs; SDGs, LGBTQs and community building (*machizukuri* 街づくり); and some relevant topics. These events varied in the size: some accommodated more than 100, and some other accommodated around 20. I went to these symposiums, talked with them, and asked to cooperate with my interview. These events are limited to the ones held around the Kanto region, and from 2017 to 2019. Given that many expressed a need to travel to the Kanto region from the other regions in which they are based, there can be a tendency that they problematize the rural queer issue in relation with isolation, rural hostility, invisibility, and government's apathy toward this issue. In addition, my interviewees can be relatively interested in activism, compared to the whole population who loosely identify themselves as queer. Since I expanded the snow-ball network from them, the interviewees I succeeded recruiting might be biased even among queer communities in this sense. I needed to take this strategy for the lack in my initial connection with appropriate interviewees, and also the lack of literatures done on Japanese context.

Leslie (2017) recruited the interviewees through a farmer's market, distributing the letter of research corporation. I did not take this strategy, given the historical and contextual difference. In Japan, "queer anti-urbanism (Herring, 2010)" has not been observed in the same scale as the U.S. In addition, based on Tamagawa's (2018) summary about the

cultural context concerning queers in Japan, I understand that it differs from the settings where Leslie and the other rural queer researchers have conducted their research. There are well-known infrastructures for queers in Japan, such as Shinjuku Nichome, but these spaces can be culturally separated from their everyday lives (Tamagawa, 2018). In addition, the lack of research concerning rural queers, especially those who farm, possibly indicates that it might still not be easy to come out in the farmers' communities, and thus I wanted to avoid potentially jeopardizing their access to social capital by accessing the potential interviewees through farmers' networks.

Another strategy that I could have taken was participant observation at some local communities for queers, such as gay bars. This was again not feasible for me. Participant observation usually requires long-term participation. In addition, it is more difficult when you are an outsider since it usually requires long-term rapport construction. Establishing snow-ball network from the non-profit organizations was, therefore, the most feasible and effective strategy.

Inspired by metronormativity, the other research strategies that could have been employed are: 1) recruiting interviewees through urban queer communities; 2) conducting a group interview in an urban area by holding an event on rurality, sexuality, gender, and queerness; 3) observing those who participate in local pride parades as participants; 4) drawing auto-ethnography as one queer resident in a rural setting (hopefully engaging with

farming); and 5) conducting content analysis of Japanese queer magazines and analyzing the discourse of metronormativity. The research using these strategies should also be done in the future as well.

Then, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the ones the key-informants introduced me to. The sampling method is snow-ball method. The letter of recruitment writes the three conditions that follow: those who identify themselves as queer (性的マイノリティ) and 1) those who engage in farming; 2) those who are from farming family; or 3) those who used to, or wanted to, engage in farming but gave up. The interviewees were expected to fulfill one of these three conditions. The reason to assume the recruited interviewees as rural queers using this operational definition has been explained in chapter 2.

However, this did not necessarily function as the art of snow-ball sampling method worked where I needed to negotiate my research interest and legitimacy. For example, as it will be shown later on, the interviewee K is not either from a farming family, or engaging in farming. This can be interpreted as the limitation of this research, but also can be interpreted as this expansion of the network reflects some aspect of the reality rural queers in Japan face against. Since the target of this research is assumed to have particular experiences, I needed to keep them feel safe in contributing to this research, snow-ball

sampling method through LGBTQ network seemed optimal.

Given that agriculture is increasingly interwoven into some urban to peri-urban settings, agriculture per se might not define rurality, despite the fact that it is oftentimes mobilized to study rural communities (Akitsu et al., 2007). As seen in the literature review, farming is assumed to be still an important part, in at least social imaginary, that comprises of rurality. Furthermore, the research concerning the rural queer done in Japan so far has not touched upon this aspect of rurality and sexuality. I also assumed that this methodology would allow me to reach their experiences on everyday-life basis as has been done in the researches shown in 2.3.3. Given the lack of research, mobilizing farming as the central characteristics of rurality can be justified to provide more detailed exploration.

In terms of the definition of farmer, I relied on their self-identification, given the presumed social pressure on rural queers in Japan. It is in other words their identity as a farmer. Since this research focuses on their interpretations and experiences, assuming that these shed light on the hidden social structures, their identities have been prioritized in this research. For confidentiality, this research has omitted the details concerning locality such as the geographical details, what vegetables or animals they grow, and the names of the local organizations. Farming in this research varies from dairy, fruits, to vegetables. None amongst them grow or is from rice farmers. Assuming from the tone of the previous researches (Watanabe, 2009), how gendered and sexualized norms at different levels (e.g.

household, local community, etc) operate also differ depending on the type of produce. Most of them are not aware of the size of the land they, or their family, own. This itself indicates that the interviewees do not currently occupy the dominant role in farming in their own setting, and the role they are playing is limited at the farming scene in Japan. These pose limitations on this research, and will be the area to be explored in the future research. Yet, the results are rich in terms that their experiences bring light to the norms and oppressions concerning rurality, sexuality, and gender in Japan.

In recruiting the interviewees, the interviewees were given three types of documents: letter of confirmation/cancelation of confirmation, tentative question list (interview guide), and research prospectus. I also followed the research ethics guidelines of the University of Tokyo. I consulted my laboratory fellows to double check whether the information I anonymized would well avoid identifying the source of information (i.e. interviewees). Before publishing this paper, I also tried to double check with the interviewees themselves to see whether the comments cited in this paper and the basic information about them are permissible to be published. Before conducting interviews with each interviewee, I explained the relevant information such that the information provided in the interview will be anonymized; they do not have to answer all the questions; they can stop the interview session whenever they felt uncomfortable and so forth. The interview approximately took at shortest an hour and at longest three hours.

The key informant and semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed. In the case the interviewees declined to be recorded, I took extensive notes. The interviews were conducted face-to-face whenever possible. When it was impossible for physical distance, the interviews were done online alternatively. For the interview guide, please refer to the appendix, though the questions asked varies amongst the interviewees as semi-structured interview was used as the methodology.

The interviewee list is shown in Section 3.1. There are none under 30s in terms of age. In terms of their sexual and gender identity, most of them identify themselves as a man. There are only two lesbian-identifying individuals, and they both are from non-profit organizations. The interviewees I successfully got in touch with might be affected by my own male-gender expression. This can also reflect, to a diverse degree, the prevalent gender oppression against those who live as a woman in rural settings. This oppression also presumably feeds into the uneven imperceptibility among queers in rural Japan, such as lesbians (Horie, 2015).

Three out of the seven, who cooperated with the semi-structured interviews, currently engage in either part-time or full-time farming. The rest four do not currently engage in farming. Out of these four, three claimed that their family engaged in farming, and one turned out that it was technically not farming. The process of snowball expanded not because they have LGBTQ farmers' network, but because they somehow knew each other

through some events or study-meeting concerning LGBTQ and society.

To analyze the data collected, for this paper, I used a mixed-method approach of life history analysis (Yabuki, 2017) and critical thematic analysis (Lawless and Chen, 2019). As shown above, the rural queer issue in Japan is yet explored, especially using the rurality-revisited approach. When the data is highly contextualized, and the contexts are useful in describing the details of the norms and structure they experience, life history analysis allows researchers to deeply analyze the reasons behind their histories (Yabuki, 2017). As this approach is useful in understanding the richness, diversity, and details behind the world they see, this research needed another approach to break the entirety down so that the mechanism will be understood. Since the topic this research deals with concerns power relations, critical-theory-based approach was necessary. For this, critical thematic analysis was employed to break their stories down to analyze the mechanism why they experienced what they have experienced. In taking critical thematic approach, researchers are required to code the data, paying critical attention to “recurrence”, “repetition”, and “forcefulness” (Lawless and Chen, 2019, p.95), equipped with academic assumptions about “economic, social, historical and political contexts, social and hegemonic structures, institutional power, and ideological impact (Lawless and Chen, 2019, p.95).” MAXQDA 12, an application, was used when I coded and analyzed the data.

The interviewees occasionally mentioned specific regionality and did either not specify the urban/rural label nor provide relative information to legitimize posterior labelling. These specific regional names needed to be anonymized and operationally labelled in relation to urban/rural framework for this research's purpose and anonymization. In such occasions, the author consulted a statistical criterion (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, 2019), and write it in this paper either as city, urban area, regional central city, or rural town. The replaced words are shown in brackets.

For chapter 5, given the characteristics of qualitative research, I will leave the direct citations from the interviews in Japanese. “[]” will be used for the phrases or words that I needed to change either for anonymization of the data, or for nuances lost in translation. “***” is for anonymizing specificity of the data such as a name of place, that of a person, and so forth. Expressions, dialects, accents in citations of their comments in Japanese are adjusted so that it sounds like my own Kanto dialect, due to the possible risk of identification.

Finally, regarding my positionality, as a cis-gender, male-expressing, and queer-identified person with (1) urban habitus and (2) Kanto dialect and accent, my positionality has limited the capacity of this research in understanding and delving into their rich stories. As a grandchild of a farmer, however, I tried to relate what I myself have seen and experienced as I visited my grandparents as a semi-outsider (which is leaned more

toward outsider position perhaps) to the data I gained. To gain boots-on-the-ground farming experiences, I participated in study tours during 2018 to 2019. Again, this might be reflected on who I was able to approach.

3.1 About the Interviewees

Table 1: INTERVIEWEE LIST

Type of Interview	Label	Category 1	Gender/Sexuality	Age	Number of Interview	Interview Date	Others
key·informant	B	key·informant	Lesbian	40's	1	Dec.8.2018	Staff member of a non-profit working on LGBTQ issues
key·informant	L	key·informant	Lesbian	40's	1	June.29.2019	Staff member of a non-profit working on LGBTQ issues
key·informant	J	key·informant	FtM, heterosexual	30's	1	Aug.11.2019	Staff member of a non-profit working on LGBTQ issues
Semi-structured, Informal	C	Full-time farmer	Gay man	40's	1	March.4.2019	Respond the interview as a couple with D
Semi-structured, Informal	D	Part-time farmer	Gay man	40's	1	March.4.2019	Respond the interview as a couple with C
Semi-structured, Informal	E	From a farming family	Gay man	40's	2	①Dec. 28.2018 ②Apr.30.2019	
Semi-structured, Informal	F	From a farming family	Gay man	40's	1	March.13.2019	
Semi-structured, Informal	G	From a farming family	Gay man	30's	1	May.18.2019	Interview via online
Semi-structured, Informal	H	Full-time farmer	FtM, heterosexual	30's	2	①June.18.2019 ②June.28.2019	Interview via online
Semi-structured, Informal	K	Retailer at Local Market	FtM, heterosexual	30's	1	Aug.22.2019	Interview via online

CHAPTER 4. GENERAL NARRATIVE ABOUT RURAL QUEER

4.1 About the Key Informant Interview

As shown in the literature review, there is a research gap in Japan's context as to how rural queers experience or make sense of their experiences and how it is related to urban/rural dynamics. However, I did not have resources to reach the appropriate interviewees, and thus I started from interviewing staff members of non-profit organizations and peer support communities. For the selection of the key informant interviewees, the organizations advocating for equal rights to rural LGBTQs in Japan, or using SDGs in their messages are purposefully selected. In using SDGs, most of them seem to make some comment in relation to local governance and equal rights, such as goal 11. These organizations came to be known by the researcher(me) mainly through symposiums and events held in the Kanto region between 2017 to 2019. This could mean that these organizations were relatively motivated to problematize heteronormativity and cisgenderism in relation to rurality. It should be noted that the expansion of snow-ball network of interviewees also started from these organizations.

The purpose of the key informant interview was to grasp the overall situations (their discourses concerning shared experiences) about the queer communities in Japan. The key informants were also expected to introduce the researcher to appropriate interviewees so that the other appropriate interviewees would follow. The key informants B and L came to

be known by the researcher through the events as mentioned thus far. The letter of interview offer was also sent to them, including the other organizations that followed the same conditions but could not receive the offer. As Yabuki (2017) mentions that not answering the interview itself is a sort of data, I would like to keep note of them too. In these organizations, the staff members can have traumatic experiences in relation to their sexual identities and their experiences in relation to geography (or rather local communities). In this research, the interview contains the questions asking their life histories. Presumably, these could explain the hardship to reach out to informants.

J is distinctive compared to the other key informants. He was recruited by the researcher to delve more deeply into a certain local context, since his organization offers peer support for local queer residents. J is more embedded into a certain local context, compared to B and L. I expected that a network from J would expand larger, but he knew no queer farmers or ones with farming backgrounds.

4.2 Insights from Key Informant Interviews

The key informant interviews reveal the following: the imaginary of rural queer that the key informants share; the different elements of rurality that they are drawn to; and their strategies to problematize rural queer issues. Their imaginaries are constructed based on their own experiences and anecdotal evidence in their communities, and thus it is assumed

that the imaginaries the key-informants referenced are more widely shared amongst the queer communities. Given the lack of information concerning rural queers in Japan, this can be used as the initial reference to develop research framework. These are used to change and legitimize the operational definition of rural queer in recruiting the interviewees. They also mention the cultural values and social structure that they relate to rural settings. These were used to amend the interview guide (i.e. the tentative question list). Although they are trying to problematize certain issues surrounding the rural queer, they seem to have a hard time accessing primary data. Based on this difficulty gathering first-hand voices from rural queers in Japan, they seem to feed back into their idea that rural queer people in Japan are usually unable to access queer communities, and isolated. This further legitimizes this research for this will fill this gap by providing certain primary data, which falls in the hardest to reach.

The shared imaginary of rural queer drawn from the key informant interview data is that they feel isolated; and lack access to queer community, infrastructure for queers, and information concerning sexuality and gender. Those who wish to live in rural areas are considered as rare due to the risks the key informants think of, though this does not necessarily apply to regional central cities(chihō toshi 地方都市). B's comment is representative.

B: I often hear they say they would not come out to their family. Some say they will hold it to tomb. [...] I think that their felt pressure to adopt to the local values is overwhelming. The local city my organization bases at is still somewhat rural, but it is also considered as a large/urbanized city in this region (region as in Kanto 関東, Chugoku 中国, Tohoku 東北, Kyusyu 九州 etc). People say that they ran away from their hometowns to this city because it is hard to move to Tokyo or Osaka for the distance.

B also assumes, based on conversations with the community participants, rural queers suppress their identity and feel the pressure to hide and adapt to the dominating local identity. This imaginary legitimizes the narrative that queers would not live in or move (back) to a rural area, which is oftentimes associated with their hometown. They are considered to have some reasons that they need to go back to their rural hometowns, or that they do not have enough resources (especially financial resources) to leave their hometowns. B and L mention those who reluctantly went back to their rural hometowns to take care of their elderly parents, ending up isolated.

The key informants generally share the imaginary mentioned thus far. However, what they emphasize seem to come from different elements of the rural imaginary. The different imaginary of rurality will influence what message they deliver in terms of the rural queer issues they mainly advocate for or against, and thus in this paper I have taken the observed

difference seriously, and decided to analyze this aspect by collecting more information through semi-structured interviews. This will be further analyzed in Section 6.2. For this section, the ones observed amongst the key-informants will be shown. For instance, to describe the hardship rural queers experience, B cited the following case about a person who went back to their rural hometown:

B: I got an email from a person who used to live in a certain rural town. He moved to an urban area, like Tokyo or Osaka. But he needed to move back to his hometown to take care of his elderly parent. He sent us an email at this moment. The email from him read that he does not have anyone to rely on in the region he lives in since he had lived in a different urban city. He also does not know where he can meet people of the same sexuality. He feels isolated, and does not know who to talk to. I was thinking that this would be a serious case, so I tried to reply him as quick as possible every time I got an email from him, but after a while, he stopped emailing me. I don't know what and how he is doing now, which makes me worried.

In this case, the referred rural queer individual was born in a rural town, moved to an urban city to realize his identity, and “needed” to go back to his rural hometown. Once he came back, he got isolated both from the local communities and from the queer communities.

L's explanation was somewhat balanced, but her explanation seems to represent the

aspect concerning agricultural community and landscape. This comes with the expectation that rural queers who farm would be rare. L mentions that rural queers tend to be isolated, especially those who engage in agriculture. She has hardly met queer farmers in Japan. She also thinks that agriculture is male centered. “Men” are expected to succeed the land and occupation, and “women” to support their husband, which also means the conservative gender oppression remains as well. She explains that lesbians would definitely have hard time in these settings, and thus would not do farming. Living in a rural area requires ones to merge themselves into the locality, meaning they cannot easily get away from the situation in case something happens, according to L. L also mentions that she might have become an environmental activist as she was highly interested in environmental issues. She, however, felt “the need to give the dream up” because of the presumed hardship she would experience in rural settings. L’s explanation is based on her own background that some of her close acquaintances are farmers. L’s comments largely confirm the previous researches on rural gender in Japan (Akitsu et al., 2007).

In contrast, J mainly refers to the infrastructure and job opportunities. For J, the capital concentration in urban cities is the cause of leaving rural areas. J explains that the locally based companies usually lack capital to offer training sessions concerning diversity/inclusion strategy, which defers the change in cisgenderism and heteronormativity

prevalent among the private sector.³⁴ Furthermore, the fewer and less lucrative job opportunities discourage them to come to visit, or settle in rural areas:

J: One of the difficulties I, as an organizer of this local queer community, face against is that there are only a few companies that have shown progress concerning sexuality issues. The locally based firms are usually smaller in scale than the large companies which usually base themselves in urban areas. These smaller local companies have not done training sessions about LGBTQ inclusivity enough. Lots of the community members mention their exposure to microaggression and harassment at these local companies' workplaces (whether they are currently working at or they are having a recruitment interview at). They are worried whether they should come out to their bosses, or at interviews. If they need to do so, they wonder whether they should choose LGBTQ friendly companies. They ask me for recommendation concerning which company they should choose, but as far as I know, there are only a few "LGBT friendly" companies in this region. Even if I tell them my recommendations, they oftentimes say that they would not just go for those options since they are simply not what they can and want to do. Plus, what oftentimes happens is the trainings have only been done for those with some managerial titles, so the education does not penetrate to the workers. Their second option is to search on online job matching websites such as Job Rainbow. But,

³⁴ The same line of argument was also made by B.

the jobs on their website concentrate in urban areas, especially in Tokyo. They say that this might represent that Tokyo is more progressive and friendly to LGBT, and so they think of moving out. [...]What they often say is that they want a job in this area, but in the first place, job offers are so much fewer than in the urban areas. The ones available offer very low salary, and part-time position, and this derives from the local industrial structure. I mean, sexuality issues come after this issue of fewer job offers. [...] So, I sometimes hear that some LGBT in cities have a wish to have a rural and cozy lifestyle, but they do not go for it because of the fewer opportunities available.

The fewer job opportunity can be a problem no matter what sexuality or gender, but this is more significant for those who want to access medical cares concerning their gender expression. This will further be elaborated in the interviews shown in the following section, especially H and K.

B's imaginary seems to mainly refer to rurality as hometown in the countryside. L's imaginary is based mainly on the job occupation and one's life tied to geographical settings. J refers mainly to the business structure which would not provide enough resources for queers' needs. Through the key-informant interviews, it became clear that understanding the diversity and how it confuses or enriches the rural queer discourses needs to be further analyzed through this research.

They seem to share the idea that rural queer experiences are somewhat unique or different than the urban one's experiences. To problematize the heteronormativity in rural settings and governance, they seem to be considering SDGs as the potential tool to advocate for their equal rights to local governments and citizens. The outstanding reason is drawn by B that SDGs is given authority by the Japanese governments, and thus some entrepreneurs and municipal governments are more active when the issue is related to SDGs.

Having said that, they are working on sexuality issue as a human right issue, and thus they do not want to be manipulated in order to achieve the other goals, such as productivity, which potentially impairs human rights approach. B, for instance, shows her concern, saying that talking about sexuality in relation to SDGs might not appeal to some people, governments, and small-scale business entrepreneurs in rural areas; because they seem to stick to the idea that sexuality matters are individual matters. This relates to interviewee E's concern, which will be introduced in its details later on, about whether queers are included in the "leaving no one behind" principle. Their manner that they still are watching whether it can be actually incorporated in the SDGs' discourse, can be interpreted as "if people do not relate sustainability matters to sexuality issues, then probably we should give up on SDGs and seek for the other conceptual tools." The responses to this issue differ amongst

the key informants, but it can be understood that they share the same concern that the majority do not relate SDGs to sexuality in Japanese context, and thus the SDGs authority is limited in relation to sexuality matters. This itself can be criticized³⁵ since the UN's SDGs bases itself on the just sustainability discourse, and thus all the issues concerning discrimination are considered covered. Yet, the key informants have the impression that the authority given to the framework can malfunction in a given circumstance.

CHAPTER 5. DIVERSITY AND NORMATIVITY: LIFE HISTORIES

The previous section revealed the imaginaries shared amongst the activism about rural queers in Japan. As rural queer issue stands on the intersection of rurality and sexuality, the difference of their imaginaries toward rurality seems to be causing the confusion in the activism as each one element of the imaginary points to a different source of problem. Therefore, drawing the rich life history of the rural queer individuals is significant both in terms of replenishing the lack of diverse primary sources of information, and providing the comprehensive framework through this research's analysis. This will also further contribute to reimagine how to recontextualize and reconstruct the rurality, gender, and sexuality in Japan.

³⁵ Fukunaga (2014) provides detailed theoretical explanation concerning the relationship between sustainability, its governmentality, and exclusion.

In order to replenish the archival knowledge concerning rural queer and contextualize the entirety of this research's analyses, this chapter will retell the interviewees' life histories, paying particular attention to their lived experiences concerning sexuality, gender, and locally-embedded experiences³⁶. For the purpose of this research, the information collected through the interviews will be shown in accordance with the dominant strategy they are taking to cope with, survive, or confront the heteronormativity and cisgenderism in their own settings. This does not necessarily mean that they utilize only one strategy. They combine diverse strategies to live through the mechanism standing on the intersection of rurality and sexuality. Since numerous of attributes seem to have influence on their choice of strategies such as their perceived SOGIESC; this chapter tries to provide the contexts where these attributes are intertwined with each other. The details of the strategy will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Following key informants B and L, the interviews with E mainly reveal the norms concerning rural settings in comparison with urban settings. It cannot be said that all LGBTQs share the same or similar experiences as E has had. Yet, what is significant is that the social identity, gay, has enabled him to problematize his own experiences as a shared problem amongst those who access either one of the identities amongst "LGBTQ". E is

³⁶ Refer to chapter 3 for the tendency amongst the interviewees. For example, most of them identify their gender identity as male.

trying to add rural essences to LGBTQ movements by constructing around the stories and norms that have already penetrated to a certain degree amongst the LGBTQ movement in Japan. In this paper, I will begin from E's case.

5.1 Fighting Back Against Rural Heteronormativity: E's Case

E sees entirely different worldview in Tokyo than the one he sees in the "rural" area where he grew up. He was brought up in what he calls a family with "traditional and conservative values". He says that it has not been easy to construct his gay identity until he went out to a city in Tokyo. E is in his 40s, and identifies himself as gay. In this paper, I categorized him as "a person from a farming family" as it was the initial information I had.

The conditions for recruiting interviewees for this research wrote, "those who grew up in a farming family", and so my expectation toward him was this. However, it turned out that he was not actually from a farming family. For him, it seems to be necessary to access the label "from a farming family", because it allows him to access the discourses about the rural queers' rights that the queer individuals in Japan have recently started constructing. By accessing the label "rural queer" and "a son of a farmer", he is trying to deliver the voices to the isolated rural queers. E's eagerness toward this seems coming from his own experiences as a "rural" gay who has felt isolated and left behind.

Though the public recognition of the term LGBT has soared amongst Japanese citizens, numerous conservative norms remain. As literatures, both written in English and Japanese, pointed out; the information, infrastructure, and knowledge about and for sexually non-conforming people concentrate around urban settings. The rural settings are largely understudied (Kawaguchi, 2015; Sunagawa, 2015; Sugano, 2019). The interviews with E reveal the ruralized norms that have not been widely discussed. This attitude of E also made it clear that E is trying to problematize the rural settings that have been “left behind” compared to the urban ones, by which he also aims to “improve” the situations for those LGBTQs who feel “isolated, neglected, and left behind.”

Literatures on rural sociology, agricultural sociology and gender studies, concerning Japanese rural settings and agricultural communities, have pointed out that gendered institutions construct the large part of rural, local, and household governance (Akitsu et al., 2007; Tsutsumi, 2015a; 2015b). The literatures in this line also reveal that the past interventions and policies to “improve” the environment where “women” provided unpaid labor, ended up in essentializing gender, and thus preserving the then existing patterns of gendered institutions (Iwashima, 2012). This was done by just making them look malign, instead of radically changing the patterns deriving from the dichotomic gendered system. This gendered system also puts pressure on sexually non-conforming people as it presupposes heterosexualized dichotomy of gender (Ehara and Yamazaki, 2006). In order to

confront this dichotomy, E's strategy seems to follow the logic that LGBTQ friendliness marks sophistication and development of the civilization, which Mason (2018) points out. This logic incorporates the idea that the underdeveloped "rural" needs to improve. Knowing this, E admires his own image of a cozy and nostalgic rurality lived through himself. E also thinks that every locality has valuable characteristics, meaning that while he has internalized the dilemma between urban imperialism and rural protectionism, he is aware of this dilemma even as he represents it. I would like to first visit the marriage pressure, one of the gendered institutions E brings up. This is one of the powerful heteronormative institutions.

E: I think that queers feel so reluctant to visit their home just for seeing their family or close relatives in seasonal holidays (e.g. Obon(お盆), and New Year's celebration) that some of them cannot even go. Because, though their family might kind of know their situation, their close relatives come and ask things like if they are STILL single. They typically start with the question how old their kids are. If they answer, for example, they don't have kids and they are not even married, these relatives would say "Wait. What?" They would continue "it is not acceptable that a person at your age is not married or not with a kid."

本当に盆正月に一時帰省するっていうのでさえできない。なんでかっていうと、盆正月っ

て親戚があつまりますよね。家族はそれとなく事情を察してくれていたとしても無遠慮な親戚たちが、あんたまだなんで一人なんだって聞いて来たりする。結婚、今子供はいくつなんだ、から始まるんですよね。「いや、そもそも結婚してないし、子供なんて…」っていうと、「は？なんで？」って言われたりする。もうあんたいい歳して結婚もしてなくて子供いないとか、そんなのとんでもない、だの言われちゃう

The population that visit the rural areas every now and then for such reasons shown above is oftentimes counted and promoted as one type of “relative population,” according to Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (2018). In this context, homecoming is considered as having positive functions to rural governance. Yet, what E sees in this is the micropolitics that discourages and even suppresses them. This is also associated with the heteronormative life course imagination:

E: In rural areas, men are expected to buy a house for their parents, and women are expected to give birth to their first child, both by the end of their 20s. People think they are allowed to expect that, that it is normal. I heard a story about a woman who gave birth to her first kid when she was thirty. Her relatives said to her that she didn't have to take thirty years to give birth to her first baby. Her relatives even asked her what she was doing for the past thirty years. The older generation than ours starts to go back to their hometown to take care of their elderly parents. It cannot be helped...rather it is

very nice of them. But, once this generation goes back [to their rural hometown], a bed of nails awaits them. People say to them that “your poor parents. [Your parents] don’t even get to see their grandchild’s face.” [The local people] offend these people asking what they have been doing. [The local people] even question their parents’ competency in growing their own kids. [The local people] tell them not to circulate the discourses like “be yourself” because that will affect [the local people’s] own kids. There are lots of stories like these which are unbearable to hear. These make me so sad and distressed.

地方だとやっぱり、男性なら 20 代のうちに親のために家を建てる、女性なら 20 代のうちに最初の子供を産む、それができて当たり前、普通、それが出来ないとだめ。私が本当に聞いた話ですが、30 歳で初産を迎えられた奥さんに「おせえんだよ、今まで何してたんだよ」なんて親戚にどやされたって。で、更に上の世代になると今度はもう親の介護のために戻らなきゃいけないと。本当にもう、仕方がない...っていうか非常に大事なことですけど、戻るとやっぱり針のむしろが待っている。かわいそうに...と。あんたのお父さんお母さんは孫の顔も見れないで死んでいくのよ、って周りの人が言うんですから。あんた何やってたんだよ、とかね。あーあ、あんたのお父さんお母さんの育て方が悪かったからあんたはそんなになっちゃったんだね、とかね。で、ゆめゆめ、「私は私でいい」なんてうちの子にだけは言わないでくれ、だとか。もう、それはそれは...聞いていて耳を疑うし、その次には悲しくて切なくてどうしようもないエピソードが吐いて捨てるほどあります。

Halberstam (2005) coins the term queer time as well, when analyzing metronormativity. The concept problematizes the tendency that life course imaginaries are shaped around cisgenderism and heteronormative assumptions. According to Halberstam, queers do not live the same life course as the dominant scheme imposes on us. They argue that all people are queer in some way or the other, and thus no authoritative interventions based on these biased imaginaries should be legitimate. Despite this, E is still exposed to these norms. E witnessed the norm institutionalized and exercised again and again, which makes him imagine that the local community will turn to them and impose the same oppression on them. E relates this with a wider rural structural problem:

E: The problem is that the oppression against the sexually non-conforming does not only derive from groups of individuals internalizing heterosexism, but also from the local “issues” that rural municipal governments consider facing against. Specifically, their public relations magazines always send the message that they need to tackle aging society *with low birth rate*³⁷. If someone says that homosexual people are also human beings, they would typically respond that such population will increase if we let them be. When I talked with a primary school teacher, that person responded that [if we have a class about sexuality] the students would not get married in the future.

³⁷ Emphasis put by the author because the specific Japanese term aging society with low birthrate(少子高齢化) has the connotation to emphasize reproduction. The current legal scheme in Japan does not suppose that reproduction is an option for queers in Japan at this moment, so one possible interpretation is that the term is heteronormalized. Shrinking society(縮小化社会) is less sexualized.

問題が個々人の発想じゃなくて、地方都市の構造に埋め込まれていると...つまり行政の広報では絶えず、この町の少子高齢化はなんとかしなきゃいけない(...)とか言っ(ている)。(...) 同性愛者だって生きてていいとか言うと、「そんな人が増えるじゃないか」とか返ってきちゃうような。小学校(の先生とかと話したら)、「卒業生が結婚しなくなるだろうが」とか言われたこともあります。

E also shows other specific examples of municipal policies, guidelines for education, and corporate governance that assume heterosexuality and cisgender. These policies normalize the heteronormative intergenerational responsibilities that must be assumed on the individual level. E warns about the municipal policies founded upon the heteronormative conception of sustainability, which is to maintain the number of the population relying mainly on heteronormative reproduction. E compares this rural governance to urban governance:

E: I haven't heard a similar heteronormative policy, such as the one that almost forces people to reproduce, exercised at the municipalities in Tokyo. If there is, it will be a big problem. I mean the reason the queers cannot go back to rural areas is not limited to the household level where they cannot rebuild their relationships with their family. It is also about the rural municipalities being desperate about increasing the kind of population they want. Heteronormativity comes into its full effect there. It leads to explicit

homophobia, transphobia, and social pressure on people to get married and [heterosexually] reproduce next generation. That excludes diverse people ranging from LGBT, those who have some illness, those who might have lost their partner, those who have not experienced marriage or pregnancy for some reason, and so on. They all feel really oppressed. I personally believe that the rural hardship is about the rural society not allowing bio-sovereignty for people, which people in urban areas are eligible for. That makes it impossible for the rural queers to go back to their hometown.

さすがに東京都の自治体でそこまでヘテロノーマティビティとか、結婚出産を無理強いするようなことはあまり聞いたことが無いんですが、もしそれがあつたら大問題になるでしょうね。つまり地方に戻ってこれないっていうのは、家族との関係が構築できないとかそのレベルの話じゃなくて、自治体が人口を増やすための政策にやっきである、ここには当然強烈なヘテロノーマティビティが働き、それは時にはあからさまなホモフォビアとかトランスフォビアとか。とにかく結婚や出産に向けての強烈なプレッシャーが働いていると。そこで排除されるのはもはや LGBT だけじゃない。何かの事情で、ご病気かもしれないし、若くしてのパートナーとの死別かもしれないし、何かの事情で一定の年齢になっても結婚や出産を迎えてないすべての人が非常につらい思いをしているという。なので、私自身は地方の辛さっていうのは、セクマイ³⁸に限らずに生を巡った自己決定が都会では当たり前許されるのに、地方でそれが許されない、そのことが人々を故郷に帰れなくしている。

³⁸ セクマイ (Sekumai) is an abbreviation for セクシュアル・マイノリティ (sexual minority).

In explaining their sovereignty over their lives, E refers to the urban/rural framework. His reference to this urban/rural framework is also supported by his own experiences in urban settings, such as joining the pride parades and going to gay bars. E used to live in Tokyo. When he was exploring gay networks, he started from online communities first. He made some gay friends, which helped him construct his gay identity and gain confidence. E explains how urban infrastructure for queer was important for him to take the courage to meet his online gay fellows:

E: I gradually came to be close to the gay fellows I got to know online. We came to say why not gather and hang out. I was a bit scared, actually really scared. But, the online communication made me imagine this person would have this sort of personality, this person would be nice, and things like that. That made me gradually want to meet them in person. That was when I first went to Shinjuku Nichome. [...] We used our own online ID and nickname. When I first met them, that was fun. [...] We started off from somewhere safe for us, then went to a place one of them knew, then came to hear the review of the other places which I did not have a chance to learn about online. I was excited about new encounters, wondering if I might get into some romance with someone there. Things didn't start like that, but I got to talk with the guys there. And my network gradually expanded like that.

やがて、皆で集まってご飯食べようよ、みたいになって。怖かった、それは凄い怖かった。

けど、文字ベースでやり取りを繰り返して、この人はこんな性格だろう、この人と会ってみたいとか確かに思うようになって。恐る恐る行ったのが二丁目ですね...(...)ID 番号とハンドルネームで会って、あ、あなたが！みたいな。凄い楽しかったです、あれは。(...)その時は別にオフ会だから最初はクローズドな場所で飯食った後、誰かが知っているお店に流れて行ってだんだんオンラインと違うお店の評判を聞いて、そこにいったらちょっとドキドキするような出会いがあるかな...みたいな。で、まあ行きました。そうすると、別にいきなり色恋沙汰になるっていうより、喋る人がいますよね...お店の人と喋ってることもあるけど、それを横で聞いてあの...って行って話しかけたりかけられたりして、そこから今度またこの店で飲みましようね...みたいな。

The significance E feels about this experience in relation to urbanity becomes clearer when it is compared to his comment below. This is extracted from E's story when he got a job in a remote area:

E: But these happy days lasted only for a few years. [...] I migrated to a remote area because I got a job there. Things were completely different. There were almost no [safe] places to hang out. There were of course online communities for local gays, so I messaged and got to meet them. But they never wanted to meet up near their area because people might see. If this person lived in the south of the town, he would tell me

to meet him in the north. I knew some places to hang out because my friends in Tokyo told me before I moved, but I needed to travel a bit to get to these places. Even if I go, I would say only 40% of the customers are the relatively local people, 20% are from neighbor prefectures, and the rest is either those who are sightseeing or on a business trip. I made some friends there, but...[only a few].

ただそんな幸せな日々のわずか数年ほどで。(…)日本の地方に就職が決まって戻ってきたら全然状況が違う。そもそもお店がないし、ゲイの出会い掲示板みたいなものはあったし、コンタクトして会うんだけど、家の近くでは絶対会いたくない、誰かに見られるかもしれないから、と。その人が例えば町の南に住んでいたら、町の北の方で待ち合わせ...とか。(遠い町) まで行けば、東京にいたときに紹介されたお店もあったし、そういう所だと、地元の人 4 割、近隣の県の人 2 割、出張の人とか観光の人が残り...みたいな。そこで一応友達的な関係になれる人もいたけど(…)

E explains how rural queers tend to get isolated through the lack of communities for queer, “hypervisibility” culture (Leslie, 2017, p.752), and a feeling of danger. To fix their felt isolation, the local queer communities around the local bars can be imagined even if there are not a lot of such places. According to E, however, in these places, the rural queers apparently mainly share the idea that they just need to accept their hardships, and tell themselves that it is how things are in these rural areas. In addition, E explains anecdotal

evidence about a kind of silencing mechanism amongst the rural sexually non-conforming people:

E: [I just heard about it, but oftentimes] there is a conflict between those who made a U-turn³⁹ migration(U) and those who had always been there(T). The former groups(U) are made up mainly of those who went to Tokyo or some other city, realized the importance to be themselves, and decided to come back to their hometown to make it LGBT friendly there. They(U) are opposed by their fellows(T). They(T) say that activism like that just jeopardize their safety, and that it is just a show using them. [...]

Another story is about this person who did a wedding ceremony. Their [LGBTQ] friends from the local community did not show up. This person then went to a local gay bar, and heard that people were saying things like that was just annoying, and that [the local queer people's] family questioned if they were one of them. Ideally, it is best if they can unite under sexuality. But, those who stayed in their hometowns were like “those who once left this town do not understand our hardship. They don't understand how it feels like to be stuck here and unable to leave.” So, I think what is happening is quite ironic: those who apparently look happy, who oftentimes have nothing fettering them such as their family and relatives in the rural area, are the only ones that can claim

³⁹ According to Rural Migration Guidebook (地方移住ガイドブック) by Headquarters for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan(内閣官房まち・ひと・しごと創生本部事務局) in 2015, U-turn migration is the pattern that one migrates back to their hometown, I-turn migration is the pattern that one migrates out of their hometown, and J-turn is the pattern that one migrates back to a rural town but not their hometown. Their political interest can be seen on the trajectory drawn around rural areas instead of urban areas.

against heterosexism in rural areas.

特に U ターン組とずっと住んでいた組は対立構造があって、だいたい東京とかに行って自分らしく生きることの大切さに気付いて、これを自分の大好きな故郷でも実現したい、って帰ってくると、「そんなことされたら迷惑だ」とか「自分たちがあぶりだされる」って言って反対を受けるんだそうです。(…) ある人が同性結婚式をあげたら、地元の当事者の友達は何人も来なかったって。そのあとでゲイバーに行くと、あんなの本当迷惑よね、なんて言われて。家に帰ったら、お前もあれなんじゃないか、って言われた、なんて会話をしていたりしたそうで。本当はセクシャリティでつながりたいのに、地元でずっといた人たちは、「一旦出たやつらに何が分かる、ここを離れられなかった自分達の気持ちなんてわかるはずがない」ってなっちゃうんですよね。なので、見かけ上ハッピーに色んなことをされている移住組、家族や親せきのしがらみが何もない人達しか、地域では活動できない、という非常に皮肉な状態になっているんだと思うんですね。

Given such an experience, E hoped that the large-scale events in cities can be an easier opportunity for rural queers to attend. He also hoped that these occasions provide the opportunities for the rural queer individuals to feel safe and share their stories. However, what E has experienced made him feel that the rural queer is left behind. E cites his friend's story to make a point here:

E: What I found severe about Tokyo Rainbow Pride is [represented by this story]. This person came from a rural town. For this person, everything looked shiny, but there was no one this person knew or could talk to... There were no stalls they could relate themselves to. They wandered for a bit, but eventually got exhausted, and went home. [...] I think, even though there was no one they knew, they could have felt safer or somewhat belonging to this community, if there had been some stall or booth claiming against the same problems or issues as these rural queers experience. [...] There was nowhere they can turn to or take a rest when they felt isolated or not quite belonging to the community. The only way left for them at the parade was to make a U-turn and leave. [...] The brochures about rural queer issues [were good because these] can allow them to share their own stories or feelings that being in a rural town is hard.⁴⁰

TRP に直結して深刻だなと思ったのが、地方から頑張って来たんだけど、人が凄く多くてイベントごとがものすごくキラキラしていて、でもそのブースのどこにも自分の知り合いは居なくて...すごい所在なさのなかで、うろうろしたけど、だんだん辛くなってきたから途中で帰ります、みたいな人の声を聞いたっていう事です。(...)例え自分の知り合いがいなかったとしても自分が抱えているのと同じような課題や問題意識を最前面に押し出されているブースがどこかにあれば、ここなら...とか、ちょっとそこで話聞いたりとかできたかもしれませんよね。(...)私の気持ちをどこに持っていけばいいのか、どこのブースから

⁴⁰ As shown in Section 1.3., Tokyo Rainbow Pride 2019 launched a campaign related to rural queers, and also had a stall displaying the brochures featuring this campaign.

回ればいいのかちょっとわかんなくなっちゃったっていう人が、結局 U ターンして帰るし
かないので、今は。(…)地方のチラシとか丁寧に見てもらったらやっぱり地方って結構きつ
いよね、って凄く共感できるだろうし。

Elsewhere, E also shares his intuitions that there are particular issues to the rural queer, and that the rural queer is left behind in terms of self-actualization and people's recognition compared to urban settings.

E: Being in Tokyo, everything is fine. But, not everyone is like OUT in Japan⁴¹ where they look open, proud, and happy. That includes me.

東京にいるときは平気。でも、いわゆる OUT in Japan みたいな、カミングアウト・プライド・ハッピーみたいな人ばかりではないと思う。特に自分みたいな人は。

As E felt that the rural queer is left behind, SDGs caught his interest. He thought that it could be a strong tool in lobbying the municipal government. It is not rare for activists to refer to the concepts and frameworks developed in a different language especially if they have trans-local implications (Kazama and Kawaguchi, 2010; Thoreson, 2014). With the sense that the rural queer people are left behind, E's expectation toward this framework seemed tremendous:

⁴¹ An advocacy campaign calling for the equal rights for queers (OUT in Japan, 2015)

E: When I first saw the “leaving no one behind” principle⁴², I thought that this was it.

This would save me. [...] The slogan “leaving no one behind” was supposed to save me.

話を SDG s に戻すと、「誰も取り残さない」というのを見たとき、これだ！と思った。やっ

と自分も救われると思った。(…) leaving no one behind という標語を見たときに、これだ！

これを使えば私も救われる。そう思っていた。

However, E’s expectation was gradually overturned collectively by the attitude of municipal governments, politicians’ discriminative remarks, and the documents the municipal governments publicize on SDGs:

E: Checking the documents, I was shocked. They write the phone number of the environmental office for reference. They call some projects SDGs because it partially fulfills SDGs [but not all]. They were already doing these environmentally-friendly projects before SDGs [and now they call these the SDGs-related projects]. In the same town, [some politician at the municipal level] publicly mentioned that there was no need for issuing partnership certificates for same-gendered couples. I was like what the heck? I mean it would have been a bit fairer if they interviewed some non-profit groups or peer-support groups working on sexuality issues. But they didn’t do such a thing. And

⁴² “As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.” (UN General Assembly, 2015, p.1)

they erased queer? How can such a government be following SDGs? I learned the term “SDGs washing” last December. It means they advertise as if they were working on all the 17 goals when they actually do limited activities that they are good at doing. In this process [as they are showing all the 17 goals], they look like they are doing something to improve gender inequality and inequity as well. But the reality is “such people do not exist.” How dare! That was really shocking for me concerning the discrepancy between SDGs’ ideal and reality.

蓋を開けてみると、問い合わせ先が環境関連の部署になっていたりとか、もともとエコな取り組みっていうのはそれぞれ昔からやっているだろうに、それが SDGs の一部に合致しているからということで(...) 全くその同じ市で、(...) 私たちの町に同性パートナーシップへの要請はありません、なんて発言(が出たらしいんです)。なんだそれは、と。例えば性的マイノリティの自助グループなり支援団体にヒアリングして、ニーズないんですね、ということなら全く構いません。一度もそんな事なさらぬのに、いきなりいないことにされて、それって SDGs の真逆では? と思いました。ちょうど去年の 12 月末に SDGs ウォッシングという言葉を知り、得意な部分のつまみ食いだけをして私たちは SDGs やってます、と言い、ちゃっかり広報の時には 17 のパネルを持っている。そのプロセスの中で、だったらジェンダー平等もやっているって見えるのに、いざ蓋を開けてみると、「そんな人うちの町には居ません」と言われてしまう。なんてひどいことなんだ、と。SDGs をめぐる現実と理念の乖

離っている文脈で一番衝撃的だったのはそれで。

As E mentions disappointedly and depressed, when SDGs is touted as one of the municipality's slogans, they appear to base the policy on social inclusion and sustainability. The discrepancy between this image that provides brand to the municipality and the actual policy implementation is oftentimes left unquestioned. In this context, SDGs is reduced to the tool that merely brands the town, whilst leaving the unresolved structural problems such as heteronormative institutions, and heteronormative governance. For people like E, it is not just discouraging, but it can become the strong tool for the users with authority to conceal the apathy toward certain political issues related to sustainability such as gender and sexuality:

E: The more I listen to those who bless SDGs, the more suspicious I become against it. Discrimination and human rights issues should be in the SDGs' scheme, but those who praise SDGs do not talk about sexual orientation and gender identity. Why is that? Some of them do not even know the word [LGBTQ]. Even among those who know about it, there is the atmosphere that they know the word, LGBT, so they are open and friendly to LGBT. That gradually wears me out. I am disappointed. When they talk about rural sustainability, it is oftentimes reduced to sustaining the population. The local governments even provide dating services for cisgender, heterosexual people. The

services for them seem to increase, but there are none for the sexually non-conforming. They do not even talk about sexuality, which disappoints me. Am I, as a gay, included in the “anyone” that SDGs say? I lost the confidence to believe that I am in [this scheme] anymore. Tell me, who are they then? Who are in? How can the oppressed, who are so much oppressed that they cannot voice what they are going through, come to be recognized to make their way into SDGs scheme? Do they who use SDGs even think about this, how to incorporate those who are silenced?

SDGs を謳う人々の話を聞けば聞くほど疑いが募っていった。差別や人権の話も当然対象はずなのに、性的指向・性自認の話を何故しないのか？そもそもこれらの言葉を知らない人・意識していない人もいるように思われた。中には他に、「LGBT という言葉を知っているから私フラットでしょ？」といった空気もあって、次第に私は自信を失っていった。特に地方のサステナビリティの話をするときには「人口の持続」という話に回収され、お見合いや行政がすすんで男女のカップルのマッチングサービスをするとか、異性愛者への支援が盛り上がっていて、同性愛者や SOGI の話がないのに、いつもがっかりしていた。私は、ゲイである私は、その SDGs のいう「誰も」に入っているのか。もう今は確信が持てない。だから教えてほしい、「誰も」って一体誰のことなのか？私はここにいる、と声も上げられない当事者は、どうやってその「誰も」として認識されるのか？SDGs を使う人たちは本当にそんなことを考えているのか。

What has been interesting about E is that he does not speak particularly for his area (though he did so occasionally during the interview). He generally talks about rurality, putting urbanity in comparison. Presumably, he is trying to claim against the normativity, strategically referring to the rural/urban dichotomy, because it is oftentimes mobilized in political discourses related to sustainability in Japan. He is also keen to mobilize himself for social activism, and sees the rural queer issue as an important problem. E, however, is also aware of the danger of oversimplifying the urban/rural dichotomy. He also seems to admire the local culture as well. One of my goals in this paper is to examine and address this dilemma. E also tries to avoid the risks leading to identifying his identity. The following interviews will provide more of the specificities concerning rurality and sexuality.

5.2 Queers Embedded into Rurality/Locality 1: Dodging/Resuming Strategy?: H's Case

H, who lives as a transgendered man, works as a full-time farmer. He is sometimes asked to give talks about sexuality and gender as a guest speaker at advocacy events. The family farm he works for is mainly organized by his mother. He started farming after he quit his former job in an urban area. He lives in an apartment room which is thirty-minute to one-hour drive from the farmland. Several years have passed since he started farming.

He says that studying agriculture is an endless process. He did not go to an agricultural college, so he learned agricultural techniques mostly from his grandfather.

He does not feel the need to deal with the locally distributed responsibilities since his mother deals with them. He recently started feeling annoyed concerning the process of local knowledge production which is based on cisgenderism, but he somehow finds a way to keep working on farming. It seems to be important for him to just let those happen, because letting them happen and not allowing irritation to keep staying in his mind seem to be better than feeling stressed on daily basis to confront those.

The farmland he works at is also his ancestral home. As a kid, he helped his grandparents and parents with farming. He did not imagine he would succeed the work since he found agriculture very tiring, energy-consuming, and not a kind of thing he would like to do. He says that the primary reason he did not want to do agriculture at that moment was this aspect of agriculture, instead of intensive interpersonal relations or social relations related with farming communities and farming.

H started feeling incongruity about his gender when he was an elementary school student. He hated people directing him and telling him what to wear and how to behave like a girl. For instance, they strongly recommended a school bag in red, instead of one in black. H did not understand why people told the other people to do certain (gendered) things and

behave in a certain (gendered) way. However, H did not know concepts, frameworks, and ideas to fight back against these oppressions. H could not even realize his gender incongruence toward his assigned gender.

H became a high school student. H belonged to a school club and made some friends. They told him that one of the fellows was wanting to become a boy. H did not quite understand the idea, but H got curious about it. H kind of knew the concept lesbian, and that “there [were] women who fell in love with women, even though they [were] stigmatized.” As H got interested in the news, he thought that he might be lesbian too. That encouraged him to ask out the person who was the talk of the club. H, however, was feeling something about the idea of H accepting the lesbian label was not quite right.

H broke up with this person. H graduated from his high school. Having that feeling that something was not quite right, H was watching TV. H realized that he oftentimes came to hear “gender identity disorder” on mass media. H decided to talk about his struggle to one of the supportive friends who was assumingly going through the similar struggle. As H studied, he gained the concepts concerning gender identity, and started realizing that the struggle was more about gender identity and less about sexual orientation. H started gathering the information about the nearest community of lesbian and transgendered people and participating in them. H was still not sure about H’s gender identity, so H was struggling, questioning H’s gender identity.

As H's incongruence toward body became stronger, H decided to have medical cares so that H can change H's body. The "male hormone" seemingly changed H's body so that it easily gained muscle, beard, and body hair⁴³. In this period of time, H was living in a city away from his hometown where he had some queer friends. He moved to this city when he was in his early 20's. It was a bit of out of blue that he gained the moment when he decided to come back to farmland. He had a chance to help his mother with farming as he was turning his early 30's.

At that time, his mother was virtually the only one in his family who was farming. The chance he happened to help his mother was an eye-opener for him. He learned again how hard farming was, especially how hard it was for a single person to deal with all the work. He also realized that it was easier for him than his-old-self as the medical care seemed to make it easier for his body to gain muscle. He thought that he gained the confidence in his-new-self and that he might be able to farm with his new physiques. He decided to start farming full-time, so he rent an apartment room where he can commute to the farmland.

H learned the most of necessary techniques and knowledge he has now from his

⁴³ The expression "male hormone" is a direct citation from the interview. The medical cares, of course, can cause adverse effects. For the details, refer to the 4th edition of the guideline for prescribing gender identity disorder by The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology(性同一性障害に関する診断と治療のガイドライン(第4版改) 日本精神神経学会 性同一性障害に関する委員会)(2018)

grandfather. H did not think of going to an agricultural collage. He did not come out to his grandparents even though his body was changing. H says that they would not “[have been] able to understand.”

H has not witnessed the local community members exchanging or borrowing and lending tools for farming. H mentions that there might be this sort of local customs, but he has not seen. Another reason there are not a few local/rural things he is not familiar with is because he lives away from the farmland. Again, his mother resides next to the farmland. The ownership belongs to his mother. Almost all the local responsibilities are done by his family. They also participate in J.A.’s meetings, and thus the truly important messages trickle down from them to H.

H calls the area around his farmland “rural”. In contrast, the area he lives in, which is thirty minutes to an hour away from the farmland by car, is not completely “rural” for him. H’s explanation about rurality is shown below:

H: A rural setting for me is where people know each other really well. The neighbors borrow and lend random stuff. They know exactly where this and that person lives, [...] the size of land they have, and they even know what firm their children, brothers and sisters got a job at. Whereas in an [urban] area, people do not care much about their neighbors. The apartment I live in is like that too. They don’t have as much interaction

as they get to learn what sort of people their neighbors are.

僕が田舎って感じる場所は、隣近所が昔でいうなんかの貸し借り(したりとか)、誰がどこに住んで、(...)あそこは何人兄弟で、どこどこに就職させてみたいな詳しい情報をお互い知ってるみたいな、そんなのが田舎かなって思ってた。(都市)の場合は隣近所の事とかあまり...僕の住んでいるアパートもそうなんですけど、隣にどういう人が住んでいるっていうところまで交流がほぼほぼ無いので...

H invited his friends who identify themselves as having some queerness, and participated in an event that was gathering the voices from queer individuals to publicize. The message he asked them to share was “there are LGBTs in rural areas too.” I asked him if his friends also posted a similar message. His answer was that they did not because “they live[d] in a relatively urban area.”

What is read in this H’s comment is important to this research. H describes his situation using the word “rural” (or the words related to rurality), whilst he also questions whether a certain space should be called rural when it is designated by some authority systematically. For him, rurality feels real. It manifests and poses real threats. However, it is also not fixed; it constantly changes its shape. This implies the legitimacy of the approach this research takes. Following is how H explained the kinds of struggles he thinks that rural queers experience:

H: I often hear that they have a partner in [this region,] so they have moved in. Those who leave say their parents do not accept them. Also, they leave because they want to have medical care. They cannot earn enough [here]. The local companies pay their labor low. They typically go to cities like Nagoya to get a job at, say, a factory. They earn first, and have medical care. Sometimes, the fact that their family just understands and accepts them is not enough. The low salary is an issue for us...

Me: Given that, I thought, if they want to farm, they need to be resilient...like financially resilient. Otherwise, it would be difficult. Do you think that it is one of the reasons you do not see queer farmers so often?

H: I guess... queers hesitate to farm because farming is rural. Even if they do, they would not be out. Given that not many queer farmers are out even if they might do farm, and that farmers are usually in rural areas, they should be scared of stuff like outing⁴⁴.

H 結構[自分の今いる地域]に来た目的で多いのはパートナーがいたから。っていう子が多いですね。出ていく子は家族の理解がなかったから、とか言って出ていく。あとは治療をどうしても始めたいとか。ここに居てもお金が、給料とかが安いから大きい工場名古屋とかに行って、一気に稼いで手術をする、とか。家族の理解があってもやっぱり、収入っていうところも少ないからやっぱり...

⁴⁴ Outing means the act of revealing a certain person's sexual and/or gender identity without their permission.

Me そういう意味では農業に携わるっていうのは、忍耐強く...特に金銭的に忍耐強く出来ないといけないのかなと思ったんですが、それもあって農業に携わっているセクマイにあまり会わない、と思ったりしますか？

H 農業って田舎だから...じゃないですかね？なんでセクマイが農業にあまりいないのか...多分いたとしても言わないんじゃないですかね...田舎...結構農家って田舎が多いので田舎で、農業やってて、カミングアウトしてる人が少ないのはやっぱりアウトィングとかが怖かったりとかするからですかね....

H explains that there are fewer job opportunities. Available jobs have a low pay, mainly due to a low minimum wage. He explains the structure where those who need medical care for achieving their wanted gender expressions, first need to earn, and thus they are forced out of their rural areas. This medical care is not fully covered by national insurance as in 2019⁴⁵, and thus H's explanation makes sense as they need a certain amount of cash. Furthermore, I asked a question whether H thinks that financial foundation is important for queer farmers to farm. H answers to this that farming takes place in rural settings, and that is the focal reason queers do not farm or live in rural settings. The rurality described by H here differs from his previous explanation which referred to the structures of fewer job opportunities.

⁴⁵ The national insurance scheme started to solely cover sexual reassignment surgery from April 2018, though there are criticisms against this scheme that it cannot be virtually usable for several reasons. Remarkably, it does not yet cover hormone injection, and any combined medical cares (e.g. hormone injection and sexual reassignment surgery). (Nihonkeizai Shimbun, 2019)

Using the same word “rurality”, he now points at the rural community where it is difficult to keep control over one’s privacy and information that can easily get circulated. Despite these two different forms of rurality, queer individuals might still move to rural towns if they want to live near their intimate other’s place.

There are discourses to praise the strong bond as social capital, and that is considered to be oftentimes observed in rural communities (Assmann, 2015). What these discourses try to preserve and foster can be contrasted to what rural queers experience such as the “rural live-and-let-live” narrative, and “hypervisibility” (Kazyak 2011, p.573; Leslie 2017,p.752). These concepts point at the normative oppression on rural queers. Hypervisibility itself is not necessarily hostile for rural queers. It, however, keeps reminding them that their queerness can easily become the target of talk of the town. For H’s case, these severely discourage him from participating in the local farmers’ communities.

H: Now that I have officially registered my new name [to the municipal government,] I am thinking that I might want to go to the seminars, say, at the prefectural level. I cannot still go to the local farmers’ gatherings nearby. Farmer’s community is small. [One can easily be connected to another group.] They say things like “I know this person in this area”, and ask questions such as “whereabout in ** town is your farm?” Especially, uncles do. When I hear people say that they know this or that person in my

area, I am like “oh...ok.”

で、今は（名前を変更したので）近い地区の勉強会には行けないけど、他の県内とかの勉強会には行けるかもしれないな、とか。でもなんか、農業コミュニティって狭いからですね、「だれだれさんの知り合いなんだ」とか、「え**（行政区分としての町・村）ならどこ？」とかよく聞くんですよね、おじちゃんとか。「ああ、あそこのなんとかさんなら知ってる。」って言われると、そうなんです、みたいな。

The local community H is in is small. Based on what H says, there are multiple local communities, but these seem to be loosely connected. For H, it is important to control the information about himself because it might jeopardize his life and his family's life. He knows people can easily come to offend him.

H: Things are hard in a rural town. [...] When I went to some meeting, there were four middle-to-elderly-aged guys who were smoking and chitchatting. One looked rough, another looked elder, and there were the others. I happened to join them. One guy (A) asked another (B) what he did. The guy(B) worked as a representative at an employment support facility. He was saying that he helped those with depression, some “developmental disorders”, and things like that. I heard the guy (A) say a punch fixes a retard, which is not a good speech. He said people used to say and believe this. That

scared me because, if I come out, they would say stuff like “I should be more considerate for my parent”, “me being queer is me imagining things”, or “people like that (i.e. non-heterosexual and non-cisgender) don’t exist”.

難しいですよ、でも田舎って。(…)前ちょっと集まりがあっていった時に外でたばこを 4 人くらい、いかついおっちゃんとか、歳のいったおっちゃんとかおじちゃん 4 人位でたばこ吸ってたところに自分も出くわして、一緒に話をうんうんって聞いてたんですけど。喋ってたんですよ、一人の人がもう一人に、お前はどんな仕事してるんだ、って聞いたんです。その人は就労移行の施設の代表の方なんですけど、うつ病を持ってたりとか発達障害を持ってると人の就労の手伝いをしてるところの社長さんだったんです。そしたら、ああ昔はそんなやつ殴ればどうにかなるって言ってたよな、って。あまりいい言葉じゃないんですけど。そんなやつ殴っとけばいいんだよ、みたいなことを言っていて。だから多分セクマイの自分がセクマイですっていったら、親の事をもう少し考えろとか地域でカミングアウトしたら親の事を考えろとか、そういう事は気のせいだとか、存在しないとか、そういう言葉でやっぱりなんか...

Based on these experiences, H came to be prudent in controlling the information about himself especially in these communities. Some people might say that H is needlessly highly anxious about it as they might not necessarily attack him if his identity went public. However, as he and his family’s job and everyday life are embedded in the rural locality, it

will be too late for him after this risk manifests. Answering this interview itself can be a risk as this can reveal his identity even if the possibility is quite low. H was trying to connect me with the two other queer part-time farmers. They were at first quite interested in this research, and yet they eventually decided not to cooperate with this research assumingly for this reason.

According to H, local farmers do not necessarily need to rely on the local community to gain an access to markets and agricultural tools. H stated that he did not have difficulties in farming in this region. However, the following is H's explanation about how cisgenderism affects the agricultural knowledge sharing and production:

H: There are of course seminars, gatherings, and some local farmer's associations. There is also a gathering led by a relatively young local farmers association. I don't, or for worse, cannot go to these gatherings. If I were a gay, it might not matter. I know I am saying something not quite right. But, as a transgendered person, I have changed my name. I haven't come out to the local people. So, I am worried that they turn a cold shoulder, and things like that happen. I haven't even taken a membership at these associations. They would bet if I am a man or a woman. Things like this which are completely irrelevant to keep farming would happen. If I need to go, I think I will

choose the ones at the prefectural level, not the city/town level, because they allow anyone to join. They do not care what person comes or not. It is less likely to meet those who I and my family might know. They don't even check the name registered for the meeting. Well, precisely speaking, the reception might check but they don't know me. At the local meetings, they know whether this and that person from this family is there or not. [...] People in rural towns like rumors and gossips. That worries me if things like these happen to me too.

(この地域での)研修とかも勿論あるし、そういう組合というか...いくつかの農家さんが集まっているやつとか。あと、よくあるのは若手農家の集まりとか、そういうのもあるんですけど、全く行ってない、っていうか行けてないっていうか。変な話自分がゲイだったら別に関係ないのかなって思っていて。トランスジェンダーなので、名前も変わってるし、地区の...地域の人にはカミングアウトしてないんですよね。なのでそういう集まりに行ったときに変な目で見られたりとか、そういうのがあるんじゃないかなって心配で。なので、組合とか言うのには全く入ってなくて。カミングアウトをしてないので、変な目で見られたりとか、えあの人女の人じゃなかった？男の人なのに、女の人だったの？とかそういう農業に関係ないことが起こりえるかな、と思っていて。なかなか行けないんですよね、そういう組合とか。勉強会とかもあるんですけど。行くとしたら、(市内/町内/村内)の勉強会ではなくて県とかで、誰でも参加できるようなところだと、人に会うっていう確率は少な

いな、と思っいて。あと、名簿とか多分チェックはされないんです。受付の人はチェックすると思うんですけど、何々さんが来てる、とか来てないとか、**さんの家の子が来たよとかっていうのは、多分ほぼほぼ分からない(知らない)と思うんですよ。(...)田舎って噂好きだからですね、起こるんじゃないかなって思ってなかなかその辺が...

H explains that, at the meetings for local farmers, the name and gender are on the participant list. Cisgenderism presumptions construct this as the social checkpoint to determine if a person is sexually conforming or not. The possibility of him being labelled as deviating from the norms deters him from attending these meetings which are very important to gain knowledge about the species he grows. The power embedded in this structure can weaken if queer individuals can somewhat separate their privacy (i.e. the information about their farmland, family, etc) from these opportunities. The following is how H tries to avoid this, making extra effort which would be unnecessary if cisgenderism presumptions were not institutionalized at the local governance level:

H: Exactly [The locally held gatherings are the best in terms of the species I grow]. But, I can choose the other topics like bugs, how I can avoid the usage of herbicides, and such. I can still learn how to fertilize my soil [organically], sunlight, how to manage the surrounding natural environment [if I go to the seminars held far from here]. I can still learn how to farm in general, instead of how to grow well the specific species I grow. I

have come out to the organizer of this seminar, so I go there.

そうですね。なので例えば、カメムシ、とか。(自分の育てている品種)に何の虫がつくのか
ってというのが分かっててその虫にどう対策するのかわ、僕は選んでたまに行ったりするん
ですけど。品種だと、(育てている品種)ってなれば自分の地区が主に講習会が多いんですけ
ど、他の、虫、とかどうやってなるべく除草剤をまかずに草を成長させないとか、ポイ
ントを違う所において...(育てている)品種とかだったらなかなか、ここから遠いところでは
講習会はないので、虫とか、どうやって土を作るかっていうところで勉強会に行ってます。
(...)そういうところで土とか太陽とか環境づくりとかそういう...品種っていうよりもどう
やって農業やっていくかっていう講習会には参加してます。

The seminar H refers to here is held by a non-profit organization related to farming. The organizer of this event “knows [H’s] struggles concerning sexuality because [H has] already come out to this person and negotiated”, and the organizer “allowed [him] to make [his] name tag with [his] newly registered name.” It is quite rare that the local farmers attend the gatherings held by this non-profit organization, but in case it happens the organizer makes considerate remarks for him, such as telling them “[H is] going through this and that. You should not share these to the local community.” Based on H’s experience, it is suggested that municipal governments should secure the opportunities free from cisgenderism and heterosexism. Instead of governments, however, the civil society seems to be the main

source that provides alternative opportunities for rural queers in H's case. In the first place, H would not need to travel extra miles for gaining knowledge, or for commuting to the farmland every day. Cisgenderism and heterosexism embedded in these knowledge production opportunities seem to force him to pay for the unevenly distributed cost.

Cisgenderism and heterosexism are not only exercised in knowledge production. In rural governance, local groups play the important roles. For how these groups are gender-based, H mentions:

H: There are fire brigades, local women's group, and ...let's see...I stay clear from them.

I have changed my registered gender and name. [They usually require both for participating, so] I need my new name when they make participant list. That worries me because they might leak the information that further leads to outing. So I don't go to these gatherings too. That is also why I don't know much about them.

消防団ありますね。婦人会あるし...あとは何があるんだろう...逆に全然ノータッチなんですよね。関わるところ...この間性別を変えたので名前も変えたので、名簿とか作る時はその名前に...どこかで情報が洩れるんじゃないかなとか思ったりして。アウトィングが起こるんじゃないとか。なので全然、何会とか集まりにはいかないし、ぜんぜん知らないっていうか...

H knows lots of these local groups, but he does not know the details of these groups' governance. Gender-based management of the members seems to deter him from getting in touch with them. This makes up another obstacle for today's rural queers in Japan. They relate heterosexism and cisgenderism with these local groups, and imagine the risks in getting in touch with these groups which are very important for rural governance. However, the lack of experiences leads to the lack of shared stories with specificity amongst the collective identity rural queer.

I have already shown, in this paper, the norms oppressing rural queers based on E's story. H's story provides the specificity and richness to the rural discourses E referred to. The oppression observed here severely deters queers from making livelihood in these spaces. If they are embedded, and thus cannot easily escape such as the example of H, they let the cisgenderism and heterosexism pass, telling themselves that "this is rural, this is how it is." That makes them take the strategy to not always confront the oppression, and the collective silence possibly makes it harder for people like E, as well as rural studies researchers, to access sources of information concerning rural queer experiences. H also questioned the concept "rurality". Based on H's story, rurality constantly changes its shape, whilst it dynamically imposes power on rural queer's imagination and reality.

5.3 Queers Embedded into Locality 2: Negotiation Strategy?: C and D's Case

C and D answered my interview as a gay couple. About their migration history, C and D first lived separately in different urban cities. They both had a job at different companies. They came to live together, and started saving finance for the couple's future. They finally decided to buy a house and land, and move to an area they see as rural. They spent their savings to purchase a house and neighboring land. The land owner currently lives outside of the region. According to C and D, the owner "seemed to want to sell the land and house as soon as possible". They bought a house in this region because it was where they think was "perfectly rural."

C started going to an agricultural collage for a year, and then he started farming using the conventional techniques he learned from the collage. They mainly grow vegetables and sell them to the local restaurants and some other small-scale shops. In the first year, the vegetable yield was poorer than they expected, but it has been gradually improving. D is interested in organic farming, so part of the land is invested on organic farming. One of their dreams is to gradually shift to organic farming. D works at a local firm. He financially supports C who contributes to most of the yield. The total revenue decreased before quitting the previous jobs, but they are satisfied with the current agriculture-based lifestyle because they can "pace themselves." About C and D's case, their desire to display a sort of rural queer possibilities in Japan is noteworthy.

Both C and D used to work in cities. C was inspired by D, who was always saying that he “wanted to live in nature,” so that they both started considering moving to a rural town. Lots of people were against the idea because they were worried about this gay couple. In contrast, they are now happy living in this rural area. They are sometimes asked to give talks about sexuality and their lifestyle at schools and public facilities. They happily accept these opportunities because they know that there are people in this region too who suffer from sexuality and gender issues.

When moving in, they came out to the neighbors and the municipal government. “The local people accepted” them, they say. C says:

C: Thinking back about the analogue[-technology] generation twenty years ago, the lifestyle like ours was a dream that would never come true, like having a same-gendered partner, living in a rural town, getting along with the local people. It was a dream more difficult to achieve than traveling outer space. It was more of a fictional world.

僕は20年前のあのアナログ時代からしたら、パートナー、男性のパートナーと田舎に移住して一緒に暮らして地域と仲良くなってっってもう、宇宙旅行よりも異次元の夢っていうか、架空の世界だった

They came out to the municipal government officer to see whether it is safe for a gay couple to live in this rural area. The officer positively responded to them, saying that they will proactively support this couple. C and D are still in touch with the officer. The municipal government interviews them every now and then to see whether everything is ok. C and D are content with this.

Urban-centered imaginary of queer was not comfortable for C and D. To explain the reason they chose this lifestyle, D mentioned his exhaustion from the previous job:

D: I had been especially admiring the nature, so I was dreaming of living in the environment which makes me feel nature. Plus, the exhaustion from the job was definitely one of the determinants. C had also some trouble at work. [...] When I first met him, he used to overwork until really late almost every day. [...] And then, about myself, I needed to deal with tons of customers' complaints. It should have been ok if it were one or two, but there were too many. I needed to deal with them in addition to the ordinary job I was in charge of. My boss didn't support me, so I needed to bear with it myself. [...] I even needed to go to work on weekends too. Also, when some severe complaint came to me, I got so much affected [psychologically]. Our conversation [between C and I] came to be occupied with [how I should deal, or not be psychologically affected by] the complaints from my workplace. [...] At that moment

[when we decided to move to some rural town,] my capacity could not be fuller. [...] I was like I cannot go on like this, and then I quit.

僕は特に自然が好きだったんで。で、いつか自然のいっぱいあるところに住みたいって思ってたのと、プラス、ちょっと仕事疲れっていうのもあったはずなんですよ、絶対に。で、彼の方も前の職場でちょっと色々あって。(…)出会ったときは、結構(C)、すごい遅くまで残業していたんですよ。(…)で、(私の職場では) 結構、クレームが多くて。一個二個とかのクレームだったらいいんですけど、なんかもう、同時に何個もクレーム抱えて、で、その処理は普通の仕事プラスのクレームなんで、クレームが増えれば増えるほど、負担が増えるんですよね。で、上司が手伝ってくれるわけでもなく、結構抱え込んでいて。(…)で結構もう、週末とかも会社に行ったりもしてたし、重いクレームとかあると、精神が引きずるんですよ...で、結構もう、(C)にもクレームの事を言い続けたりして。(…)完全にその時、キャパオーバーだったんですよ、仕事。(…)もう、無理だわってなって、辞めたんですよ。

Metronormative imaginary has been associated with the consumerism culture (Leslie, 2017). Such narrative can presumably conceal the queer's stories like the one above. Both C and D identify themselves as a gay man. However, it does not of course define all the characteristics they have. Accessing sexual and/or gender identity as a collective identity just allows them to access the collective discourses. There is a tendency that people assume an unmarked person, which is cis-gender and heterosexual (Kazama and Kawaguchi, 2010).

D's story about the exhaustion from work which triggers one's desire to change their lifestyle can be overshadowed by this widely shared assumption, metronormalized cisgenderism and heteronormativity. The significance of the implication it brings us can be utilized to reconsider what messages and narratives are foregrounded on public relations magazines such as the migration brochures published by municipal governments.

Exposure to metronormative narratives is not the only one that overshadows the rural queers' desires. There seems to be a narrative that reduces oppression to an individual's responsibility. The narrative typically used is that it is the newcomer's responsibility to fit into the new society, and therefore if one does not like it here, they can just leave. This seems to be conflated with the narrative described by H and K, that is "this is how things are in a rural area." C and D received the following response when they talked about their migration plan to their friends who are sexually conforming:

D: I was talking about my migration plan to my colleague's husband at the company I previously worked at. This person is from a rural town of ** prefecture, and he said to me that I should never move. He said that C and I would not be able to survive in a rural town like the one he was from. He was like "forget the idea." But, look, we are still here. What does this all mean? What makes them think that way? They are not sexually non-conforming, but they still warn people like us that gay people would not survive in

a rural area. Does that mean they have prejudices against queer people?

前にいた会社の人も旦那さんが**の田舎の出身の人で、僕が田舎移住するってその人に言ったときに、絶対やめといた方がいい、っていったんですよ。その旦那さんの田舎ではいや暮らして行けないよ、みたいなことを旦那さんが言ってて。やめときなあって。実際来たら全然住めてるので...それってどういうことなんだろうね。その、何がそういう風に思わしてるのか、当事者でない人も田舎にゲイが入ってきたら住めないよっていつてること、やっぱりその、差別の意識はあるってことですよ...。

The husband here seems to internalize the norm that rurality does not allow sexual deviancy. He is giving a sort of friendly advice to them based on his knowledge in his hometown about what rurality is like. He is also away from the rural area he is referring to, and thus it is relatively difficult for him to claim against how a certain rural area is governed on behalf of an imagined oppressed. In this sense, on its surface, he is behaving friendly to them so that they would avoid the predicted hardships in the rural area. However, at the same time, by doing so, he also reproduces and enhances the metronormative narrative that tells living in a rural area is hard, especially if they are queer. These narratives might not force them to behave in a certain way, but they deter and direct the rural, and would-be rural, queers' behaviors.

As they were searching for a new place, they went to the briefings for those who are

considering rural lifestyles. These briefings are led by various municipal governments where their rural fellows⁴⁶ share their own experiences. C and D first found the obstacles against newcomers regardless of their sexuality:

D: When we went to a briefing at [the place we recognize as rural], we got so much information, and that made me really anxious. That was after we got determined to move to a rural area, though.

Me: By so much information, do you remember what kind of information?

D: They said that there was no job. Even if we went, there would be no job for us. [...] Even agriculture seemed to have age limitation. C was OK that wise. But I was turning 40, which seemed not easy to make ends meet according to them. Their detailed explanation almost depressed me. [...]

C: That person who was making the presentation was from the local revitalization workforce. They are half governmental, half civil. We got various information from them. They said there was not a job to do other than agriculture.

Me: I see...

⁴⁶ In Japanese system, those who moved to, and successfully settled in, a rural town are considered as optimal examples. They are called with a bit of admiration “senpai ijūsyā(先輩移住者)”, implying that they are supposed to be the model for the following newcomers.

D: If you want subsidy, you need to be younger than 45. I was not 45 then, but approaching. I didn't think I was old, becoming 40 then, but the message I got was so depressing. And then..., the toilets. Most of them are not flushable. That is a big issue for me. Most of the toilets are still without running water.[...] They also said that once we move in, we would not be able to leave. According to them, local people would get very sad. They treat the newcomers kindly, so they become really depressed when the newcomers need to leave. So, if we decide to go in and live there, we need to be, um...

Me: so determined that you will stay there for your whole life?

D: Exactly. We got this sort of information that made me worry so much. I was like "can we really make it?"

D: (二人が「田舎」と認識する範囲のある特定の場所)の説明会に行った時も、すごい色々な情報を得て、ほんとにやって行けんのかなってすごい不安になったんですよ。もう、決めたものの。

Me: 色々な情報っていうのは、どういう事とか覚えていますか？

D: そもそも職業がない。行って仕事がない、って言われたんですよ。(...)僕の年齢(的に)、例えば農業をやりたいとか、なんか仕事をしたいって言ったら、彼(C)にはあるんですよ。

あるけども、僕その時もう間もなく 40（歳）にさしかかるところだったんですよ。で、厳しいよ、みたいなことを言われ。で、そんなにたくさんの種類の仕事もないし、とか色々説明していただいたら、すごい、暗い気持ちになって...(…)

C: あの人は、地域おこし協力隊の人。半...行政じゃないけど、まあ、民間でもないかなっていう所ですね。その人が、地元の事情を我々に伝えてくれて、農業したかったら、あるけど、それ以外だったらないよ、って話を。

Me: そうですか...

D: 農業も、補助金もらうのに 45 歳。その 45 歳にはなってなかったけど、結構もう、リミットに近づいてた。でその、自分の年齢が 40 歳くらいだった時に自分の年齢がそんなに年とってると思ってなかったけど、なんかすごいマイナスなイメージが感じられて、かつその...トイレとかも、水洗とかじゃないよ、って。ああ、それも凄く大きくて、水洗とかは少ないですって。汲み取りが多いです、って言われて。(…)あと、一旦移住してしまったら、皆凄く親切にしてくれるけど、一旦入ったら、出られないよ、みたいな。その、出るときって凄く悲しむらしいんですよ、皆が。すごい親切にしてくれる分、出たとき凄く悲しむから、入るんだったら、もう決め...えっと...

Me: 骨をうずめる気で？

D: そうそうそう。そういう形をなんか凄い色々言われて、僕すっごい暗くなったんですよ。

もうやっていけないの本当に...って思った

Of course, the various attributes come up regardless of sexual and gender norms when people decide where to move to such as labor opportunities, age limitation on starting a new job especially farming, differences in infrastructure, and the local culture. This does not mean, however, the gender and sexual norms are irrelevant. As they explain more about their own definition of rurality, they mentioned the gender-based norms:

Me: [As you mentioned proximity to the natural environment defines rurality], is agriculture an important part of it?

D: Yeah. I want to do it too, honestly speaking. Touching the soil, eating the food I grow without using chemicals, you know.

C: It could be forestry too, but the hurdle for us was too high.

D: It is really male dominant. The workers in forestry look so masculine for me. [...]

C: And then, fisherpersons' communitiesI cannot even imagine mingling with them.

We actually gave up moving in a fisherpersons' town in southern *(municipality), because we thought it would be hard.

Me: By hard, do you mean it seemed hard for you two to start fishing as professional fisherpersons?

C: That is right. Also...the town was not like open to outsiders. C and I were imagining lots of potential difficulties.

Me: Being gays and being identified as a gay couple, are they among the difficulties you were thinking about?

C: They were. I was thinking that they would not accept us. It might be just my assumption. But, that was one of the things I was worried about.

Me: 自然に近く暮らすときには、農業は重要なポイントですか？

D: はい。僕もしたいんですよ。ほんとは。土触ったりな。自分で育てた食べ物を食べたいんですよ。農薬とか使わず。

C: まあ、あの、林業っていう道もね...少なからずあるかもしれないですね。でもやっぱ、林業ってハードルが高いですわ。

D: 男社会ほんと。ザッツ男みたいな、感じだなって。(…)

C: あと、漁業はもう...そんな...入れない。そうすると漁村なんか行けないし。一回**の

南のところ漁村の町で。そこだったらちょっと厳しいだろな、っていうので、断念しました。

Me: 厳しいっていうのは...今から漁業を始めるのが厳しいっていう事ですか？

C: も、ありますし、もう...その...コミュニティ的にもよそ者ポンって入れるようなところじゃなさそうだったし。色んなハードルが、問題があるのかなっていう。

Me: その中の一つに、自分がゲイだってバレたら、っていうのもありましたか？

C: はい。ありますよね。受け入れられないんだろなって。決めつけかもしれないけど。そういう心配もありましたけどね。

As one decides where to move to, they should consider various conditions. As shown above, the issues concerning gender and sexuality are added onto the list. In addition, they were using an online housing service (i.e. Urban Renaissance Agency(UR 都市機構)) at the earlier stage of their search for a new place:

D: We didn't go see a real estate broker as far as I remember.

Me: When you say you search for a place on UR, do you do it online?

C: Yeah.

D: C did it for me. When he found an attractive place, we actually went see the places.[...]

Me: As you were saying a bit before, did they check, ask, or do something about you two as two men looking for a place together?

C: No, they didn't.

D: When I searched online, I checked the box of "for room share", which most of the available places fell under.

C: That attribute means the place is open for any combination or group of people.

Me: I see.

D: I was using the online service in the first place. So they couldn't have said anything directly to us.

C: Right.

D: Also, we were looking only for the places that are open for room sharing, so there was not a big problem.

Me: Did you somehow know that the internet search was easier for two men than using the agents, or was there some reason you went for using the online service by UR?

C: I somehow knew that UR provides somewhat cutting-edge services such as room sharing services, allowing the residents to customize the room, etcetera. I didn't like to get in trouble with the agents, so I went for UR from the beginning where there is nothing like that. I knew that UR is optimistic about room sharing somehow.[...] They also do not require guarantors and deposit, which is awesome.

D: No need for guarantors meant a lot for us. We didn't even want our parents to know about this, about us living together. We didn't want to ask our parents. That meant a lot for us.[...]

C: We were thinking of moving to a place in-between our previous place and the place we live now. [...] There was a possibility that we couldn't leap to the current address from the previous place. We were thinking if this place didn't work first, then we could earn some time in the place in-between. There are also UR housings in that city.

D: 不動産さんいった記憶ないもんな。

Me: UR で探す、というときにはオンラインで探すんですか？

C: オンラインで。

D: で、彼（C）が探してくれたんですよ。で彼が、あっちこっち探してて、いい物件が見つかったら、一緒に見に行くみたいな。（…）

Me: 先ほどもおっしゃってましたが、UR でオンラインで調べる時に、男性二人っていうの、条件というので、特に突っ込まれたりとか、引っかかったり、詮索されたりとかする事ってないんでしょうか

C: なかったです

D: ネットで検索する時に、シェアリング、シェアハウス可っていうのがほとんどだったと思います、確か。

C: 基本的に誰でも一緒に住んでもいいってやつ

Me: なるほど

D: で、しかも、そもそも最初、ネットで探してたので、対ネットだから、特に何か言われることもなかったしな。

C: そうそう、そこはない。

D: しかも、一緒に住んでいいっていう物件ばかり探してたので、特に問題はなかったです。

Me: インターネットでしかも UR で探した方が、男二人だから文句を言われたりっていうのがないよ、っていう情報はどこかで調べて知っていたのか、それともなにか UR で探そうっていう風になったきっかけは？

C: UR って結構その、ハウスシェアリングとか、他にもその部屋をいじっても良いとか、そういう結構先進的な試みがあるっていうのは、なんでか知ってたんですよ。で、不動産とか相談してややこしいごちゃごちゃしたことをするのが嫌だったから、最初からそういうのがない...UR はそういうの（シェアリング）に前向きっていうのは知っていたので(...)保証人、敷金、礼金いらないっていうのは、すごいよな。

D: 保証人がいらないっていうのは凄い大きくて。僕ら、親に頼むのもちょっと嫌だったんですよ。一緒に住むのとか、詮索されるのも嫌だったから、ほんとに良かったよな(...)

C: そう。(...)こっち（今の住所）くるときに別の中間点を挟もうとしてた(...)。で、あの、ここに一気に来れない可能性があったんで、どっか近くの**市っていう町側なんですけど、ここ（今の住所）がだめだったら、一個前のその町で一回落ち着いて、そっから（今の住所）を開拓しよう、っていう気だったもので。そこも UR あるんですよ。(...)

From the conversation above, it is obvious that they used the UR online service because it offers the places open about room sharing. It can be interpreted that, because they had the information about some discriminative house owners and the imaginary of governance based on rural heterosexism, they chose an option that allows them to avoid these. Furthermore, they state “No need for guarantors meant a lot for us. We didn’t even want our parents to know about this, about us living together”, indicating their wariness toward the possible danger if their sexual identities are revealed. Their anxiety toward sexuality and gender is added onto the other issues about migration. The following shows how careful they were in keeping control over the information about themselves when they participated in a briefing:

Me: Bad information...for example?

D: C used to be introvert, though he has changed now. We told the officer of a rural town that. That officer said that people like us couldn’t enjoy a rural town like that. That was southern ** prefecture, rural **. That let [C] down. That was when we made a phone call to [where they live now]’s government.

C: I remember.

D: They said something completely opposite. They were warm and kind. He said to

them that he was not good at communicating with people. But the officer was quite supportive. They were like “we will be there for you.”

C: They were quite optimistic.

D: They have been supportive. Even if we tell them the bad information about us, they are always supportive and giving us warm words like “we will fix the obstacles, for you.”

Me: ネガティブな情報っていうと、どういったことだったんですか、例えば？

D: あの...、結構彼(C)って人付き合いがそんなに得意じゃなかったんです、そのころは。今は違うんですけど。で、あまり人付き合いとか好きじゃない、っていったら、そんなんでは田舎移住なんてやっていけないみたいなことを、**の田舎のほうの...、**県の南の方のところにいて。それでその、彼は凄い落ち込んで。でその時、落ち込んだ時に、ちょうどそのタイミングで(今の住所)市に電話したんですよ。

C: そうそう

D: その後逆に全く新しい...温かいことを言ってくれて。で、彼は彼なりに、自分はある限り人付き合いは得意でないと言っていた、(今の住所)市に言ったけど、そこもなんか...なんとかする、みたいな感じだったよな。

C: うん、前向きな...

D: なんか凄い、寄り添ってくれるっていうか。その...、こっちのバッドインフォとか言っ
たとしても、えっと...そこは障害にならないから、とにかく力になるみたいな感じだった。

They value these governmental supports highly as they thought they would like to move in this town with their relationship public. They are happy about the local government's policies and administration as these will be in effect even if they were a closeted gay couple.

Newcomers generally encounter locally specific issues. There are discourses that the local bond as the social capital is essential to deal with these everyday issues (Assmann, 2015). For them, however, the governmental support meant a lot:

D: The municipal government's officer in charge of em-/immigration, we get in touch with them when some issue comes up. We text or call them.

Me: For example, that part of my house is broken, or something like that?

C: Things like what we should do with a raccoon playing on the second floor, or rats we found in our house. Should we kill them or do something else? That sort of stuff.

D: They respond really quickly. They might want to create good case studies by helping

us maybe. But they are always quick.

D: 移住課に対しては、なんか問題があったらすぐに、これどう解決したらいいですか、みたいなことは普通にメールしたり電話したりして。

Me: 家の例えばどこそこ壊れちゃったんだけど、とか？

C: アライグマが上歩してる、どうしたらいい、とか。ねずみが現れたけど、捕まえてどう殺したらいい...殺すのか、どうしたらいい、とかね。

D: そしたら、すぐに考えてくれて。で、多分僕らを助けることによって、今後の例にもなると思うんですよ。だからかもしれないですけど、すぐに対応してくれるんですけど。

Supports for the newcomers by different levels of government can be received differently by individuals. However, the act per se of diversifying the source of information capital encourages the newcomers especially when they can be vulnerable to the community politics.

C and D started farming as they moved to this town. They dreamed of more of a farming lifestyle than becoming farmers as an occupation⁴⁷. The conversation below represents it well:

⁴⁷ As for the difference between these, refer to Orito (2014; 2019) for example.

C: I had been wishing living on farmland in nature after retirement. [...] The story by some rural fellow encouraged us to get on with it. Even if we fail, we thought that we could at least do gardening perhaps. I was maybe too optimistic. But I decided to go to an agricultural collage introduced by the local government. [...]

Me: My understanding is when you farm, you need to participate in and rely on the local farming community. Do you two have memberships in such a group?

C: We know there are, but we don't have membership, basically. J.A. invited us to join them, but I have not been confident. I turned down their offer.

D: Actually, I recommended not joining. Joining J.A. almost means to become a slave. [J.A. members] borrow loan, buy some equipment such as green house, and get desperate in paying back the debt. They work all day throughout year. That doesn't change anything from our previous lifestyles. The result will be the same[if we join the conventional agricultural community]. In firms, we work all day like slaves. The conventional agricultural system reproduces the same result. I don't like it.

Me: I see...

D: Getting along with people is not that [easy]. Harder than that is becoming a slave

utilized in the conventional system. That vanishes the meaning we came all the way here.

C: People better do as [J.A.] says in the system. [J.A.] buys all the yield. You can sell all the amount you harvest. [The conventional farming communities] prepare seeds and species developed by their technology with the long history. But we didn't like the idea. What we wanted was freedom. Well, it might be just me, not him.

C: 老後は漠然と自然に囲まれたところで畑でもしながら過ごしたいな、っていうのがあったんですけど、(...)でもその、移住者の話を聞いて、とりあえずやってみようかと、どうなるか知らないけど。それで、どんだけ失敗しても家庭菜園くらいはできるんじゃないかっていう、甘い考えで。で、ここに来て農大に入ったっていう。県の紹介を受けて。(...)

Me: 農業をやるときのイメージって、結構コミュニティっていうか、農のコミュニティがあって、そこに参加してやっているイメージなんですけど、実際には参加されたりしていますか？

C: ありますが、参加はしてないです。基本的には。J.A.とか誘いはありましたけど、まあ余裕がない状態なんでお断りしていますね。

D: それ以上に奴隷じゃないですけど、ちょっとお金を農協から借りて、ハウスを建てて、

そのお金を返すためにひたすら朝から晩まで年中無休で働き続けるしかないっていう...それだったら会社と変わらないじゃん?っていうので、僕は反対したんですよ。結局一緒ですよ、会社も社畜になってひたすら働き続けて、で、その制度...確立された農業制度に入ってしまうと、社畜農業になるから、嫌だっていうか。

Me: なるほど。

D: 人と付き合うのも...あれかもしれないけど、人と付き合うとか以上に、その社会に、その制度に入って奴隷的に働くのは嫌かなっていう。ここに来た意味がなくなるっていう。

C: もうそこに乗ったら全部買い取ってくれるし、どの出荷...あの、作った分だけ出荷もできたりするので、もう、言われたとおりにやったらいいんですよ。向こうが用意した種を使ったり苗を使ったりして、長い間蓄積してきたつくり方の通りに作って、その通りやったらいいと思うんだけど、それがちょっと嫌だった。自由が欲しいと。っていうのは僕のあれなんですけどね。

What were important for them as they moved in were gaining a new lifestyle different from the one before. They were exhausted by the overwork culture. That made them question capitalism, and thus they were seeking for a lifestyle that allows them to distance themselves from it. Leslie (2017) interviewed the queer farmers, and reveals what they gained through farming. They obtained an anti-capitalism lifestyle, and that meant their

freedom from queer urban partly characterized with capitalism (Leslie, 2017). This story from C and D supports this insight by Leslie.

As shown thus far, however, they encounter obstacles in this process of gaining a new lifestyle. C and D got severely pessimistic responses from their friends about their plan. They also needed to think extra about the possibilities that the owner, or the real estate agent, discriminately would impose something extra bothersome on them to deal with. When they participated in the briefings, they were exposed to the narrative that it is all on their shoulder if they do not like the new place and community. There are also gendered and heterosexualized imaginaries of rural communities. The additional comment from C and D that supports this explanation is that they decided to move in the current place because the municipal government has always been helpful.

As they moved in this rural town, they could have moved in separately even though they were a couple. How did that option look to them?

C: If a single gay man came here alone, it would be hard for him to live here. I mean he wouldn't enjoy his gay life. It would be much easier to stay in an [urban area]. It would be hard for them unless they go to ** cities on weekends, or Nagoya if they seek for some romance. It would be hard if they did not go out to cities.

Me: Do you think that it was a good move for you to come here together? Would you

have not come here if you were alone?

C: Even if I was cis-gender and straight, it would be too hard to move to this town, live by myself, and participate in all the residential communities. The operational presumption is based on, say, three-generational household, because there are diverse responsibilities like organizing local events, and organizing local festivals and so on. These are supposed to be taken care of by family members. I recently heard that the elders living by themselves for whatever reason, like their family left them, or their family passed away, are exempted from doing certain local jobs. They wouldn't survive without these special considerations that the local people make for them. That is regardless of sexuality.

Me: I see. If you participate in the local community, the presumed unit is household. So, you wouldn't be able to deal with all the tasks distributed amongst the community members, because they see household as the smallest unit. Is that correct?

C: Plus, if you are queer, it is obvious that your life here would not be comfortable.[...]

Me: I see. As you were also mentioning, all the different levels of groups in charge of local governance distribute the communal responsibilities separately based on household unit. And you basically need to participate in all, am I right?

C: Basically.

C: 例えば、ゲイの単身者がこっちに来た時に、凄く住みにく...あのゲイの活動がしづらいところだなっていうのは感じますね。(都市)入った方が早いんじゃない?っていう。(都市)から来たかもしれんけど、週末**に行くとか、なんか出会いを探しにいくなら**か名古屋か、まあ町に出ないとやっぱ厳しいんじゃないかなっていうのは思いますね。

Me: 二人で移住してきたのは大きいって思いますか?それぞれ別々には来なかっただろうな、って感じですか?

C: 一人じゃ絶対来ない。まず無理。たとえ自分がシスジェンダーのストレートでも難しいんじゃないかと思う。この特に農村地帯の(色んなレベルの)自治会的なものに加入して生活するっていうのはもう無理。一人じゃ無理。この運営の前提が多分、一家三代くらいの人それぞれ分担して、自分は盛り担当自分は祭り担当...色んな協力をしあって成り立ってるので...最近話聞いたのは、高齢者がもう単身になって周りが出ていったり死んだりして、一人になった人がもうどうしようもなくなっていると。だからもう、役は勘弁してあげようとか、草刈はちょっとだけとか、色んな配慮がなかったら生きていけない。それはもう、マイノリティ関係ないところですよ、その、セクシュアルマイノリティ。みたいなところで、発生しているので...

Me: なるほど。地域コミュニティに参画しようとする、家単位で世帯単位で見られちゃ

うから、世帯単位で役割が多すぎて、一人だとそれをこなせないっていうことが大きい？

C: さらにそこに、セクシュアルマイノリティの問題があったときに、快適じゃないだろうな、っていうのは容易に想像できます。(…)

Me: なるほど。で、先ほどおっしゃってましたけど、この(様々なレベルの自治協議体)この一個一個でそれぞれ仕事がバラバラに来て、こなさなきゃいけない、けれども、全部に参画しなくてはならない？

C: 基本は。

Besides the fact that they were not thinking about living separately from the beginning, there are structural obstacles against one-person households. The local responsibilities are distributed based on household. The amount of responsibility is excessive for households with less than two persons. Furthermore, as marriage equality is not guaranteed for non-heterosexual couples or groups in Japan as of 2019, access to the household-based system is virtually not available for them in the first place. If building trust in a local community is essential for participation as well as local environmental management, being unable to participate due to this structural reason is a severe handicap. In addition, as C explains, it is considered necessary and important for the local community to keep track of the number of members and the family structure of each household, when they adjust the

amount of responsibility for the household. This mutual monitoring culture as the interactive management is legitimized in the local governance context. This, however, can look hostile to queer people. This implies the importance of the support from the municipal government for those who can be isolated in local/rural communities, as that enables them to hedge the risk by diversifying the sources of support.

These heteronormative and cisgendered governance system and institutions exist in various forms. To explain a local event, they referred to families they saw there and said “they all cooperate with each other to contribute to the local event. Wives do the accountancy and husbands do physical labor.” Furthermore, their explanation below is about the gender-based governance of their area:

C: And finally, the local fire brigade.

D: They come to us and ask us to join. I forgot about the age requirement. They call for men, and each household having male members needs to provide at least one. [...]

C: We need to negotiate again at the Spring Meeting of the town next spring. At every meeting, they negotiate with us so that we will join the membership. They say that they lack in number, and it is the local rule. We did the same argument a year ago.

Me: There are a lot of rules and stuff to do...

D: Also, there is this cooking class only for men held by the village woman association.

They are like “you got to come”.

Me: It is held by the woman’s association, and only men participate?

C: Exactly. The cooking class for men.

D: It is the wives’ idea that men also need to cook. By the way, surprisingly, I was invited to join the local women’s association! I asked them if I was counted as a wife/woman(*Fujin* 婦人), and they said yes! They are all women!

Me: So, you were the only one invited? C was not invited?

D: C participates in [different levels of local groups], so I am guessing the village recognized him as the man/husband. Male-figure/Husband-figure. It seems that the village recognized me as taking the woman/wife(‘s figure) without asking me!

C: それの最後が消防団。

D: 消防団に入ってほしいって...あの...男がいる家で、何歳までだったか忘れましたが、絶対に入らないといけないっていうのが消防団で。(…)

C: でも、人手がないからどうしても来てくれと、そういう決まりだからっていうそのバ

トルを、もうすぐ春の総会でね、やるんですよ。一年前もやったんですよ。もう次もしない
といけないなど。(…)

Me: 結構色々複雑に制度があるんですね...

D: 他にも男の料理教室ってあってね。村の婦人会が主催するやつとかにも、絶対強制参加
くらいの勢いで誘いがくる

Me: それは婦人会が主催しているのに、参加者は男性だけ？

C: 男性だけ。男の料理教室っていうね

D: 男にも料理をしてもらう、みたいな婦人の考え方だね。女性たちが。であの、この間婦
人会に誘われたんですよ、僕衝撃すぎて。でなんか、僕フジンなんですか？って聞いたら、
フジンなんだって。女性ばかりの団体に、「Dさん入りませんか？」って。断ったんです
けど。ははは。

Me: そうですよ。お二人にお誘いが来たんじゃないかと、Dさんだけ？

D: こっち(C)が(様々なレベルの自治協議体)とかしているんで、彼の方が多分男性ってい
う風に認識...村は認識したとおもうんですよ。男性役。で僕は女子役っていうふうに勝手に
に認識されてるんかなって思って。まさかの、婦人会。

As they say, for the local fire brigade, “each household having male members needs to provide at least one”, the group system is gendered. The membership of the local fire brigades consists of the local men. They gather and drink alcohol at special occasions, such as new-year celebrations. The women’s association provides membership mainly with wives. They invited both C and D for “the cooking class for men”, but only D was offered the membership of the association. Furthermore, D asked the association member if he was counted as a wife (*Fujin* 婦人), and their answer was yes. Both C and D talked about this episode happily as they really enjoy the rural life there. They take this episode as the story of them becoming a member of the local community.

C and D are keen to contribute to the local community. They take the local issues seriously and consider possibilities as to what they can do for the local communities. They are happy as the local community “accepts” them. Yet, they also have the sense that they are the newcomers coming from outside of the local community. They feel that they are just becoming the local member, but the process is yet complete:

D: We are determined to be living here for a while. But the reality is the kids in neighbor families have left here, the kids from over there also left for urban cities...all of these mean that [this town’s sustainability] is jeopardized. So, to sustain it here, we need to welcome people from outside, and construct a system so that those who stay

here want to stay. We think that it could be a little bit more rational.

C: They are exhausted from orchestrating the local prosperity which needs guts and unreasonable labor. I want to bring this to light, but I have achieved nothing here basically. The word from a newcomer with no accomplishment sounds empty to them. So, I will hold it back at this moment until the time comes. That's why I am in [all the local governance groups.] I will wait for an appropriate opportunity. I want to make all these a little bit simpler and fairer for the local people.

D: やっぱり、僕らは、これからもここに住んでいくつもりなんですけれども、結局現状、隣の家の人も子供さん全員出ていったし、こっちの反対っかわも子供たちは全員都会に出て行ってしまったので、このままだったらもう崩壊の道を進むしかないと思うんですよ。この村社会は。だから、持続していくためには、他から来てもらわないといけないし、住んでる人もここにいてくれるような、もうちょっとその...制度的にも、もうちょっと合理的な制度に変える必要あるんじゃないかなって思います。

C: 今も力で推し進めてる感じがするし、強引に盛り上げようとしてるところがあって、それに疲弊してるんですよ、ここの村人たちは。それを今言いたいんですけど、なんの実績もないんで、よそ者が言ったところで、意味もないですから。まあもうちょっと様子見て。で(地域自治)にも参加さしてもらってますからね。まあ、そこにいるうちは様子見なが

ら、発言の機会をちょっとうかがってましてね。もうちょっとシンプルに住みやすい...システムの構築を考えていきたいなと思ってますね。

The process of them becoming a member of the local society does not sound new as it has been pointed out by the previous research (Kitō and Fukunaga, 2009). However, the following comments from them are worth paying attention to:

D: I am actually surprised that we have encountered no big problems with us coming in here openly gay.

C: Absolutely unexpected. I even thought LGBT issue does not matter for us any longer, which is supposed to be our theme. [...] I had kept telling myself that I was gay when I was in a [city], in order to protect myself. Surprisingly, it stopped after I came here. I do not have to keep telling myself that I am gay to live my life. It has been incredible [days.] I didn't expect this.

Me: But you two still give talks about sexuality and your lifestyle occasionally. Does that mean you still think there are problems or obstacles against them?

C: Exactly. Full of problems. [...]

Me: You were mentioning earlier, but do you think that it makes a difference you two

coming in here as openly gay men than those queers who are from this region, or want to come back to this region?

D: People ask us that a lot. We are outsiders at the end of the day. It could be the reason we are not afraid of things here. But, those queers who live here, assumingly, they are afraid of being themselves. It (i.e. us being the outsider) is a total difference than what they are going through. Now this imagination makes me reconsider the significance of C's activism.

C: Yeah. I want to change the atmosphere so that they can be themselves and not feel pressured to come out in their local area. It might be ten or twenty years from now, but I want to see it achieved. It won't change so quickly. Especially in rural areas, things take time to change. But I hope my activism will save more of them, even if it amounts to just a bit extra of contribution.

D: One of my old gay friends is also from a rural area. He says that he cannot come out to the local society. He is disparate keeping the information from leaking. But I wonder if it is really the case. [...] But, look, we are still here. What does this all mean? What makes them think that way? They are not the sexually non-conforming, but they still warn people like us that gay people would not survive in rural. Does that mean they

have prejudices against queer people? I cannot think of any big problems [living in rural towns like this]. But, I know there are [queer] people who suffer. There are also sexually conforming people who highly recommend us not coming in. I wonder if us living here happily is just us being lucky. [...]

C: I believe that anyone can achieve the lifestyle like ours. Thinking back about the analogue[-technology] generation twenty years ago, the lifestyle like ours was a dream that would never come true, like having a same-gendered partner, living in a rural town, getting along with the local people. It was a dream more difficult to achieve than traveling outer space. It was more of a fictional world. I don't know why, but we are somehow here now. So, I want to show it to the next generation, and even the generation before us, that they can do the same. There might be other attributes, like who their neighbors are and what local conditions there are. But I think I can be a kind of a role model for them.[...]

C: We are all different, even among the sexually non-conforming. We don't like to be judged as gay. We are gays, but we don't represent gay. [...] But, we still feel the need to show that this is our life and people can achieve things at the same level.

D: でその、ゲイとして入ってきてるけども、全く問題がないことにはちょっとびっくり。

C: そうそう、それは意外だったな。だからもう LGBT 問題なんか、関係ないんじゃないかっていうね。自分らのテーマ。(…)意識してたのはやっぱり、ここの生活よりも(都市)の時の方が、自分は自分を保つために、ゲイというのを意識して生きてきたなど。でここに住んでからは、一切自分がゲイというのを認識しなくても、普通に生きてたんで。不思議な(日々)だったなと思っています。意外です。

Me: それでも、講演活動とかをされているのは、課題を感じているからですか？

C: もう課題だらけ。(…)

Me: 先ほど少しおっしゃっていた、もともとここにいる人が、ここに住んでいた人たちで当事者だと認識した人たちが、ここに戻ってくるとか住み続けるとかっていうことと、ゲイとして公表して入ってくることは違うんだろうと思いますか？そこにも関わりますか？

D: まず、それ、結構言われることなんですけど、僕らってその、もともと外部の人間だから、堂々とできるんだと思うんですよ。でもここに元々住んでいる人たちの当事者たちって、絶対言えないと思ってると思うんですよ。で、そこにまず決定的な違いがあると思うんですけど、そう考えたら、その子たちを救うために、Cさんの活動があるのかもしれないなと思って。

C: だね。将来その子たちの10年後20年後、もうちょっと地元でも言える空気、言わな

くても言ってもその人のままでいい空気っていうのがね、出来たらな、と。急には変わらないし、地方は反応遅いかもしれないんですけど。一人でも多く、そういう苦しみから救われるならね。

D: 僕の以前のゲイの友達も田舎の出身だったんですけど、絶対言えないって言って。絶対にばれたらいけない、って。...でも、それってほんとにそうなんかな? (...) 実際来たら全然住めてるので...それってどういうことなんでしょうね。その、何がそういう風に思わしてるのか、当事者でない人も田舎にゲイが入ってきたら住めないよってってるってことは、やっぱりその、差別の意識はあるってことですよね...。えっと、ちょっと C さんは分からないですけど、僕はどこに大きな問題があるかとかを、ちょっと思いつかなくて、でも実際問題思い悩んでる人もいるし、非当事者の人も来たら住めないよとか言う人がいるってことは...。僕らがここに住んでうまいことってるのは、たまたまなのか。 (...)

C: まずここまで発信したら、ここまで一応誰でもたどり着けると思うんですよ。この生活くらいまでは。僕は20年前のあのアナログ時代からしたら、パートナー、男性のパートナーと田舎に移住して一緒に暮らして地域と仲良くなってってもう、宇宙旅行よりも異次元の夢っていうか、架空の世界だったんですけど、それでもなんか知らないけどここまで来た。これからの世代の人、別に上の世代の人でもいいんですけど、この生活を目指すなら全然いけるよと、この形くらいはね。あとは隣人とか、地域の特性とかもね、影響するかもしれんけど。全然いけるんじゃないっていう、見本っていうか、ロールモデルっていうか

ね。(...)

C:当事者でも当事者ごとに事情が違ふし考え方も違ふから...それこそ完全個別かなど。ここでやってるのも完全個別のスタイルだから。もう我々をゲイとひとくくりにしなで、と。代表なんか誰もいないし、同じ意見はだれひとり居ないから、(...)で、その上で自分らの私生活はこうです、と、言うことですかね。

C mentions here that he “[has] even thought LGBT issue does not matter for [them] any longer” and “[keeping telling himself that he is gay] stopped after [he] came here.” This indicates that he feels the need to speak out against the oppression less frequently than before as he became content with his new life in the rural area. However, at the same time, he contributes to activism as he had gained a collective gay identity, so that he can confront the locally implemented heterosexism. As also seen in the comments above, they are aware that the rurality they have experienced derives mainly from the fact that they, as outsiders, participate in the local community, what they call “*mura*(^村).” They know that it can be different from experiencing rurality of one’s hometown. Yet, as D shows his struggle in seeing the specific differences between these two elements of rurality, the discrepancy between their experiences and the imaginary experienced by other queers vexes them.

5.4 When (In-between) Rurality Slightly Manifests 1: F's Case

F identifies himself as a gay man. He is in his 40's. F's parents grow vegetables for their own consumption. When he goes back to their parents' home, F's parents tell him to bring some vegetables back to his current residence. F's father is a landowner. He earns part of his revenue by lending the land where the local farmers farm. To keep the trust and the friendly relationships with them, F's father sometimes goes and provides some physical labor for these farmers. The earning from this is not enough, and thus F's parents need to work at firms as well. I asked F whether he wanted to become a farmer. F's answer was that there was a different career he wanted to pursue, so he did not think much about the option. F has a job not related to farming. His migration history goes as follows: hometown, an urban city, a "rural" town, and back to the same urban city. His turns have been triggered by changes in his job or his relationship status.

Having said that, F mentioned how the natural environment he was raised in influences what sort of environment he wishes to live in. He wishes living in a rural area in the future. About his migration history, he moved to an urban city from his rural hometown, got a job there, moved to another town he also calls rural primarily because he wanted to live near his then partner, and got back to the current urban city. Based on this experience, F stated the possibility he moves to a rural area in the future:

F: I have not thought about becoming a farmer. ...But, [as a kid,] I liked touching the soil, and the rice field...I really like the seasonal scenery. In spring, rice fields are soaked in water. Rice grows from these rice fields, and in autumn, I really like the atmosphere of harvest in autumn. I feel like these views are imprinted on me deep inside. Deep inside, I crave for nature showing its different faces depending on the season. It became more obvious to me as I lived in another rural town where it has a completely different climate pattern. Now that I know the positives of both regions, I learned working outside every now and then contributes to my psychological health.

農業やりたいって思ったことないかな...ただやっぱり土いじりとか、地元の田んぼ...春になって田んぼに水が張られてそこから稲が育って、そして実りの秋みたいなその景色は本当に凄い好きで、なんとなく自分の体にしみ込まれてるような感じがあって。(...)やっぱり心の中での原風景としては実家の**の四季折々の田舎の自然みたいなのは凄くしみ込まれていて、またその**とは違う気候の場所に移住したことによって、地元と違う自然の良さみたいなを感じて、で、両方の自然の良さを感じたからこそ、外にでて仕事をするっていうのが凄く気持ちいいな、とか、精神安定上凄く良いなって凄く思うようになったっていうのもあるかな。

F is from a farming family. He has also lived out of his hometown, and has experienced rurality in different regions. Using the word “rural”, F explained the local governance of his

hometown and how F's family members interacted with the network:

F: You know, where I am from is rural, so there are local communities such as associations for local kids and their parents, neighborhood associations, and the ones centered around citizens' community centers. These communities help each other for harvest. They also gift vegetables and rice each other. My father relatively well participated in these communities, so he oftentimes got local jobs and responsibilities. He got along with them, so he also helped them with farming. They got together to clean the ditches and do some other stuff too.

地元が田舎なので、子供会とか町内会、地区の公民館を中心としたコミュニティがやっばり出来ていて、その中で農業の繁忙期になると手伝いに行ったり、みたいな...ことがあったり。野菜とか米のゆずりあいみたいなのはしょっちゅうあり、どちらかという父親もまあ公民館を中心とした中で色んな仕事が回ってきて、その中で色んな人達とコミュニケーションを取りながら、農業の手伝えることは手伝ったりとか。あとは地区で、例えば、用水路を掃除するとかそんなときにも、地元の人たちと一緒に集まって、活動してたなっというの覚えています。

This is F's memory as a kid. As he grew, he got fewer opportunities and less motivation to get involved in these activities. I asked him how he would compare this experience to

another “rural” region he has lived in. He did not have to engage in the local activities, but he described his experience as follows:

F: [...] I had some chance to do agricultural stuff...more for leisure purposes.

Me: Looking back upon that time, [...] was there anything that possibly deterred queers from getting involved with these activities, especially in terms of gender expression? Was there something that caught your attention?

F: Not that I can think of. ...But, I sense that those who are in the primary industry work masculine. They stick to the idea, maybe. They asked me questions like “Are you married? Do you have someone you want to get married to? Do you have a girlfriend?” That was part of everyday conversation. I felt a bit awkward every time I got asked these questions, but it wasn’t a big deal for me.

F: (...) 多少農業的な物に関われる部分と...あとはプライベートでレジャーとしての関わり方みたいなのはあったかな

Me: 当時を振り返って、(...)セクシャルマイノリティ特にジェンダーエクスペッションに関わるところで、そういう体験に参加しづらかったりとか、気にかかった点があれば教えてほしいんですが？

F: それは特にないな...ただ、肌感覚として一次産業に関わっている方ってより男らしく仕事をしている方って多かったり、その考えの中で生きているから...やっぱり結婚しないの？みたいな風当たり...っていうかそういう...コミュニケーションの中で彼女は？結婚は？みたいなのは聞かれていたかな...と。それが多少居心地悪いなって思ったことはあったけど、困るほどでもなかったかな

F moved to this area because he got a job there. F participated in these activities as part of leisure, not as part of his everyday life. He interacted with them not as a member of the community. He got asked about his marital and relational statuses, which made him “a bit awkward”. Though these questions indicate that heteronormativity penetrates amongst them, he answered that he felt that it “was not a big deal.”

For more information in this line, I asked him what he thought about the different patterns of migration, U-turn, I-turn, and J-turn⁴⁸. F’s answer is that, as he has come out to his parents, he does not find any big problem in terms of U-turn. As for J-turn, he thinks that getting into a community as a newcomer from the outside per se will be difficult, but probably that is about it. The presumed difficulty in making a U-turn trip that Headquarters for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan (2015) defines is that they are expected to succeed the assets from their parents. This intergenerational expectation has been heteronormalized especially after modernization (Muta, 2006;

⁴⁸ Reffer to Headquarters for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan (2015).

Johnson, 2013). Therefore, I also asked him whether his parents told him to succeed the land and the occupation. His answer was “Not at all. I told them beforehand that I would never succeed. (全くないです。むしろそれを言われる前に継がないからって自分で言ってた)”

Another reason he moved to another “rural” town is that he wanted to live near his then partner. He decided to live in a distance from his partner that took him an hour to travel by car. That tremendously shortened the time he spent on travelling. They decided not to live together for they could not negotiate somewhere between F’s workplace and his partner’s. As they lived separately, F did not feel the need to come out to the local communities both around F’s place and his partner’s. In other words, they did not have to depend on the local communities to realize their livelihood in terms of their access to financial, economic, social, and environmental resources. To my questions whether he came out to his colleagues, he answered “I did to those who seemed open and safe. (一対一で、この人は大丈夫だろうなっていう人には割と)”

He has been to an area which he calls rural. However, he did not have to engage in the communities deeply both because he did not depend on them for the access to various resources, and because he was preoccupied with his occupational concerns. I asked him about the communities and groups he interacted with. At that time, he was so busy in his work. He spent most of his time either in his place or his workplace on weekdays. I also asked him whether he was in some gay community. His then partner restricted him from

engaging in queer communities, and he followed his partner's requests. He was in that sense also isolated from queer communities as well. As this partnership ended, he came back to the urban place he lives in. He then started constructing some gay friend networks through the queer communities in the urban area.

Similar to the other interviewees' stories such as E, and H; F got engaged in the queer communities after he came back to the urban area. The following is F's answer to the question about the models he follows, which came up in relation to his experiences in the queer communities:

F: I had no reference in terms of what I would like to be in the future as I was a teenager. That lasted until I reached the latter 20's. After I got my first job, I got so busy. I didn't think much about what it was going to be like for me. I needed to focus on the job because I was so busy in managing the tasks. That surprisingly made me worryless. Although, back then, my colleagues occasionally asked me if I made a girlfriend or was thinking about marriage. It wasn't a big deal again, though it made me a bit awkward. From the latter 20's to early 30's, I still didn't have a reference to follow. The gate to the gay communities for me was shut. I didn't actively seek for information. I didn't either have gay friends, so it was basically impossible to compare myself to someone else and find a sort of guideline. I didn't even know that I could compare myself to the others.

Things started to change after my remigration to Tokyo. I got diverse gay friends, got involved with lots of gay communities, got to see diverse lifestyles and how they live their own lives...each of these came to construct references I can compare myself with. Especially hanging out with some friends in my age range, how gay people other than me live their lives, what they think about partnership and how they do or do not do it, how they make their own families... all of them became good models to refer to.

10代の後半から20代の半ばくらいまでは、ロールモデルはまあ、全くなかった。仕事に忙殺されてたっていう所もあるので、あんまり将来に向けての不安とか悩みもなかったかなと。とにかく仕事が忙しくて目の前の今の仕事に集中しないと追いつかない感じだったので、意外と悩んでなかった。ただ、同僚に(Fさん)彼女は?結婚は?って聞かれるたびに、うっ、とはなっていたけれども、そんなに困ってはなかったかな。20代後半から30代前半になった時にも、ロールモデルはなかったな。とにかくゲイのコミュニティに対して門が開かれてなかったので、自分からそういう情報を求めるっていうこともなかったし、身近にゲイの友達もいなかったのもそもそも比較するっていうことすらできなかった。比較できるっていう事すらにも、気付いていなかったのも、やっぱりモデルは居なかったと。転機が訪れたのはまた東京に戻ってきて、色々なゲイの友達が出来たり、色々なゲイのコミュニティに入ったことで、色々な生き方とかあり方みたいなを見て、その一つ一つがロールモデルにはなったかな、と。で、やっぱり同年代の友達と飲んでいる時に、

自分以外のゲイの人たちの生き様というかパートナーシップというか、家族の作り方みたいなのは、どれも参考になった。かな。

F mentions that participation in the gay communities enabled him to realize that there can be references as to designing his own future. F also mentions that his remigration to Tokyo was the trigger. He also mentions that he did not even know about the existences of possible references he compares himself with. This indicates that F has internalized and been exposed to the dominant life course imaginary centered around cis-gender and heterosexual, as pointed out by Halberstam (2005).

F contributed his own experiences to a queer social movement that promotes public coming out. He also knows about SDGs, as he gives lectures about sexuality and gender at educational facilities. However, in comparison to how B and L use the tool to call for the equal rights to rural queers, he has not touched on SDGs in his lectures. He learned about SDGs and its relation to sexuality issues as he attended the meetings and gatherings that were designed for the LGBT activists to share their knowledge. Based on the knowledge, he believes that SDGs can make it easier for the speaker to deliver certain messages. F mentions “I believe that [advocating for sexual rights] shares the message that difference and diversity should be valued to bring about change(違いを大切にして違いを活かすっていう所がもしかしたら根っこでつながるのかな).” He also seeks for a way to bridge his

message and SDGs as he talks about “how to make a better interpersonal relationships[...], like reconsidering how they want to live, through the [sexuality and gender] lens(それを通して生き方を考える、みたいな。(….)よりよい人間関係について考える).” Despite these, he is still not sure how he can incorporate SDGs in his lectures and activism. Based on his life history, urban/rural framework are related to how he understands his life, but it is not felt as significant as the other interviewees seem to find. What F’s story indicates is that rural queer discourses do not stand when we merely consider geographical issues based on certain parameters, such as geographical coordinates. This implies the difficulties that the current rural queer social movement is experiencing in relying dominantly on the word *chihō*(地方) as rural.

5.5 When (In-between) Rurality Slightly Manifests 2: G’s Case

G is from a dairy farming family. G thinks that G is gay in their 30’s. About their own sexuality:

G: I find my body male. I find my psychological self somewhat feminine since I was young. [...] In that sense, I am transgendered too.

身体的には男性だと認識しているし、心理的な面については結構小さいころから女性的な面が自分の中にあるなと思っています。(…)そういう意味ではトランスジェンダーでもある

と思っています

For G, rurality is dragged to the image of home and hometown, whilst it is also about the space lack of queer communities and facilities for queers. G thinks that it would be unlikely to happen that G will move to a rural area due to the current occupation. G used to dislike the idea of moving to a rural town. Nowadays, however, G started to feel that living in a rural town is not too bad. G is certain to stay away from the primary industry and farming. About G's migration story, G moved to a regional central city first to start a new life away from G's family. G then got a job in another regional central city. G, then, got a new job in a rural town, and finally moved to the current place where G calls rural, as G got another different job. G is not content with the current place, but finds it ok due to the current job.

G was uneasy when G's parents said "you need to graduate from the cute girly stuff. You are becoming a grown-up as a primary school student." G wanted a study desk which featured some Sanrio⁴⁹ characters. They also said the same thing about the stuffed toys G had at that time. G told me about the story that the girly stuff needed to be incinerated as it was "possible in rural areas". About their own gay identity, the primary school teachers taught them that "everyone was going to have sexual attraction so that boys would come to be attracted to girls and vice versa". G then came to think that certain sexual orientations are "wrong" as stated below:

⁴⁹ Japanese cartoon character brand

G: I was taught stuff like homosexuality was wrong. I already somehow knew the words such as homo, and fag (okama オカマ). I didn't want to admit that I was one of them. I believed what they taught me. But, I found myself sexually attracted to men at fifth grade.

すでに同性愛はいけないものとか、ホモとかおかまっていう言葉を知っていたので、自分がそうではないと、認めたくなかったのも、授業で習ったことを信じてたんですけど、小学校5年の時に性的に男性に惹かれることをしっかり自覚した

G “could not come out until graduation from university” because “[G] was afraid that people would discriminate against [G].” As G studied gender, “I retrieved the confidence which enabled me to have relationships with people. I got to meet the other gay people as I became older especially after graduating from university.”

The rural imaginary G holds seems to derive from their own experiences at the farm G is from. About this, G explained how their mother was isolated and exploited under the gender-based norm that was exercised within the household. In relation to this, the rural local governance founded upon gender-based groups was also discussed. G also expressed that G attained the freedom from surveillance from G's family as G got away from the hometown and home:

G: My mother looked so poor. Rural women are exposed to severe discrimination. They need to deal with the same number of tasks as men do. But, once they get home, they are required to perform the house chores and care work. When they want to let the steam off, they need to travel for a long distance [to meet the people in a similar situation], so they don't get to meet each other so often. They are isolated, exploited at home, lack in access to opportunities to share their hardships with their fellows.

Me: You realized the situation your mother was in, because you studied about gender?

Or, did you have this feeling that something was wrong since you were young?

G: I have witnessed it since I was young. I didn't realize that it was actually gender-based discrimination until I studied about it. It was something so normal for me.

But I knew that my mother looked poor and she must be going through some hardship.

As a kid, I knew that my mother took care of me. She did the same work as my dad, and she was so tired, but she also cooked, did laundry, for us. I was sorry for her. [...] In my

university, I learned about gender and feminism. I came to think about what I saw at

home, and realized that it was actually discrimination and exploitation. I realized that I

also played a role in exploiting her. I regret it, so I confront against my dad and my

older brother to help her. I wouldn't have realized these if I did not study gender.

Me: How do your father and older brother respond to that?

G: [...] my brother is ok in terms of exploitation. But my father clearly exploits her by ordering her into doing this and that. He doesn't even know that he is exploiting her. I confront against him more, of course. He shuts up. He makes himself look like he is apologetic. He sometimes evacuates into his own room. Once I leave the two of them alone, they immediately start quarreling, or my father starts picking on her. I try to intervene whenever I notice.

G:うちの母親なんかは凄く見てて可哀そう。農村の女の人って凄く差別をされています。男と同じように力仕事をやるのに、家に帰ったら家事とか全部女の人だけにやらせるんですね。そういった中で愚痴をこぼす相手に会うためには何 KM も先に行って合わなきゃいけないって、頻繁に会えないので本当に孤立していて家庭の中でそういう差別にもあって、それでもなかなかそれを吐露する場所がないっていう事で。(...)

Me: お母さまの状況に気付かれたのはご自身がジェンダーなどについて学ばれたからですか？それともずっと見ていて違和感があったのかについて教えていただけますか？

G: やっぱり小さいころからそれは見ていましたけれども、それが女性差別だっていう風にはやっぱり、勉強するまでは思えなかったです。それが当たり前の事だったので。でも本当に辛そうだな、可哀そうだなと思いつつ。子供としてもいっぱい世話をしてもらおうわけ

ですよね。あんなにお父さんと一緒に仕事をして帰ってきて疲れているのに、ご飯作ってもらったり洗濯してもらったりして凄いいし訳ないなっていうのを思いつつ、(...)それが大学に入ってジェンダーとかフェミニズムにも触れて、実家の事を考えたときに、これはばりばりの差別だよなっていう事を改めて感じて、自分は本当に差別をする...母を追い込むことに加担してたなっていうのを凄いい反省して、実家に帰るたびに父親とか兄弟に対しても色々文句を言ってお母さんを助けるっていう事をし始めましたね。やっぱり勉強してないとそうした身近な事にも気づけなかったかなと思います。

Me: それに対してお父様とかご兄弟の反応はどうなんですか？

G: (...)そこまで兄が母を追い詰めるっていう事はあまりない。一方で父ははっきりと母にあれこれ命令したりですね、駒使いをして抑圧することになんの自覚もなくやってるので、たびたび目にするので、父親に対しては結構言うんですね。で、その時父の方は僕が言うと、ちょっと黙るんですよ。黙ってちょっと反省したふりをしたり、あと、自分の部屋に逃げていたりですね、するんですけど。やっぱり母と父だけになっているとすぐ喧嘩をし始めたり母をいじめたりする姿があり、そのたびに僕が色々言いますけど...

These experiences feed into constructing his imaginaries of rurality. About the regional specificity, G mentions that designated school districts functioned strongly in the local governance. These groups take care of the local environment by providing labor such as

weeding, and cutting down the extra trees. Gender-based local groups also play important roles in terms of this region's governance:

Me: I would like to hear more about the region you are from. Are there local groups, such as the local fire brigade?

G: There is. My father used to be a member for a long period. In the local fire brigades, the local people belong to the community and act. He had been in there for a long time. He even got a prize for that. [...] He retired from the group, and my brother took over his position. He also succeeded the land and the farm. I need to say that they perform their job once in several years. What else do they do? They go out for alcohol, men exclusive. I guess it is a rural thing.

Me: Does your brother share what it is like in the group?

G: [He says that] they gather together to shoot some event, like helping someone's wedding. There are times that they sound serious, but usually he comes back home drunk. I thought they just gather for fun.

Me: Do you think you might also want to participate?

G: Never. As a kid, men's groups like that where uncles gather around was a menace for

me. I was sure I would stay out of their business. They use words like homo or fag (okama オカマ), and offend those who behave or look effeminately. I experienced them so I knew. I was determined that I would stay clear from them.

Me: ご出身の地域の話をもう少し聞くと、自治会とかの話をもう少し聞きたいんですけど、消防団とかはありますか？

G: 消防団あります。うちの父も消防団にずっと入っていました。田舎の消防団って地域の人が消防団員して所属して活動しますよね。父も長い間それをやっていて、その功績を認められて賞状もらったりしてました。(…)父が年配になって退団した後、長男が実家の牧場を継いでいるんですけども、長男が今消防団に入っています。でも、私から見ると、消防活動って本当に数年に一回しかないんですね。活動することって。で、他の活動は何かって言うと、男たちの遊び、お酒を飲む集まりにしか見えません。多分田舎の消防団だからだと思うんですけど。

Me: お兄様から消防団の飲み会はこんな感じだよ、みたいな話はたまに聞いたりしますか？

G: たまに行事でなんかあつまるといっつか...結団式みたいな？の時はまじめな集団なのかなって聞かされて思うんですけど、でも普段は大体酔っぱらって帰って来たりしてたので、そういうやっぱり飲み会っていっつか楽しい遊びの場、なんだろうなっていう風に思っ

てました。

Me: ご自身は参加されてみたいとかっていうのはありますか？

G: あ、それは絶対ないです。子供のころの私にとって男同士のおやじたちの集まりっていうのは脅威というか、絶対に関わりたくない人たちでした。彼らは大体ホモとかおかまっていう言葉を使って、なよなよした人に対して攻撃を大体するっていうのが経験上分かってたので、関わりたくないなって思っていました

Witnessing what sort of interaction G's father and brother have with the local communities, G recognizes that the group is exclusively for men. Even though G has not actually participated in these activities, what is important here is that they would not be able to remove themselves after participation. Participation can trigger the following microaggression in the group and vulnerability as G will get more dependent on the group for the social resources. Even if the other rural queers have experienced similar situations, it is not so easy to encourage them to speak about their potentially traumatic stories.

When talking about G's own participation into gay communities, G started the sentence with “[t]his would have been completely different in a city”, indicating G's desire to distinguish rural queer's experiences:

Me: How did you meet your, say, non-cisgender heterosexual friends? Where did you

meet them?

G: This would have been completely different in a city, but as I went to a university, I started living by myself far from my parents. That was the first time when I got free from surveillance from my family. That was when I got free from pretending that I was heterosexual. I started behaving whatever I felt like. [...] I went out for getting some gay magazines. I found one in a bookstore in [this urban area]. That was the first time I got one. I gained the information through the magazine for the first time in my life. [...] There were various things written on the magazine. There was some information about Tokyo, and also about (the prefectural region I am from).

Me: いわゆるシスヘテロでない友人に出会っていったきっかけは何でどこだったかはお伺いしてよいですか？

G: これはやっぱりあの...都会とは違うと思うんですけども、僕が大学生になった時初めて実家から離れて、割かし自由になって家族からの監視がなくなり、とりあえず家の中で異性愛者を演じる必要がなくなったんですね。それまでは家の中でも、異性愛者をずっと演じてました。で、一人暮らしを暮らすようになってそこでは自分を自由に表現できるようになったんですけど、(…)で、そのゲイ雑誌を探しに行ったんです。そしたら(ある都市)のお店にゲイ雑誌があつてですね、それで初めてゲイの情報をゲイ雑誌から集めたんです

ね。(…)ゲイ雑誌の中に色々な情報がありまして、もちろん東京の情報もあるんですけど、
(出身地域：県単位)の情報も書いてあると。

G tells this story of realizing their sexual identity as the one having a rural background as follows. G was feeling as if they were under the surveillance. G started living by themselves away from home and felt free from the oppression. That enabled G to start collecting information concerning sexuality and gay communities. G then started actually getting involved in the communities. G experienced this when the internet was emerging and being developed. G could possibly have purchased gay magazines at some neighbor bookstore. G values their experience of purchasing the magazine in an urban setting presumably because G could easily get caught as their old acquaintances occupy their sphere of everyday life. G seems to try to differentiate their own experience than experienced by the urban queers, because G believes that the process G went through might have been different if G was in or from an urban setting. As G talks about freedom from the surveillance of their family and community, G seems to refer to rurality as home and hometown.

I asked G whether there is any opportunity to share G's rural experiences with someone with the similar background or with someone interested in moving to a rural town:

Me: Do you know any people who identify themselves as queer and want to engage in

the primary industry? Do you know anyone who gave up such a lifestyle?

G: As far as I can remember, I haven't met gay people who said that they wanted to do farming or work for the primary industry.

Me: Have you seen the opposite, those who say that it is not their thing?

G: Most of them among those who I met wanted to come to cities. I guess they wouldn't talk about primary industry, when gay people meet up...I guess.

Me: [...] So, you don't talk much about their background like what sort of family they are from, or about what have been hard for them, do you?

G: There are people whose background I don't know about, like what sort of family they are from...I guess almost none of them.[...]

Me: Have you heard or talked about their migration plan with your, say, gay friends, or queer friends?

G: Not at all.

Me: 第一次産業に関わりたい当事者とか、そういうのをあきらめた当事者とかはご存知ですか？

G: 僕の記憶をたどる限り、第一次産業に携わりたいと言っているゲイの人にあまりあった
ことない...かなあ。(...)

Me: 逆はありますか？第一次産業は嫌だ、みたいな人は？

G: 都会に来たい、とかいう人の方が多かったんじゃないですかね。あまり第一次産業に関
わる話を...ゲイの人で会ったときにしてないかもしれないですね。

Me: (...)自分の実家の話とかどういう家で育ってきて、こういうのがしんどかった、みたい
な話って、あまりそういう話ってしないですかね？

G: 実家の背景知らない人とかも結構多い...知らない方が多いかもしれないですね...。(...)

Me: 例えば、ゲイ友達でも、LGBTQのお友達でもいいんですけど、から、所謂地方移住の
相談とか、こういう風に考えてるんだけどっていうのを聞くことはありますか？

G 無いですね。

According to Tamagawa (2018, p.496), the possible cultural context concerning queers in Japan is that, though there are well-known queer communities and facilities, such as Shinjuku Nichome, these spaces are culturally separated from their everyday lives. It is narrated that the norm is that they do not much talk about one's private information to

secure this sort of separation such as their full name, address, and so forth; given that they will resume their everyday “normal” lives once they are out of these spaces (Tamagawa, 2018, p.496). Though this is not necessarily true as the situation is changing gradually, G’s comment above indicates this cultural background concerning queers in Japan. This normative system that is supposed to protect queers from unwanted aggressions might negatively contribute to metronormativity, as it is difficult for them to share the details of their rural background under this norm. That causes the lack of shared details about their rural stories, and that feeds back into, and reproduces the metronormative narratives. When it gets reproduced, the abovementioned mechanism (i.e. lacking the details of the rural livelihoods) makes up what Herring calls the “misleading and accurate provincialism⁵⁰” (Herring, 2010, p.150), instead that it is now misleading and *inaccurate* provincialism because it lacks the details.

G also talks about the other aspect of rural imaginary. It refers to the urban-rural dichotomy, and explains the inequity concerning how space is constructed, and opportunities are distributed:

G: My hometown is **, but I have been wanting to avoid living in a rural village. I mean there are less opportunities for gay people to meet the other gay people. ...I think

⁵⁰ Based on Herring (2010, p.150), in this paper, I understand that misleading and accurate provincialism narrates that a certain ruralized area is backward for a certain aspect. It is “accurate” in a sense that it captures an aspect experienced and/or lived by the local people, but it is also “misleading” because it labels the area as ruralized and backward as if it explained the whole of the ruralized area.

I will get isolated, and that will not be fun. But I am gradually learning the positive aspects of my hometown. Lots of those who are in cities are attracted to places like my hometown. I recently think that it would not be too bad to live in a rural town as I realized that there are quality places such as a cozy restaurant in middle of farmland. I cannot have an easy access to these facilities in cities. So, if I have enough money and time that make me feel ok to travel to cities whenever I want to, living in a rural town is an option. [...] But then, as I have said, there are fewer gay people in rural towns. The [general amount of] population is different in the first place. I think that there are not a few obstacles for gays to enjoy life [in rural]. I have been feeling this strongly these days. I have been here for a while, and before, I lived in this [regional central city]. It was fun then. I mean the population size is totally different there. I assume this population size leading to the structure where there are way more places for gays to hang out and meet the other gays. I haven't hung out like that since I came here, so I again find rural life hard.

G: 僕の実家は**（場所）ですけど、あまり農村には住みたくなっているのはずっと思っていました。というのもあまり出会いとかが出来ないので...孤立するだろうと思うし、なかなか生きる上で楽しくないんじゃないかっていう思いがしばらくありましたけど、実家のよさっていうのも結構最近になってわかり、**にあこがれる人って結構実は都会で

はいるみたいで。実家帰った時に温泉入ったり、畑にポツンとあるレストランに行ったり、なかなか都会にいと簡単にアクセスできない、クオリティの高い安らぎの場所っていう存在を知って、そういう面では、農村に暮らすのはもしかしたら心地よいのかなって思ったりするんですね。なので、都会に行きたいなって思ったときに簡単にいける財力とか、時間とかがあるのであれば住む場所は農村っていう事はあるなって凄く最近思うんですね。(…)[しかし、]やっぱり田舎っていうのは出会いがすくない、人口がやっぱり少ないので、ゲイとして人生を楽しむうえでは若干障害があるなどは思っています。実はこれは最近凄く感じてて、(今のところに)住んでるんですけど、その前の(地方都市)の時はめちゃくちゃ楽しくて。人口の規模が全然違うんですよ。で、そのせいだと思ってるんですけど、出会いというか、ゲイの遊び場が全然数が違うし、こっちにきてなかなかあまり遊んでないのでそういう意味ではやっぱり田舎辛いなっていうのをひしひしと感じています。

Here, G explains that what G desires in relation to their sexual identity concentrate around urban settings, for which reason G basically does not want to reside in a rural area. However, G also finds the goods particularly available in rural areas, and thus if G has enough finance and time resource that enable G to travel to urban cities whenever G wants, living in a rural area is a fair option. The value of the ruralized places here are mainly determined by the environmental services it offers. This implies a complex queer's desire to move to a rural area as a consumer of the landscape and the environmental services (Powell,

2016) that are possible when they secure the access to the other queer desires. In relation to this, toward the end of the interview, G stated a comment below:

G: Geographically, there is inequity between urban and rural in terms of the available resources. There is nowhere to hang around in rural towns. There are less people. Rural gay communities are small, stagnated, and closed so everyone knows each other, where it typically ends up in no more romance available. If they want to hang out, they need to travel really far, which takes money and time. There is this inequality between the urban and the rural from the beginning. And then, I really like my home and the surrounding environment, which are cozy. There are quality environmental services, but to live as a gay, there are a bunch of issues.

地理的な面で都会と田舎とでは、凄い格差...持つてる資源の格差が凄いあると思うんです。どっか遊びに行くにも田舎だと場所がないし、そして人がいないので本当にゲイだって、固定化した人間関係で、本当に数人しかいないコミュニティで、どう恋愛したらいいのか...しようがない感じで。で、遊びに行くためには、遠出して町に出なきゃいけない、時間とお金がかかるし。東京までだったらもっと何万円もかかるし。最初っから都会と地方とでは格差があるなって感じますね。で、本当に僕も実家の環境は凄く安らげる場所だし、クオリティの高い環境がいっぱいあるんですけども、ゲイとして生きる上ではなかなか色々問題があると思っています

5.6 When Rurality Dynamically Manifests: K's Case

There is a reason to position K's story toward the end of this chapter. It is basically the result of the art of snow-ball sampling. In order to approach rural queers and the injustices against them, I have assumed that it is necessary to reconsider rurality by introducing an attribute in relation to farming, in order to delve into the dynamics of the world rural queers experience.

K, as a transman working at a local market retailer, was introduced by another interviewee. As always, I asked them whether they knew someone with some sexually non-conforming identity and either (1) engages in farming, (2) is from a farming family, or (3) wanted to farm but gave up for some reason. The person who connected me with K mentioned that they were not sure whether K fit into one of these conditions, but that I should interview K if I really wanted to study rural queers in Japan. K is from a region he calls rural, but he is not from a farming family. He moved to a city and now works at a local market where he needs to travel for less than an hour. K talked about his life history using the words, such as village, and related his story to rurality. In this sense, K might not fit into the initial operational definition of this research, and yet he is also one of the rural queers in Japan that I have succeeded in reaching.

K is involved in queer activism in a small scale. He mainly tries to support his queer peers by providing spaces where they can feel safer and more enjoyable. On weekdays, he

works at a local market retailing company which purchases raw materials from the diverse set of suppliers including primary industry worker's associations. He calls this environment "like a village" as each actor is deeply dependent on the other to gain an access to the indispensable resources such as daily business information, and trust.

Before getting this job, K used to work at another company which was unrelated to the local market environment. K shared his episode about what he was feeling in this process:

K: I, as an FtM⁵¹ transgendered person, was looking for a job as I graduated from university. It was important for me whether they require their workers wearing the uniform, where the workplace is, and things like that. There was no workplace that I felt quite right. I got a part-time job at the place where their uniform is sporty. I felt I could bear with it. But, a problem came up when they offered me a full-time position. They offered swimming classes too, so they asked me to teach these classes too. I never wanted to wear the swimsuit. I did not get the job with my sexual identity open. I was there with people recognizing me as a woman. When they asked me to wear the swimsuit, I said "never". But the company didn't understand. I quit. I made up some excuses because I really wanted to quit. I left there as if I ran away from them.

⁵¹ FtM refers to female-to-male transgender.

僕 FtM で、元女子っていうのがあって、大学卒業してから就職ってなった時に、どこで働こうとか、制服があるとか、やっぱりすごい気にして、なかなか、ここで働きたいっていうのがなかったんですね。で、まあ(以前働いていたところ)なら制服がジャージなんで、そこだったらいけるだろうっていう事でバイトしてて、でそこからですね、社員にならないかっていう話をもらったときに、(そこ)がプール教室もやってたんすね。なのでそのプール教室の先生もしてくれて言われた時に、ちょっと水着は無理だと。カミングアウトして入ったわけじゃないんで、女性として入ってるわけで、そこで水着で先生になってくれて言われた時に、それはちょっとどうしても自分の中で無理だと。てなった時に、お断りをしたんだけど、やっぱりそこは会社の方も折れてくれなくて...ってなった時に、もう辞めますと、無理やり理由をつけて、逃げるように辞めたっていう感じなんですね。

Given this experience, he was looking for a job that allows him to wear male-gendered or genderless clothes. The retailing company he currently works at requires their workers, regardless of their gender, to wear a uniform. Their uniform looks ok for him because it looked sporty and somewhat non gendered. The retailer position as a job sounded doable for him, though he had some unclear concerns. He had the image that local markets were closed and gendered communities. K experienced the effect of this closeness of the local market as he started working as a retailer. K talks about this experience using the word “male-dominant society (otokoshakai 男社会)”:

K: As you know, local markets are basically so male-dominant. It was almost a decade or more ago when I got in this working environment. There were no women, in the market. I mean there were, but they were wives of [small-scale, in-market] companies' presidents. The wives are typically in charge of accountancy. There were no women visible in the market[, putting up for auction, for example.] When I was applying for this job, I wrote my resume as a woman because I didn't want to come out to the workers there. My appearance, though, was not that different from how I look today. [As I actually started working in the market], at the first glance, they were like "oh, a new young guy is here." But once I got to talk with them, they were like "[I didn't realize that] you are a girl." They looked at my name tag and went "oh, girl." They gradually came to find me a girl. At that time, there were literally no women working visibly in the market. So, once they thought that I was a girl, they immediately changed their attitude, and treated me like a girl. That was almost like a magic. Most of them were uncles in their, like, 50's or 60's. It was typical amongst them treating me like a girl once they thought that I was a girl. Before they knew, they were thinking that I was a boy, so they were like "hey, you, bring that over here!", or like "hey, hang that up!" But, as they found me a girl, they immediately changed their attitude and went "no,no,no...you don't have to do it", or "you don't have to hold it. Girls don't have to carry such a heavy stuff." They changed their attitude drastically and immediately once

they found me a girl.

やっぱり市場ってすごい男社会で。で僕らが、入ったその十何年前って本当に女性がいないくて、市場の中に。で、いるっていても、社長の奥さんで経理をやってます、みたいな。で、そういう女性の方は居たけど、現場でバリバリ働く女性っていうのが全くいない時代で、それこそまあ僕が行ったときは、まあもう自分自身もカミングアウトしてなかったんで、履歴書書いていったときには、女子ですという風な形で入ったものの、見た目はあんまり変わらなかったのだから、普通にすれば若いお兄ちゃんがはいってきたかな、と。だけどやっぱり喋ると、「あ、女の子か。」とか。名前を見て、「あ、女の子だったんだ。」とか。で、気付かれていって。そのころ女子って本当にいなかったのだから、女の子ってわかった瞬間からの女子扱いが凄い。女性扱いっていうのが本当に凄くて。もう本当...50、60代のおっちゃんとかってというのがほぼほぼだったので、もう若い女の子ってわかった瞬間の極端な女子扱い。今まで喋らなければ男の子とってた時は、「おい、お前それ持ってこい」とか「それ**あげろ！」とかなんだけど、女の子って分かった瞬間「もうそれ触らなくていいから」とか。「いや、女の子がそんな重たいもの持たなくていいから」とか、言っただけで来たりして。もう扱いが180度変わるみたいな感じで

As K starts this episode with “as you know(yappari やっぱり)”, K had had the imagination that local markets were male-dominant and paternalistic. Based on this, K thinks that people should expect the same image. K explained above the gender-based conservatism of

its milder version. He also shared me his uneasy feelings toward the physical construction of the market:

K: They were almost excited about the new girl coming in the local market. They treated me like a girl from head to toe, that was hard for me to live with at the beginning. ...Also, there is this toilet issue too. Because they thought me a girl, I needed to use girls' bathroom. But it was humiliating for me. I used to use bathrooms people usually don't use. I used boys' bathrooms where people didn't usually come. Or, I used the ones when nobody was there. I survived like this before I came out to them.

市場に女の子が来たぞ...っていう女の子扱いが凄くて。最初はそれに耐えるのに大分苦しんだかな...うん。でまあ、トイレ問題とかもやっぱり、皆からは女の子ってわかると女子トイレ入らないといけない。でも自分の中ではそれは苦痛に感じていたから、誰もいないトイレ、男子トイレに入りに行くとか。誰もいってないすきを狙っていくとか、そういう、カミングアウトするまではずっとそういう生活。

K went on as shown above until he started having medical cares to achieve his wanted gender expression. As his body started changing, he felt that he needed to come out to explain about the physical transformation he was going through. It is reasonable for one to desire keeping control over the information concerning their gender and sexuality, as the

revealed information might jeopardize their safety. Furthermore, coming out is essentially reconstruction of already constructed relationships. This means that the more dependent one's access to resources is on the already constructed relationships, the more sensitive and delicate work it becomes for them.

K: As I started injecting hormones, my voice got lower, beard started growing, my body looked more masculine. The changes got more obvious as I got more of the medical care...So I thought I needed to come out. I decided, and I started with my company fellows. They accepted me. But this is a local market. This local market is like a large village, you know. It is not just about your company. There are a lot of other retailers, and they all know each other so much that they are almost equivalent to relatives. They are connected to each other. So, when I decided to come out, I needed to come out to everyone. Otherwise, I could not keep my business running. I struggled to decide whom I should come out and to whom not.

ホルモン治療の注射を始めると、声が低くなる、ひげが生えてくる、身なりがちょっと男性化していくんで、明らかに変化が分かってくる...ってなった時にこれはカミングアウトしないと無理だなと思ったから、自分の中でも決めて、まず会社のカミングアウトして。働いてる会社の中では、まあ、受け入れてくれてすんなり進んだんだけど、やっぱり市場っていう中っていうのは、自分の会社だけにとどまってなくて、まあもう言ったら大きな

一つの村...みたいになってて。お店がもう何件もあって、で、そのお店の中の人たちは皆
親戚みたいな感じ。自分の会社だけカミングアウトするんじゃなくて、もう皆にしないと
市場では生活できませんみたいな状況で。で、これをどこからどこまでカミングアウトす
べきかなっていうので、最初考えていったんだけど、市場の中では、カミングアウトして
市場の中だけでカミングアウトしたんじゃなくて、その次またお客さんっていうのがある
から、お客さんにもカミングアウトしなくちゃいけない...もうどこからどこまでのカミン
グアウトをしたらいいのかっていうのをまず悩んで。

About gender expression, the debate gets attention whether one needs to drag the social
history imprinted on their social body. K's episode above represents this debate well.
Furthermore, as his job is done relationship-based, the options he could have taken seem to
be restricted. Another option he could have taken was to quit the job and search for another
as he would not have to live with the history of the female-gendered body. About the
question what he thought about the option:

K: I definitely thought about it. [...] As I started injecting hormone, they did not even
recognize me as a girl because my voice got so low. I was living my life as a man
outside of the market. But once I was in there, they still kind of treated me like a girl, so
I needed to fulfill their expectations to some extent. The gap between my private life
and that [my life in the local market] started tearing me apart. I felt it depressing. I

thought about changing the job and starting again from scratch. But the same thing might happen at the new workplace where I might need to start from explaining my background including coming out... I'd rather stay here and educate them than going through it in a new workplace. Also, when I came out to them, ten years had already passed since I started working as a retailer. I thought that it was such a waste if I changed the job then. This feeling supported me through fighting back against and, if necessary, putting up and living with the struggles. That was a hard and long way.

よぎったね...(…)ホルモン注射を開始してやっぱり喋っても女の子っていうのは気付かれなくなるし、ごくごく一般的に男性として生活は出来てる。だけど職場に行けばまた女の子扱いを受ける。で、職場に行けば女の子でいてあげなきゃいけないっていうその私生活とのギャップが、凄い苦痛に感じてきて、やっぱりこれはしんどいなと思って、職を変えて一から違うところで働こうっていう考えもあったんだけど、やっぱり他のところに行ってもまた一からカミングアウトしていかないといけないだろうし、うん...そんな事するならもう今の環境で皆に伝えていって、やってる方がいいかなと思ったし、やっぱり(そのリテ일러)をそのころ10年位働いてからのカミングアウトだったので、ここまでやるから他の職に今更移るのもな...っていうのもあったから、その苦痛はその辺の気持ちで耐えてきたかなっていう感じですね。なかなか...しんどかったんすけどね。今に至るまでは...

K depended his life and economic resources on the job. He could not easily abandon his already ten-year career, but he was in a situation where he needed to go through the hardship with the coming-out process. Of course, this can happen with anyone with any job. However, K seemed to have a certain pride in his job as a retailer as well, which has environmental and social implications toward sustainability. For this, Tsing (2015) provides the insights concerning the values of various actors in a supply chain of raw materials, when explaining the precarious capitalism system depending on the “pericapitalist” sphere (Tsing, 2015, p.63). K had already succeeded some environmental and social knowledge concerning the products he deals with through participating in the local market, but his sexual and gender identity discouraged him to continue this learning process. K struggled between the knowledge he has succeeded from the agents in and surrounding the local market, and the microaggressions he is exposed to, due to his sexual and gender expressions (,which are, more precisely, heteronormativity and cisgenderism). As Johnson(2013) showed, metronormativity narratives and erasure of rural queer can be extended to lead to the misconception that queers do not understand rural sensibilities, and thus they can be the threat to jeopardize rurality by bringing in urban sensibilities. What can be drawn from rural queers’ experiences, such as K’s, however, subvert this narrative. K’s experience also shows the nuanced struggle in the process of subversion/submission negotiation. They are exposed to the pressure, which they do not have to need to feel, that

makes them choose either their rural identity or sexual identity as if they could choose either one of them, when both of these identities are actually various parts of their lives.

Having experienced this struggle, K is reluctant in encouraging the queer fellows to join this environment. The conversation is shown below:

Me: Do you know people like you who want to work in a local market? Is there anyone?

K: Well, I sometimes kind of give a casual offer to those who seem to have no job or want to change their job. But, it is actually hard to honestly tell them to join us, because I am worried that they might have to go through the same hardships I have been through. I eventually came to understand how a local market works, and what kind of environment it is. But it is not easy for me to say that they should come join and help us. [...] I kind of think that they will be ok because I am here for them. But at the end of the day, I cannot control the environment they will have to immerse themselves in, like the microaggressions they can be exposed to. This job (and the environment) is still hard.

Me: Kさんみたいに市場で働きたいって言ってくる人は居ますか？それもない？

K: うーん...いるけど...なんか僕自身もまあ、何もしなかったら働きにおいてよとか言ったりするけど。結局今でこそ市場環境も皆が分かるようになってきたけど、当事者としてその...環境的に苦しいことがあったから、呼んだところでまあ同じ思いするんじゃないかな

っていう部分もあるから、なかなかねえ...仕事しにおいてよって言いづらいし...。なかなかおいでよとはちょっと言えないなあ。(...)まあ、僕がいるから大丈夫だよとか思うけど、やっぱりその子が受ける言葉だったりそういうのがあるからやっぱり、ちょっとまだまだしんどいかなっていうのはあるかな...職業的には。

Based on his own experiences, K does not want to recommend the others joining the same environment. Though this is understandable, it is also true that these narratives and the settings which make him say so undermine the succession of rural-queered knowledge concerning everyday life, work, society, and environment.

K also seems to access the rural queer activism by utilizing his identity from a place which he calls rural. His experiences in the local market, which he described using the word “village” and “almost rural” (inaka-aruaru 田舎あるある), also seem to feed into his passion in joining the activism. K launches an event in a local festival:

K: You know, the events and gatherings for those who are struggling with their [sexual and gender] identities concentrate on cities like Osaka and Tokyo. They say that there are almost none in their regions, or accessible places nearby like rural to semi-urban regions. They come from the rural town they live in. They say there are no one around them who they can talk to about their sexuality.

Me: I think, if I were them, even if there were events or gatherings featuring LGBTQs in my own rural town or nearby, I would hesitate to go.

K: I agree. So, I started this festival about LGBTQs [in some peripheral prefecture]. But people don't come to the events if it so obviously features LGBTQs like Tokyo Rainbow Pride. So, we decided to get it affiliated with some local festival and mildly announce that this actually features LGBT. People in general don't know about LGBT, so it is hard.

Me: So, the rainbow festival you partly organize, is not a rainbow festival on its own [like Tokyo Rainbow Pride], but it is affiliated with a bigger local festival. Am I correct?

K: Yeah. We make it so that it looks like part of another local festival, like one of the side events.

Me: OK

K: What we do is that we make it look like one of the stalls, like really plain stall, instead of making it look specially featuring LGBT. It's just one of the stalls next to another stall, but it educates people really mildly. Those who come do not necessarily know or realize. Some of them are like "what event is this? What festival is this?" Some

come from the other prefectures. I believe that no announcement (i.e.that it is an event particularly for or featuring LGBTQ issues) makes it easier for those who struggle with their sexual identities to come. At the event, we talk with them. Some of them say that they have not come out to their parents so they want to avoid any possibility of being identified like taking pictures.

K 田舎から出てきてやるみたいなの。やっぱりそういうコミュニティが開催されるのも大阪とか東京とかちょっと都会の方になるからなかなか田舎でやります...っていうコミュニティがなくて困ってますっていう子が結構いる。こっちまで出てこないでそういうのが無いんです、とか。誰か話聞いてくれる人もいないんです、とか。そういう子が多い。

Me 実際に開催しようとなってもなかなか地元のイベントだと、行くのを戸惑うかな。自分だったら行くのを躊躇するかなと思うんですが

K そうそうそう。結構それがあるね、やっぱり。うん。だから**でも知り合いと一緒に(お祭り)やろうよって行って(...)やってるんだけどやっぱり、LGBT イベント、東京みたいにレインボープライド開催しますっていても全然集客がなくて、だからもう地元のお祭りと合体させるような形で LGBT イベントなんだよっていう形でやらないと全然人が集まらないし、全くなんか認識が皆ないからなかなか難しいかな

Me **のレインボーフェスタ、でいいんですかね、は地元の祭りと合同して、単独でレイン

ポーフェスタやるんじゃないなくてその一部を借りて...？

K そう。なんかお祭りのイベント的な感じでやっています！みたいな。

Me なるほど。

K だからもう、完全にブースを LGBT に特化するんじゃないなくて、本当にお祭りの屋台みたいな。的屋さんならんで、その中に LGBT のグッズを売ってるブースもある、啓発してるブースもある、みたいな。そうそうそう。だから、来る人にしては、「え、今日何のお祭り？何のイベント？」みたいな感じで、来るような感じ。結構他県から来る人もいるし...でもやっぱり LGBT のイベントですよっていう形で謳ってないから逆に当事者も来やすい。っていうのがあるから、まあ(そのイベントで話を聞いていると)いや実は親に何も言っていないんです、誰にもカミングアウトしてないから写真とかでも顔出しはやめてくださってっていうのは結構多い。

By holding an event or having a stall affiliated with the larger local festival, instead of proclaiming an event specifically featuring LGBTQ, K succeeds in blurring the boundary between the heterosexual-dominant sphere and the queer-dominant sphere. Whilst avoiding the unwanted outings and identification, this also succeeds in providing the opportunities to educate the local people.

Without the art of snow-ball sampling, it would have not been possible to reach K's

episodes which provide the richness to this paper's analyses. For K, rurality is associated both with a certain space such as the local market community bond, and with his hometown. As Tamagawa (2015) described, it has been believed that urbanity tends to allow the dwellers to gain autonomy over their life. That autonomy includes separating their everyday life from their queer space. For K, it was not necessarily the case as he started living as a man outside of the local market, and yet he couldn't do so inside it. He also did not want to leave the workplace as he depended financially; had already constructed the business network; and gained the relationship-based knowledge there. He altered the situation by going through coming out process in the local market community. Coming out as an FtM transgendered person per se did not necessarily jeopardize his job, though he needed to nicely address the everyday microaggressions, which were not always easy to address, in order to maintain the access to the resources necessary for his job and life as a local market retailer.

CHAPTER 6. UNDERSTANDING THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES

In the previous chapter, the contexts of their experiences have been articulated. In this chapter, the data shown in the previous chapter will be analyzed using two different approaches: life history analysis, and critical thematic analysis. In the first section, their life stories will be realigned in accordance with their strategies to fight back against or cope

with their experienced heterosexism and cisgenderism in their own ruralities. The titles used in the previous chapter also read these strategies, but these were not as precise as they combine different strategies to cope with their own experiences. In section 6.1, I will realign their stories centered around the strategies, instead of the individuals as done in the previous chapter. In the following section 6.2 and 6.3, their interview data will be analyzed so that the components of their stories will be realigned. In section 6.2, diverse imaginaries of rurality, which I call the elements of rurality, they based their messages on will be detangled. These imaginaries are leaned toward their discursive tools that frame what message they deliver. In section 6.3, heteronormative and cisgender patterns that can exclude them will be shown. Toward the end of this chapter, the insights will be aligned together to lead to a theoretical implication as to this paper's research questions. When there is a need to refer to specific sections of this paper, the source of data (i.e. the chapter and section numbers in this paper) will be articulated in brackets (e.g. if this paper refers to Subsection 1 in Section 1 in Chapter 6, (6.1.1))

6.1 Strategies: Life History Analysis

The interviewees exercise various strategies to cope with and fight back against the heterosexism and cisgenderism in both imagined, real, and lived rural settings. This is where their “creative ways(Leslie 2017, p.765)” come into effect, which are considered as

one of the keys to sustaining queerness and transitioning to sustainable rural community. However, these strategies are also the result of the onus unfairly imposed on the queers to face against heteronormativity and cisgenderism. Some of them evacuate from the local relationships in their sphere of everyday life, and the others put themselves in the rural locality and deal with these. Some of them are tied to their land. For them, it is not easy to move to the other place. Some of them are not closeted, and also happily live in the rural community. The surfaces of these strategies might sound familiar. However, I argue that paying particular attention to the details and dilemmas they face against reveals the complexity concerning how rurality manifests and influences their lives.

These strategies are carried out, mostly on the daily basis, with the dilemmas. As seen in the data, given the diversity of their experiences, it might be inappropriate to impose a certain framework. However, given the lack of discussion and overall imperceptibility, I believe that their use of words around rurality and sexuality constitute “a necessary error (Butler 1993, p.21)” that enable us and them to make sense of the world, detect the norm, and collectively reimagine the future of rural queers in Japan. I labeled the different strategies as follows: dodging/resuming, creating safe spaces, strategical problematization, and negotiation. The discussion in this section is drawn from the life history analysis based on the entirety of their life histories. They combine different strategies that work the best for the context they are in, and thus it must be emphasized

again that these strategies need to be understood in relation to the entirety of their life stories.

6.1.1 Dodging/Resuming strategy

Directly confronting against the remarks, behaviors, or institutions assuming heterosexual and cisgender can jeopardize one's safety and identity, especially where it is harder to guarantee one's privacy (e.g. their address, family members, what economically and socially they depend on etc). It tends to be considered more difficult for them when they are embedded in their familial and/or regional bonds. Citing Ishida (2019, p.60),

One of the characteristics concerning how sexual minority people⁵² meet each other is that they meet up “outside” of regional society. According to Kaoru Ozawa who discussed sexual minority issue from the information security perspective, it is quite rare that either one or both of their parents is/are queer, and thus they grow discretely⁵³.

This is particularly different from other minority groups such as language minority, and ethnic minority. There are a lot of sexually non-conforming people who are (psychologically) isolated from their family and regional society.

⁵² Ishida uses the term “性的マイノリティ (sexual minority)” in the text. The term in Japanese is oftentimes used as the umbrella term for the sexually non-conforming. I translated it as “queer” for this paper's purpose.

⁵³ “grow discretely(離散的に生育する)” is a literal translation. I interpreted this as meaning “they gain and fully realize their sexual identity geographically away from their parents, and thus apart from regional society”

They feel that they need to carefully choose where, what, how, and with whom they should consult with and about. They take this “dodging/resuming strategy” when they do not want to directly confront against these stresses for various reasons. This strategy is carried out in two forms: avoiding occasions with high risks, and avoiding confrontation when they face against heterosexist and/or cisgenderism remarks. This has been discussed as the struggles concerning being closeted (Kikuchi et al., 2019); but Kawaguchi (2015) implies that the rural dynamics potentially have different implications when it comes to sexuality in rurality by pointing out the construction of ambiguous identity. This section tries to provide the examples how the interviewees employed this strategy in rurality.

H, who is a full-time farmer and lives as a man, struggles with gendered knowledge production. Thus, he goes to the relevant seminars held far away. He chooses these seminars at this moment, since he thinks that it is safer and less likely to be bothering.

H: The locally held gatherings are the best in terms of the species I grow, but I can choose the other topics like bugs, how I can avoid the usage of herbicides, and such. I can still learn how to fertilize my soil, sunlight, how to manage the surrounding natural environment [if I go to the seminars held far from here]. I can still learn how to farm in general, instead of how to grow well the specific species I grow. I have come out to the organizer of this seminar, so I go there. [...]

This person understands things about me, like my sexuality. This person allows me to make my name tag with my reassigned male-sounding name from the beginning. When the farmers in my area happen to attend these meetings, this organizer goes to them and explains what I am going through on behalf of me. This organizer warns them about outing. This (i.e. the farmers H knows attending the seminar) has happened, but I believe the information leading to outing my identity has not leaked from them.

(自分の育てている)品種とかだったらなかなか(ここから)遠いところでは講習会はないので、虫とか、どうやって土を作るかっていうところで勉強会に行ってます。自分のことをカミングアウトしてる(勉強会)があって、それに(...)行ったりします。そういうところで土とか太陽とか環境づくりとか(...)どうやって農業やっていくかっていう講習会には参加してます。(...)

自分のこともセクシュアリティっていうか、まあ、理解してもらっているんで、名札も元々(今の男性名)で作ってくれたりして。で、近くの農業の人たちがいたら、あの子はこういう感じだからあまり公に言いふらしたり、あそこの子どもが来たとか言わないでねっていうのを言ってくれていてですね。一緒の地区の人たちが何人か来たんですけど、別にそこから何か変な情報が回ったとかは特になんですけど。

What can be read from this comment are the following. H wants to avoid the local farmers'

gatherings that are highly likely to expose him to the various risks such as outing, and microaggression. H travels and attends the gatherings which are held outside of his sphere of everyday life. When something happens, it is still relatively easier for him to deal with the issue with the help of the organizer. The trust with the organizer is expected to work when something hostile against him happens, such as the local farmers happen to come. Here, the organizer is expected to do something and make the gathering safe enough to attend. The most important is, in the first place, that it is assumed by him to be rare that the local farmers take the trouble to travel all the way there.

This strategy is quite oftentimes used. G, having a farming family background, witnessed the rural governance based on gender-based groups. Let us look at G's answer to my question whether G has ever wanted to attend local fire brigade's meetings:

G: Never. As a kid, men's groups like that where uncles gather around was a menace for me. I was sure I would stay out of their business. They use words like homo or fag (okama/オカマ), and offend those who behave or look effeminately. I experienced them so I knew. I was determined that I would stay clear from them.

それは絶対ないです。そういうのやっぱり私当時...子供のころの私にとって男同士のおやじたちの集まりっていうのは脅威というか、絶対に関わりたくない人たちでした。彼らは大体ホモとかおかまっていう言葉を使ってなよなよした人に対して攻撃を大体するってい

うのが経験上分かってたので、関わりたくないなって思っていました

G experientially knew that attending the gatherings like local fire brigades was likely to jeopardize his identity and safety, and thus G was determined to stay clear from these gatherings.

Confronting heterosexism and cisgenderism can exhaust them even when these people are not the acquaintances of their family. K, a local market retailer living as a man, revealed his sexual identity to keep working in the workplace where social bond is highly valued. K can be a strong representative figure of rural queer, but he also knows that this strategy is legit and that the responsibility to claim against the structural inequity should not be unevenly put on sexually non-conforming people's shoulder:

Me: Do you know people like you who want to work at a local market? Is there anyone?

K: Well, I sometimes kind of give a casual offer to those who seems to have no job or want to change their job. But, it is actually hard to honestly tell them to join us, because I am worried that they might have to go through the same hardships I have been through. I eventually came to understand how a local market works, and what kind of environment it is. But it is not easy for me to say that they should come join and help us.

[...] I kind of think that they will be ok because I am here for them. But I cannot control

the environment they will have to immerse themselves in at the end of the day, like the microaggressions they will be exposed to. This job (and the environment) is still hard.

Me: Kさんみたいに市場で働きたいって言うてくる人は居ますか？それもない？

K: うーん...いるけど...なんか僕自身もまあ、何もしなかったら働きにおいでよとか言ったりするけど。結局今でこそ市場環境も皆が分かるようになってきたけど、当事者としてその...環境的に苦しいことがあったから、呼んだところでまあ同じ思いするんじゃないかなっていう部分もあるから、なかなかねえ...仕事しにおいでよって言いづらいし...。なかなかおいでよとはちょっと言えないなあ。(...)まあ、僕がいるから大丈夫だよとか思うけど、やっぱりその子が受ける言葉だったりそういうのがあるからやっぱり、ちょっとまだまだしんどいかなっていうのはあるかな...職業的には。

Given this, the second form of this strategy is employed, which is to avoid confrontation when they actually face against microaggression. What has been observed amongst the interviewees is that this strategy can be juxtaposed with feeling guilty by making lies. E, sharing his own history living in a rural setting, mentions:

E: The guy friends in the local community always asked me questions “who do you like?” and “what girl do you like?” It felt like I was always put on some sort of litmus test. I did not like my lies to protect myself, and to pretend like I was “normal.” I hated

myself who lied so that I could survive. I hated it that I did not allow myself to fully live my life. I didn't like myself because it felt like I was lying to my family.

周りの男子からコミュニティ内で常に聞かれる。「好きな子だれなの?」「どんな女の子が好きなの?」こんな検閲に耐えるように過ごしていた。本当の自分として生きていない嘘をついている自分も、じぶんを守るために“普通の人”として溶け込むために重ねる嘘も嫌いだった。家族に隠し事を続けるような感覚があって、そんな自分も嫌いで

Let us consider the implications of this strategy for rural queers in Japan. Given the overall underrepresentation of rural queer, avoiding the unwanted offences is a reasonable strategy. When their access to social and environmental resource heavily depends on the local community, which is more likely to be the case compared to urban settings, their desire to avoid conflicts works the best for them to survive. However, the downside to this is that the local norm and institutions are left unquestioned. When this is coupled with metronormativity (i.e. the discourses to erase queerness from rurality), sexuality matters can be exempted from what those who manage the rural governance consider.

6.1.2 Creating-safe-space strategy

Almost all of the interviewees (key-informant B, L, J, and interviewee C, D, E, F, G,

H, and K) see the lack of queer communities and spaces⁵⁴ as a problem, where those who are oppressed in terms of sexuality and gender can feel safer. Most of them do some advocacy and/or organize gatherings a little far from the sphere of their everyday life. The size of these gatherings varies. They establish their own queer network outside of their sphere of everyday life, which itself is a well-known process to gain legitimacy concerning a collective identity (Ishida 2019; Sugano 2019). In this sense, even if they take the dodging/resuming strategy at some occasions, that does not mean they do not take the other strategies such as this on the other occasions. That has the potential to subvert heteronormativity and cisgenderism.

Amongst them, K's strategy is noteworthy as it gives the rural specific savor to this strategy. Under hypervisibility, if the queer community is too evident, it can work as the deterrent against them from accessing these resources. K queers the space by blurring the boundary between heterosexual world and non-heterosexual one. This can be compared to the construction of hidden safe spaces, such as online communities (Ishida 2019). K, a transman who finds himself as having a rural background and engaging in a local market, experientially knows the importance of this. Hence, he employs the below mentioned strategy:

⁵⁴ Queer communities and spaces here range from fixed commercial spaces (e.g. gay bars) to temporal community spaces (e.g. rainbow festivals, publicly supported community spaces etc).

K: You know, the events and gatherings for those who are struggling with their identities concentrate on cities like Osaka and Tokyo. They say there are almost none in their regions, or accessible places nearby like rural to semi-urban regions. They come from the rural town they live in. They say there are no one around them who they can talk to about their sexuality.

Me: I think, if I were them, even if there were an event or gathering featuring LGBTQs in my own rural town or nearby, I would hesitate going.

K: I agree. So I started this festival about LGBTQs [in some peripheral prefecture]. But people don't come to the events if it so obviously features LGBTQs like Tokyo Rainbow Pride. So, we decided to get it affiliated with some local festival and mildly announce that this actually features LGBT. People in general don't know about LGBT, so it is hard.

Me: So, the rainbow festival you partly organize, is not a rainbow festival on its own [like Tokyo Rainbow Pride], but it is affiliated with a bigger local festival. Am I correct?

K: Yeah. We make it so that it looks like part of it, like one of the side events.

Me: OK

K: What we do is that we make it look like one of the stalls, like really plain stall, instead of making it look specially featuring LGBT. It's just one of the stalls next to another stall, but it educates people really mildly. Those who come do not necessarily know or realize. Some of them are like what event is this? What festival is this? Some come from the other prefectures. I believe that no announcement (i.e.that it is an event particularly for or featuring LGBTQ issues) makes it easier for those who struggle with their sexual identities to come. At the event, we talk with them. Some of them say that they have not come out to their parents so they want to avoid any possibility of being identified like taking pictures.

K 田舎から出てきてやるみたいなの。やっぱりそういうコミュニティが開催されるのも大阪とか東京とかちょっと都会の方になるからなかなか田舎でやります...っていうコミュニティがなくて困ってますっていう子が結構いる。こっちまで出てこないとそういうのが無いんです、とか。誰か話聞いてくれる人もいないんです、とか。そういう子が多い。

Me 実際に開催しようとなってもなかなか地元のイベントだと、行くのを戸惑うかな。自分だったら行くのを躊躇するかなと思うんですが

K そうそうそう。結構それがあるね、やっぱり。うん。だから**でも知り合いと一緒に(お祭り)やろうよって行って(...)やってるんだけどやっぱり、LGBT イベント、東京みたいにレ

インボープライド開催しますっていても全然集客がなくて、だからもう地元のお祭りと合体させるような形で LGBT イベントなんだよっていう形でやらないと全然人が集まらないし、全くなんか認識が皆ないからなかなか難しいかなやっぱり

Me **のレインボーフェスタ、でいいんですかね、は地元の祭りと合同して、単独でレインボーフェスタやるんじゃないかってその一部を借りて...?

K そう。なんかお祭りのイベント的な感じでやってます！みたいな。

Me なるほど。

K だからもう、完全にブースを LGBT に特化するんじゃないかって、本当にお祭りの屋台みたいな。的屋さんならんで、その中に LGBT のグッズを売ってるブースもある、啓発してるブースもある、みたいな。そうそうそう。だから、来る人にしては、「え、今日何のお祭り？何のイベント？」みたいな感じで、来るような感じ。結構他県から来る人もいるし...でもやっぱり LGBT のイベントですよっていう形で謳ってないから逆に当事者も来やすい。っていうのがあるから、まあ(そのイベントで話を聞いていると)いや実は親に何も言っていないんです、誰にもカミングアウトしてないから写真とかでも顔出しはやめてくださいっていうのは結構多い。

Similar strategies are seen in the previous research (Sugano 2019). Sugano (2019) explains

how queer movie festivals held in non-urban regions ambiguously construct the space both for the sexually conforming and non-conforming. According to Sugano (2019), the blurred boundary marks the start of overturning heterosexism whilst protecting the rural queers from unwanted identification. It can also more easily approach those who are questioning their sexualities. This is a pragmatic and effective strategy because it protects them from outing. At the same time, they feel relatively safe either to talk, or not talk, about their own struggles, which contributes to build discourses under the collective identity. Through these spaces, the individuals also gain some first-hand knowledge and discursive tools to dodge, cope with, and avoid heterosexism that they are required to face against in their own settings. Nevertheless, attending this event itself is less likely to jeopardize their identity than if events like Tokyo Rainbow Pride were held in these geographical settings. This can be counted as one of the most pragmatic strategies.

6.1.3 Strategic problematization strategy

E's motivation to answer the interview partly comes from the desire to talk about the issues particular to rural queers. He brings up detailed examples about how some of the municipal policies assume heterosexual and cisgender. H also utilized an opportunity to gather and spread the messages from queers. He sent the message that there are queers in rural towns too. Key-informant B and L also advocate for the equal rights for rural queers.

When they take this strategy, they temporarily put aside the question what defines rural queer, and try to widely problematize the root causes of this power structure: heteronormativity, cisgenderism, and metronormativity. In other words, their strategy is to somewhat essentialize the subcategory of sexual identity, rural queer, and try to overturn the normativities mainly through discursive tools. What is tricky about this is that it is the intersection of two different issues: heterosexual/non-heterosexual inequity, and urban/rural inequity. The following is E's problematization of the latter:

E: Tokyo Rainbow Pride holds the gathering for activists all around Japan. It started from open chat. Conducting activism in non-urban areas is really hard. It is basically so hard. So I wanted to share the story about hardship that rural activism faces against and pick some brain from those who are in the similar situation. But [how the organizers started the gathering was by saying] “You know, no one wants to start from tough stories. Fun first.” I would say that, after this two-hour gathering, we will need to wait for another year for the next opportunity. Do you know how much it costs to travel all the way here? That is how much we bet on this.

全国活動家交流会はいきなり歓談でした。地方の活動って辛いんですよ。基本的につらい。だからその地方の辛さって言うのを共有したい。(でも彼らが最初に言ったのは)「そんないきなりつらい話からなんてできないでしょ。まずは楽しい雰囲気からで」って。でも僕ら

はそこで言いたいのはこの二時間が終わったら、今度会うのは来年になっちゃうんですよ。

ここまでのコスト分かります？そこまでして僕らはここに来てるんですよ。

The messages like this is quite powerful because they question both heteronormativity and uneven distribution of wealth between those who are in urban settings and in rural settings.

If the safe space strategy is to make shelters where they feel safe, this strategy contributes to overturn the dominant patterns concerning heteronormativity and spatial inequity.

However, one of the difficulties in taking this strategy is that it is likely to expose themselves to higher risks of microaggression and outing by revealing their identity. This is related to why I labelled this as strategic, because they seem to strategically choose where to act openly queer and to act closeted. Claiming against the norm generally requires the others to change their behaviors and internalized norm.

Assumingly, they seem to feel the need to omit specificities from the anecdotal evidence they have, since it might lead to identifying the queers who provided the information to them. For this, E mentions:

E: When I am in Tokyo, everything is OK. All queers are not like OUT in Japan, though.

Not all of them, including myself, come out to the society, happily showing off their pride. I came to think that this means there is no role model of closeted queers. I came to think that my role to play is to become the role model as a gay living in and around

the closet.

東京にいるときは平気。でも、いわゆる OUT in Japan みたいな、カミングアウト・プライド・ハッピーみたいな人ばかりではないと思う。特に自分のように。これが示すのはクローゼットのロールモデルがない、という事なのではないか、と思い始めた。自分の役割は、ある意味クローゼットで生きてきた人のロールモデルになる事だと思う。

E mentions that it is hard to talk about sexuality issues when he is embedded in the rural context.⁵⁵ This comment from E shows his own dilemma between the oppression on him that is too strong for him to deal with when he is embedded in the “rural” context, and his desire to fight back against the oppression, which is more bearable for him in the non-rural context. It could be understood that he employs both the dodging/resuming strategy and this strategy, depending on the context where he is and who he is speaking to.

Furthermore, as shown in this paper, the specificity of the way heteronormative patterns are exercised seems to depend, to some extent, on the context and the level (i.e. within household, within interpersonal relationships, within community, in the wider public, etc). The B’s comment below summarizes the struggle she feels between the need to claim against heteronormativity and gendered institutions, and her admiration toward the rural/local culture:

⁵⁵ Here, the rural imaginary he is drawn to is the mixture of (6.2.1) and (6.2.2), which will be discussed later on in this paper.

B: The local festival (like that) is well received by the local people, so I would not dare say that it contributes to reproduce gender norm. I wonder when they say “because I am a man”, but there are not only negatives to such festivals; children go and enjoy, people learn some necessary social norms like the respect for the elder. It is also considered as a tourist attraction. I think I know where and what to say and not.

そんな大事な行事なので、ジェンダー規範の強化だ、なんていった日には。男たるもの?みたいなのは思う一方で、子供たちも参加したりとか、社会のルールとか目上の人を尊重する気持ちを学ぶっていう部分では、マイナスばかりとは言い切れない部分があるので、一つの伝統で観光客もたくさん来る観光資源でもあるので、色々口出しちゃいけない、と思いつつながら。

Problematizing the overarching problem (i.e. heteronormativity) and negotiating specific situation are two different actions, but they are required to work on both.⁵⁶ As seen in B’s struggle between appreciating the local culture and its believed positive function, and problematizing its possible contribution to reproducing gender-based norm; rural queers seemingly need to figure out their own answers that apply only to their situation. However, the more specific it becomes, the harder it becomes for them to claim against the issue. Geographical dispersion of population seems to make it more difficult to both form the

⁵⁶ I do not mean that they have to, but the complexity of social constructions put different types of pressures onto them, which seems to be silencing them.

collective discourses surrounding rural queer, and prescribe each region's implementation of heteronormativity. They are worn out amongst their felt threat in the hypervisibility, their felt responsibility to claim against heteronormativity, and their complicated admiration toward the rural cultures. Problematizing the overarching norm has the possibility to overturn the root cause, but they seemingly struggle both in protecting themselves from aggressions within their sphere of everyday life, and in considering how to contribute to "performative justice (Jamal and Hales 2016, p.177)" in their own specific regional/rural context.

6.1.4 Negotiation strategy

This has been mainly seen in C and D's case. C and D, a gay couple who moved to a rural town together, started farming after being settled in the new place. They both do not have rural backgrounds, in a sense that they are brought up in cities. C engages in farming full time. He grows various vegetables, and sells them using the small-scale business network that he himself needed to build. D engages in farming part-time. He supports C financially by working at a company. Taking this strategy, they partly accept the heteronormative patterns in rural governance. However, this does not necessarily mean their submission to the dominant regime; their presence itself has the potential to alter the long-standing norm shared locally. I named this "negotiation strategy" since it is full of

implications concerning sustaining queerness in rural settings (Sunagawa, 2010; Leslie, 2017; Mason, 2018). It essentially tries to seek for queerness in rural settings whilst avoiding imposition of urban savor.

By participating in the community as a gay couple, they seem to have accessed the household system, meaning they partly accept the heteronormative institutions. Their story, about them being accepted as a couple having D presumably interpreted as a wife's figure, indicates that both the rural community and governance framework accepted them referring to the already existing framework. They got along with the expectation.

At first, I was not sure if I should call this a strategy. Let us refer to D's comment below:

D: I cannot think of any big problems [living in rural towns like this]. But, I know there are [queer] people who suffer. There are also sexually conforming people who highly recommend us not coming in. I wonder if us living here happily is just us being lucky.

僕はどこに大きな問題があるかとかを、ちょっと思いつかなくて、でも実際問題思い悩んでる人もいるし、非当事者の人も来たら住めないよとか言う人がいるってことは…。僕らがここに住んでうまいこといってるのは、たまたまなのか。

D mentions that they are not aware of severe problems concerning rurality and sexuality

based on their own experiences. At the same time, however, D has been also aware that there are those rural queers who struggle with something about rurality, especially when their hometown is counted as rural. This possibly fed into their imagination concerning rurality and sexuality especially before moving in. Referring again to their migration story:

C: And then, fisherpersons' communitiesI cannot even imagine mingling with them.

We actually gave up moving in a fisherpersons' town in southern **(municipality), because we thought it would be hard.

Me: By hard, do you mean it seemed hard for you two to start fishing as professional fisherpersons?

D: That is right. Also...the town was not like open to outsiders. C and I were imagining lots of potential difficulties.

Me: Being gays and being identified as a gay couple, are they among the difficulties you were thinking about?

D: They were. I was thinking that they would not accept us. It might be just my assumption. But, that was one of the things I was worried about.

C あと、漁業はもう...そんな...入れない。そうすると漁村なんか行けないし。一回**

の南のところ漁村の町で。そこだったらちょっと厳しいかな、っていうので、断念しました。

Me 厳しいっていうのは...今から漁業を始めるのが厳しいっていう事ですか？

D も、ありますし、もう...その...コミュニティ的にもよそ者ポンって入れるようなところじゃなさそうだったし。色んなハードルが、問題があるのかなっていう。

Me その中の一つに、自分がゲイだってバレたら、っていうのもありましたか？

D はい。ありますよね。受け入れられないんだろなって。決めつけかもしれないけど。そういう心配もありましたけどね。

As also shown in their life stories, they first utilized an online service for finding a place (i.e. UR Agency) because they knew that it would allow them to avoid the annoyances, including owner's discrimination and guarantors' signature. Before moving in, they asked the municipal government officers if it would not be too difficult for a gay couple to move in. The positive sounding answer from the officer encouraged them, and they decided to move into the town as a gay couple. After migration, they also consulted the local government every now and then about the presumably geographically specific matters, such as how to deal with the racoon inhabiting on the second floor of their house, and what local

customs there are. Given these, I analyzed they were not “just lucky” as they negotiated the possibilities on the course of starting, and maintaining, their new rural life in this rural setting. Of course, the support from the municipal government seems significant for C and D. They serve as one of the resources C and D can refer to, even when they cannot rely on the local community. They were, however, aware of the possible obstacles concerning the sexual and gender norm. They negotiated their possibility, even though the options they have taken as they live in this rural town do not derive necessarily from their intentions.

The heterosexism they experience in the rural town seems weaker than they experienced before. It eases their desire to claim against heteronormativity, as C mentions:

C: I had kept telling myself [that I was gay] when I was in a [city], in order to protect myself. Surprisingly, it stopped after I came here. I do not have to keep telling myself that I am gay to live my life. It has been incredible days. I didn't expect this.

C: 意識してたのはやっぱり、ここの生活よりも(都市)の時の方が、自分は自分を保つために、ゲイというのを意識して生きてきたなど。でここに住んでからは、一切自分がゲイというのを認識しなくても、普通に生きてたんで。不思議な期間だったなと思っています。意外です。

However, they are also aware of the existing heterosexism. They are also aware that the

rurality they have experienced is something different than those rural queers who have rural backgrounds as shown earlier.

D: We are outsiders at the end of the day. It could be the reason we are not afraid of things here. But, those queers who live here, assumingly, they are afraid of being themselves. It(us being the outsider) is a total difference than what they are going through. Now this imagination makes me reconsider the significance of C's activism.

D: 僕らってその、もともと外部の人間だから、堂々とできるんだと思うんですよ。でもここに元々住んでいる人たちの当事者たちって、絶対言えないと思ってると思うんですよ。で、そこにまず決定的な違いがあると思うんですけど、そう考えたら、その子たちを救うために、Cさんの活動があるのかもしれないなって。

Their identities as gays have not vanished. They occasionally give lectures where they share their own lifestyles, and try to perform a sort of rural queer possibilities:

C: I believe that anyone can achieve the lifestyle like ours. Thinking back about the analogue[-technology] generation twenty years ago, the lifestyle like ours was a dream that would never come true, like having a same-gendered partner, living in a rural town, getting along with the local people. It was a dream more difficult to achieve than traveling outer space. I don't know why, but we are somehow here now. So, I want to

show it to the next generation, and even the generation before us, that they can do the same. There might be other attributes, like who their neighbor is and what local conditions there are. But I think I can be a kind of a role model for them.

D: There are people who give us the advice that it is hard for us to live in a rural town.

But, look. We are here. [...]

C: We are all different, even among the sexually non-conforming. We don't like to be judged as gay. We are gay, but we don't represent gay. [...] But, we still feel the need to show that this is our life and people can achieve things at the same level.

C: まずここまで発信したら、ここまで一応誰でもたどり着けると思うんですよ。この生活くらいまでは。僕は20年前のあのアナログ時代からしたら、パートナー、男性のパートナーと田舎に移住して一緒に暮らして地域と仲良くなってってもう、宇宙旅行よりも異次元の夢っていうか、架空の世界だったんですけど、それでもなんか知らないけどここまで来た。これからの世代の人、別に上の世代の人でもいいんですけど、この生活を目指すなら全然いけるよと、この形くらいはね。あとは隣人とか、地域の特性とかもね、影響するかもしれないけど。全然いけるんじゃないっていう、見本っていうか、ロールモデルというかね。

D: 例えば田舎に生活できないよ、ってアドバイスくれた人がいるけれども、結局できたっ

ていう。(…)

C: 個別というかね。当事者でも当事者ごとに事情が違うし考え方も違うから...それこそ完全個別かなと。ここでやってるのも完全個別のスタイルだから。もう我々をゲイとひとくくりにしないでくれ、と。(…)で、その上で自分らの私生活はこうです、と、言うことですかね。

Referring to the previous research, C and D's case could be understood as performing new homonormativity (Herring, 2010). Herring (2010) also warns that queer anti-urbanism should not serve only for cis-gender gay men, and that it should question the injustices concerning sexuality, gender, space, and capitalism. However, the potential that their presence will subvert the conflation of urbanity and queerness is interpreted significant in this paper. As shown above, they are trying to reimagine the rural queer possibility by showing their lifestyles as rural queers in Japan where the queer anti-urbanism has not happened in the same scale as in the U.S.

It is also true, however, that the negotiation process is essentially quite difficult. The partial acceptance of heteronormativity can contradict with the queer possibilities, and thus it can result in the discouragement of diverse rural queer possibilities. Accepting household system can jeopardize the potential of non-monogamous relationships, despite the potential that it queers the meaning of household which has been considered as an important

component of Japanese rurality. Furthermore, as they are aware, the reimagination of rural queerness and sustainable rural communities should not be built on the erasure of the various rural queers who have the rural backgrounds.

6.1.5 When materiality of rurality manifests and “in-between-ness”

E, F, G and H⁵⁷ are from farming family. As shown thus far, however, they seem to employ different strategies to cope with, or fight back against, their experienced rural struggles. Tracing their migration histories, they all have experienced rurality both in terms of the geographical coordinates⁵⁸ and their background about farming family. In contrast, C and D used to be a city dweller, and now live in a rural community. Their strategy stands somewhat unique. What, then, can explain the difference of the tones amongst these interviewees? What does it tell us about the manifestation of rurality?

As the next section will show, the different elements of rurality get foregrounded and pushed toward the background, when rural queers try to explain their experiences in relation to rurality. This means that merely geographical coordinates do not define rurality/urbanity, though geographical settings largely affect the manifestation of different elements of rurality. Revisiting Halfacree(1993), these are just the parameters for scientists

⁵⁷ Precisely speaking E is not from farmer's family. For the details, please refer to E's section.

⁵⁸ I have asked their migration story, but for anonymization the specific data cannot be shown in this paper. Yet, I referred to MAFF's webpage about statistical typology of agricultural region and city(農業地域類型について) to determine whether their migration story falls under the category of some statistical definition of rurality.

to predict the tendency, or rather to express what the scientists want to; meaning arguing around metronormativity referring only to coordinates does not allow it to play its full capacity to point to socio-spatial injustices.

Powell (2016) takes up “in-between-ness”, analyzing a certain pornographic/cultural movie series. According to Powell, this is where everything becomes blurred, the distinction between something and its counterpart goes unclear. Such spatiality has the possibility to start the transformation of the dichotomy and hierarchy concerning urbanity/rurality and sexuality. This is also where the pragmatic and feasible queer interests are fulfilled. To show the significance of this, Powell cites an oral history of a gay, Kilmer’s, coming out story (Powell, 2016, p.182):

I’d heard that gay people lived in big cities, mostly San Francisco and New York, so I moved to San Francisco. My plan was that I would get in contact with my family eventually, and if they came to visit I would pretend I was straight...I lived in New York for a year...It felt claustrophobic like there was no way that I could get out...It was really, hard, I felt so far away from the country...I came back to Wisconsin...Here in Madison, people know each other. It feels like it’s kind of an in-between spot for me, having that sense of community. So I’m kind of on the fence, not a farmer but not a city slicker either.

This comment well shows the negotiation he had in “reconcil(-ing) his identity, interests, and personal needs with his environment” as a “male-desiring” man (Powell, 2016, p.183).

The implication provided here points to the politics over Japanese rurality. This implies that, when they are in a spatially in-between spot, they are not exposed to the risks to the same extent as they immerse themselves in a more “rural” spot, whilst they achieve some interests such as consuming rural environmental services. This resonates in F and G’s tone concerning living in a rural town, even though they cannot do so at this moment for the occupation they have. G says:

G: I recently think that it would not be too bad to live in a rural town as I realized that there are quality places such as a cozy restaurant in middle of farmland. I cannot have an easy access to these facilities in cities. So, if I have enough money and time that make me feel ok to travel to cities whenever I want to, living in a rural town is an option.

畑にポツンとあるレストランに行ったり、なかなか都会にいと簡単にアクセスできない、クオリティの高い安らぎの場所っていう存在を知って、そういう面では、農村に暮らすのはもしかしたら心地よいのかなって思ったりするんですね。なので、都会に行きたいなって思ったときに簡単に行ける財力とか、時間とかがあるのであれば住む場所は農村っていう事はあり得るなって凄く最近思うんですね。

What is tricky about this is; despite the aspect that it might start transforming the urban-rural dichotomy by showing the image of some rural queer more frequently; that the practicality of in-between-ness can also reduce the meaning of rural queerness and can also lock the image of rural queerness into a consumer's position, as they can consume the environmental services as commodity. The following E's remark clarifies my point here:

E: I heard from some queer-identifying friends that they learned that it was hard to live [in a rural town]...I don't know the details, but they say it is not the case in a regional central city. My gay friends and I talk about our lives after retirement. They say, food is cheaper, and there are cheaper places to hang out in a regional city like that. If they want to visit their hometown, Shinkansen bullet train is there to go to Tokyo or wherever. We oftentimes talk about stuff like this, but with the assumption that we cannot go back and live in our hometown. I feel so sad listening to them talking, this regional city is perfect, we should lend up all the rooms of this apartment and live fun together...all of these with the assumption that they cannot go back to their hometown that they miss.[...]

Especially, if they are exhausted from their jobs, the option of living in a truly rural town flies to their mind, which everyone seems to experience at least once. But their migration story tells that it is really hard. I see similar stories on the internet as well. It was striking that they say that, at the end of the day, middle-to-small scale cities are

perfect but not big cities.

地方に移住したら辛いつてというのがだんだんわかって来たみたいで...分からないですよ。

でも(ある地方都市)の場合は別にそんなこともない。むしろ、今ゲイ仲間で言っているのは

定年後、(...)友達と一緒にご飯食べたりするのも何するにもコストが安いし、いざ自分の

故郷に戻ろうと思えば新幹線に乗れば東京だってどこだってすぐ来られる、つていう(のが、

そこ)かなって。つていう話が、結構日常的に出るんですよ。定年後どこでどう暮らす？っ

ていった時に故郷には戻れない前提。これがね、なんか、皆、いいね[その地方都市]いいね、

皆でマンション借り切っちゃって楽しく遊ぼうね、とかつていう話が凄く切なく感じる。

本当は皆自分の大好きな故郷があるだろうに、そこには戻れないつていう前提で、じゃあ

どうしようかつていう話が出てるんですね。(...) 特にへとへとに忙しい仕事をしていると、

ド田舎に住みたいつて皆一度は思うらしいんですけど、でも最近やっぱり念願かなってド

田舎に暮らしたら結構辛かった、色んなネットなんかでも見ますけど...だから(...)大規模都

市じゃなくて中小規模都市つていうのがちょうど心地よい、つて言われてたのが凄い印象

的で。

This can be a legit and powerful strategy for rural queers. Feeling secure and their rights' being protected are of very much importance. Rather, we need to be aware; whilst achieving and depicting in-between-ness might mark the start of transforming urban-rural power imposed on queer; that it might preserve the imaginary of position of queer as

consumers, and that the in-between-ness is a byproduct of spatial heteronormativity. Pointing at this warns us of the risk of virtual segregation of queer population in ruralized areas, which should not be utilized by political authority.

6.2 Elements of Rurality: Critical Thematic Analysis 1

The previous section has shown the diverse strategies. This section tries to thematically analyze their stories. The data shows that there are different elements to the imaginary of rurality.

Paying critical attention to the “recurrence” and “repetition” (Lawless and Chen, 2019, p.95) of expressions concerning rurality reveals that there are different elements of rurality that the interviewees referred to in explaining their struggles and experiences. These elements are not always distinctly employed. They are oftentimes intertwined. This confusion seems to negatively contribute to the rural queer discourses in Japan so that they cannot form a uniformly strategical discourse. I categorized them into the following three: Rurality as heterosexism space centered around “ie”(household/ 家); Rurality as heterosexism “mura(村/rural community with strong bond)”space; and Rurality as space lack of queer infrastructure. As seen in Sugano’s explanation of metronormativity (2019), it is safe to assume that the metronormativity’s connotation of hometown tends to be foregrounded. There are also the other aspects of rural imaginaries that have already been

discussed in the previous research. These will be discussed as the other rural imaginaries they employ toward the end of this section.

6.2.1 Rurality as heterosexism space centered around home/“ie”(household/家)

Rurality magnets the imaginary of intergenerational household system. This is not limited to the household as a social system, but it also connotes familial intimacy, or the ones at the equivalent level, and responsibility to reproduce so that they will pass the familial history to the next generation. This element of rurality brings the imaginary where their home is, where their family is, and where they are expected to contribute to reproduction. This imaginary is oftentimes foregrounded when metronormativity is discussed.

Household has historically been employed to govern the sex, and the lifestyles of citizens (Muta, 2006). When they explain the obstacles against rural queers, this type of rurality is oftentimes referred to. E mentioned:

E: I think that queers feel so reluctant to visit their home just for seeing their family or close relatives in seasonal holidays (such as Japanese Halloween (Obon), and New Year's celebration) that some of them cannot even go. Because, though their family might kind of know their situation, their relatives come and ask things like if they are

STILL single. They typically start with the question how old their kids are. If they answer, for example, they don't have kids and they are not even married, these relatives would say "Wait. What?" They would then continue "it is not acceptable that a person at your age is not married or not with a kid."

本当に盆正月に一時帰省するっていうのでさえできない。なんでかっていうと、盆正月って親戚があつまりますよね。家族はそれとなく事情を察してくれていたとしても無遠慮な親戚たちが、あんたまだなんで一人なんだって聞いて来たりする。結婚、今子供はいくつなんだ、から始まるんですよね。「いや、そもそも結婚してないし、子供なんて...」っていうと、「は？なんで？」って言われたりする。もうあんたいい歳して結婚もしてなくて子供いないとか、そんなのとんでもない、だの言われちゃう

This explains how normalized heterosexism is carried out within household to suppress sexually non-conforming people, and those heterosexual and cisgender people who do not follow the normative lifestyle. In addition, E's remark:

E: In rural areas, men are expected to buy a house for their parents, and women are expected to give birth to their first child, both by the end of their 20s. People think they are allowed to expect that, that it is normal.

地方だとやっぱり、男性なら 20 代のうちに親のために家を建てる、女性なら 20 代のうち

に最初の子供を産む、それができて当たり前、普通、それが出来てないとだめ

represents the imaginary of rurality related to the pressure to reproduce. The narrative here is employed to ruralize the households where the members internalize and exercise heterosexism.

H mentions their reason to leave this rural town, which is that “their family did not understand them(出ていく子は家族の理解がなかったから)”. This was the first thing that H came up with in answering my question about migration. G did not use the words in relation to “rurality”, but starting their sentence with the phrase “this would have been completely different in a city but” and mentions their understanding of rurality.

G: This would have been completely different in a city, but as I went to a university, I started living by myself far from my parents. That was the first time when I got free from surveillance from my family. That was when I got free from pretending that I was heterosexual.

これはやっぱりあの...都会とは違うと思うんですけども、僕が大学生になった時初めて実家から離れて、割かし自由になって家族からの監視がなくなり、とりあえず家の中で異性愛者を演じる必要がなくなったんですね。

The details of this story have already been shared earlier. Basically, this G’s story is

employed to explain that where their hometown exist is rural, which is characterized as the closet hometown where their family is. This is contrasted to urbanity where G's hometown is not close, and where G came out as a gay for the first time in G's life. G's explanation is mixed with hypervisibility, which spreads the word that can reach G's family in no time. This is not to say that rural areas have this characteristic, but the imaginary of remaining conservative household system which connotes familial tie, or that of equivalently close ties, is employed to make sense of the struggles the rural queers tend to experience more than the urban counterpart. Interestingly, Leslie (2017, p.764) considered this as posing context-specific difficulties to rural queer farmers, instead of this as the major case: "Being tied to land in her hometown forced Nicole to deal with heterosexism specific to her changing expressions of sexuality differently than if she lived away from the place where she grew up." Leslie's point is that being in hometown and "out" has specificity compared to being away from hometown and "out". This implies and partly criticizes the presupposed juxtaposition of rurality and hometown.

6.2.2 Rurality as heteronormative local community

"Relationship-based nature of sustainable agriculture(Leslie, 2017, p. 749)" and rural lifestyles are both supported and associated with hypervisibility culture and imagined rural heterosexism, even though rural queers tend not to experience overt discrimination as they

had expected (Leslie, 2017). That makes it harder for rural queers to address microaggressions because they oftentimes depend highly on the relationships they locally have. This is not to say that the urban queers and the other social minority groups of people are not exposed to the same risk. When their access to various types of capital depend on the relationship, avoiding the risks of jeopardizing the relationship is an understandable decision. This includes avoiding building such relationships in the first place, which significantly reduces their capacity and capability to access capital and land. Even when they have already built the relationship; the struggles concerning whether they have come out or not, whether they should do so, are added onto this.

When imagining and talking about the lived struggles of rural queer, this type of rural imaginary is employed. As this is oftentimes associated with old acquaintances occupying their sphere of everyday life, this tends to be combined with the rural imaginary shown in 6.2.1, which indicates the occasional overlap between these two elements of rurality, though each of these point to different sources of problem. The intersection of 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 makes it harder for rural queers to problematize heterosexism, because their outness might affect their family's access to various types of capital. The responsibility they feel poses a specific difficulty on them. H mentions:

H: A rural setting for me is where people know each other really well. The neighbors

borrow and lend random stuff. They know exactly where this and that person lives, the size of land they have, and they even know what firm their children, brothers and sisters got a job at. [...] [Where my farmland exist is such a place, but] I heard the guy (A)⁵⁹ say a punch fixes a retard, which is not a good speech. He said people used to say and believe this. That scared me because, if I come out, they would say stuff like “I should be more considerate for my parent”, “me being queer is me imagining things”, or “people like that (i.e. non-heterosexual and non-cisgender) don’t exist”.

僕が田舎って感じる場所(...)は、隣近所が昔でいう(...)なんかの貸し借り(したりとか)、誰がどこに住んで、(...)あそこは何人兄弟で、どこどこに就職させてみたいな詳しい情報をお互い知ってるみたいな、そんなのが田舎かなって思ってた。(...)(私の農園の付近はそんなところだが) ああ昔はそんなやつ殴ればどうにかなるって言ってたよな、って。あまりいい言葉じゃないんですけど。そんなやつ殴っとけばいいんだよ、みたいなことを言っていて。だから多分セクマイの自分がセクマイですっていったら、親の事をもう少し考えろとか地域でカミングアウトしたら親の事を考えろとか、そういう事は気のせいだとか、存在しないとか、そういう言葉でやっぱりなんか...)

H continues on to say:

H: I guess...that queers hesitate to farm because farming is rural. Even if they do, they

⁵⁹ The details of this story already explained in H’s life story.

would not be out. Given that not many queer farmers are out even if they do farm, and that farmers are usually in rural areas, they should be scared of stuff like outing⁶⁰.

農業って田舎だから...じゃないですかね？なんでセクマイが農業にあまりいないのか...多分いたとしても言わないんじゃないですかね...田舎...結構農家って田舎が多いので田舎で、農業やってて、カミングアウトしてる人が少ないのはやっぱりアウトティングとかが怖かったりとかするからですかね...

H knows how much he depends on the local relationships. He also knows that he, as a farmer, is tied to the land that he cannot easily get away from. The former, however, indicates his struggle manifesting as the mixture of 6.2.1 rurality and 6.2.2 rurality, whilst the latter refers only to the hypervisibility rural queers would experience in rural setting based upon strong community bond. The key informant L is also aware of this rural queers' embeddedness in land. The comments like this made by H provide the specificity to L's understanding.

When F explains rurality, F also refers to the relationship-based aspect of rurality, implying F's family also depends much for the social capital.

F: You know, where I am from is rural, so there are local communities, such as associations for local kids and their parents, neighborhood associations, and the ones

⁶⁰ Outing means the act of revealing a certain person's sexual and/or gender identity without their permission.

centered around citizens' community centers. These communities help each other for harvest. They also gift vegetables and rice each other. My father relatively well participated in these communities, so he oftentimes got local jobs and responsibilities. He got along with them, so he also helped them with farming. They got together to clean the ditches and do some other stuff too.

地元が田舎なので、子供会とか町内会、地区の公民館を中心としたコミュニティがやっばり出来ていて、その中で農業の繁忙期になると手伝いに行ったり、みたいな...ことがあったり。野菜とか米のゆずりあいみたいなのはしょっちゅうあり、どちらかという父親もまあ公民館を中心とした中で色んな仕事が回ってきて、その中で色んな人達とコミュニケーションを取りながら、農業の手伝えることは手伝ったりとか。あとは地区で、例えば、用水路を掃除するとかそんなときにも、地元の人たちと一緒に集まって、活動してたなっというの覚えています。

The term “village/*mura*(村)” is sometimes used to point to this type of rural imaginary, which seems to broaden the possibility for more queers to access rural queer discourses. This also implies the importance to separately think about the different elements of rural imaginary that are oftentimes so intertwined. Let us refer to K's comment who does not live in a rural area but works at a local market:

K: This local market is like a type of large village, you know. It is not just about your company. There are a lot of other retailers, and they all know each other so much that they are almost equivalent to relatives. They are connected to each other. [...] So, when I decided to come out, I needed to come out to everyone. Otherwise, I could not keep my business. I struggled to whom I should come out and to whom not.

やっぱり市場っていう中っていうのは、自分の会社だけにとどまってなくて、まあもう言ったら大きな一つの村...みたいになってて。お店がもう何件もあって、で、そのお店の中の人たちは皆親戚みたいな感じ。(...) もう皆にしないと市場では生活できませんみたいな状況で。(...)もうどこからどこまでのカミングアウトをしたらいいのかっていうのをまず悩んで。

Rural queer's experiences in K's explanation is distilled through the type 6.2.2 imaginary only.

The felt oppression that this element of rural imaginaries about local community bond generates is multi-layered. It legitimizes the imposition of various responsibilities: for the community, for their significant others including their family that relies on the community, for themselves who rely on the community, and for themselves who admire the community.

6.2.3 Rurality as space lack of queer infrastructure

The lack of queer infrastructure shows up as another element of rurality. Before getting into this discussion, the definition of the term, queer infrastructure, needs to be clarified. Kawaguchi (2016, p.87), using the phrase “the dispensable resources to live as a queer, which is so-to-speak infrastructure(性的マイノリティとして生活するための資源、いわゆるインフラストラクチャー)”, seems to mainly refer to the facilities and opportunities for queers such as gay bars, socializing events for queers, and peer support groups (Kawaguchi, 2016, p.89). For him, Shinjuku Nichome is also counted as part of the infrastructure (Kawaguchi, 2016, p.89). As Sunagawa (2015b, p.374) refers to Shinjuku Nichome as “an entertainment district (sakariba 盛り場)”, their focus is more attracted to cultural facilities and opportunities that enable queers in Japan to maintain and/or enhance their collective sexual and/or gender identities. Though this is an important aspect of queer infrastructure, I argue that the historical construction behind the urban infrastructure needs to be reconsidered to recontextualize the meaning of queer infrastructure. For instance, Shinjuku Nichome is oftentimes narrated as where they enjoy their queer night life, and resume their everyday “normal” lives once they get outside of the district (Tamagawa, 2018, p.496). For Brochu-Ingram (2015, p.228), queer infrastructure is something more generally about spaces that protects and supports queer lives, as the paper defines it as:

the sum total of protections, organizations, social spaces, and service programs for overcoming homophobia and transphobia, along with intersecting inequities rooted in misogyny, racism, neocolonialism, cultural chauvinism, and anti-migrant xenophobia.

Given that the equal rights are increasingly guaranteed legally in Canada, one of the Brochu-Ingram's main interests is so-to-speak going onto the next stage and guaranteeing the equal access to infrastructure and social services as the paper believes that "local LGBT politics (have) only partially centered on narratives of expanding rights and protections" (Brochu-Ingram, 2015, p.227). Herring's definition implies the broadest range of this term amongst the ones accessed by this paper's author. For introducing queer anti-urbanism and metronormativity in the American culture, Herring (2010, pp.160-165.) describes queer infrastructure as the infrastructure that enables metronormative imaginations. Herring's focus is more on the queered transportation such as highway, and national roads leading to the "bicoastal" (Herring, 2010, p.68) queer destinations; because they are felt as if these roads led to a queer metro-utopia. Herring's argument is that the instruments that enable these infrastructure such as "the gravel, the tar, the asphalt, (and) the buckets of yellow and white paint" (Herring, 2010, p.154), already connote the metronormalized queer savor, and thus support the superstructure of the queer metro-utopias both discursively and materially. Amongst the points Herring tries to make in the section of the book, in this paper, I

interpret that the particular contribution by Herring is to succeed problematizing the superstructural inequity between the high possibility of queer imaginations in urbanized settings and the quite low possibility of queer imaginations in ruralized settings, which is supported by the already urbanized instruments. According to Herring, this structure is also conflated with the “misleading and accurate provincialism” (Herring, 2010, p.150) which devalues the ruralized places. In order to understand the findings of this paper, for now, I will define the queer infrastructure as “the sum total of protections, organizations, social spaces, and service programs for” queer lives regardless of their sexuality and gender. This ranges from cultural districts such as gay bars, and peer groups as seen in Kawaguchi’s (2016) argument; to access determined on one’s will to medical facilities and opportunities mainly for gender dysphoria, such as gender clinics. Obviously, the full access to these facilities are also enabled by social opportunities such as the equal rights to labor opportunities, and insurance for them to access gender clinics⁶¹.

The narrative based on this imaginary goes as following: those who want to access medical care such as sex reassignment surgery, and hormone injection; need cash so they choose to leave. This medical care is not covered by the national insurance. The rural areas tend to lack in jobs that provide enough amount of salary that enables them to have this medical care, and thus they choose to leave to realize their gender expression they want.

⁶¹ As DSM-V distinguishes “gender dysphoria” from gender nonconformity and homosexuality, it is widely understood that the access to medical treatments for gender dysphoria should be determined on the will of the individuals who experience gender dysphoria, and should never be imposed by the others (American Psychiatric Association, 2016).

For this element of rurality, the importance of infrastructure is foregrounded, which is affected more with social and geographical distribution of wealth. This is employed to explain that rurality cannot financially enable them to realize their needs concerning gender expression and performance. H explains a typical reason why some queers decide to leave a rural town:

H: Those who leave say their parents do not accept them. Also, they leave because they want to have medical care. They cannot earn enough [here]. The local companies pay their labor low. They typically go to cities like Nagoya to get a job at, say, a factory. They earn first, and have medical care. Sometimes, the fact that their family just understands and accepts them is not enough. The low salary is an issue for us...

あとは治療をどうしても始めたいとか。ここに居てもお金が、給料とかが安いから大きい工場名古屋とかに行つて、一気に稼いで手術をする、とか。家族の理解があつてもやっぱり、収入っていうところも少ないから

This ties into the lack of gender clinics in non-urban areas. This indicates that the importance of each element of the imaginary is affected by the various attributes such as one's SOGIESC.

6.2.4 Other aspects of rurality

The other aspects, which have been pointed out by the research done in the past, also appeared in the data collected through this research as well. These are the imagined rural heterosexism and imagined homosocial nature of rural bond, and the lack of queer communities. Most of the interviewees of this research have witnessed these as they grew up. These imaginaries work as deterrent for them both to move to, and live in, “rural” areas though some studies indicate that they tend not to experience as overt discrimination as they initially imagine (Leslie 2017). They also associate rurality with their memory of landscape where they grew up.

6.2.4.1 homosociality⁶²

In terms of rural heterosexism and homosocial imaginaries, C and D are “surprised” that they feel comfortable living in the rural town as a gay couple. C and D mention that agriculture is an important part of rurality for them, and go on to say:

C: It could be forestry too, but the hurdle for us was too high.

D: It is really male dominant. The workers in forestry look so masculine for me.

⁶² According to Hammaren and Johansson (2014, p.1), homosociality “describes and defines social bonds between persons of the same sex. It is, for example, frequently used in studies on men and masculinities, there defined as a mechanism and social dynamic that explains the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity.”

C: まあ、あの、林業っていう道もね...少なからずあるかもしれないですね。でもやっぱり、林業ってハードルが高いですわ。

D: 男社会ほんと。ザッツ男みたいな、感じだなって。

They told me that they thus avoided another town of which the main industry was forestry.

F, G, K also refer to the homosocial image attached to rurality, that possibly diminishes queer people's desire to realize their rural lifestyles both in terms of moving in and staying in.

6.2.4.2 lack of queer communities

The lack of queer communities was also brought up to point to the inequity between urban queer and rural queer. G states:

G: Geographically, there is inequity between urban and rural in terms of the available resources. There is nowhere to hang around in rural towns. There are less people. Rural gay communities are small, stagnated, and closed so everyone knows each other, where it typically ends up in no more romance available. If they want to hang out, they need to travel really far, which takes money and time. There is this inequality between the urban and the rural from the beginning. And then, I really like my home and the surrounding

environment, which are cozy. There are quality environmental services, but to live as a gay, there are a bunch of issues.

地理的な面で都会と田舎とでは、凄い格差...持つてる資源の格差が凄いあると思うんです。どっか遊びに行くにも田舎だと場所がないし、そして人がいないので本当にゲイだって、固定化した人間関係で、本当に数人しかいないコミュニティで、どう恋愛したらいいのか...しようがない感じで。で、遊びに行くためには、遠出して町に出なきゃいけない、時間とお金がかかるし。東京までだったらもっと何万円もかかるし。最初っから都会と地方とでは格差があるなって感じますね。で、本当に僕も実家の環境は凄く安らげる場所だし、クオリティの高い環境がいっぱいあるんですけども、ゲイとして生きる上ではなかなか色々問題があると思っています

This is one of the obvious reasons for them to explain why rural queers tend to be isolated.

This is quite important in a sense that it clearly points to the inequality deriving from the geographical structure between the urban and the rural. However, we also need to be aware that the consumerist savor implied in this context should not be utilized by metronormative discourses, which can conceal the other nuanced aspects of rurality that they are experiencing.

6.2.4.3 landscape and memory

Their memories of landscape also appear in their explanation of rurality. This is a good reminder to those who internalize metronormativity (i.e. the illusory faith that all queers should want urban lifestyles and that they disturb rural sensibilities) as this shows that there are also queer people who want and lead socially sustaining lives in country as well.

C and D explained their choice of town based on its proximity to nature (“自然がいっぱいあるところに住みたい”). F also says after calling his hometown a rural town:

F: [As a kid,] I liked touching the soil, and the rice field...I really like the seasonal scenery. In spring, rice fields are soaked in water. Rice grow from these rice fields, and in autumn, and I really like the atmosphere of harvest in autumn. I feel like these views are imprinted on me deep inside. Deep inside, I crave for nature showing its different faces depending on the season. It became more obvious to me as I lived in another rural town where it has a completely different climate pattern. Now that I know the positives of both regions, I learned working outside every now and then contributes to my psychological health.

春になって田んぼに水が張られてそこから稲が育って、そして実りの秋みたいなその景色は本当に凄い好きで、なんとなく自分の体にしみ込まれてるような感じがあって。(...)やっぱり心の中の原風景としては実家の**の四季折々の田舎の自然みたいなのは凄くしみ込

まれていて、またその**とは違う気候の場所に移住したことによって、地元と違う自然の良さみたいなのを感じて、で、両方の自然の良さを感じたからこそ、外にでて仕事をす
るっていうのが凄く気持ちいいな、とか、精神安定上凄く良いなって凄く思うようになった

6.3 Rural Heteronormative Patterns: Critical Thematic Analysis 2

The previous section has shown more of the discursive side of the research result. In this section, the material side in terms of the rurality experienced through the interviewees' bodies will be shown. Rurality seems to constantly change its shape, and be felt and experienced in its entirety. Again, following Knopp's standpoint that materiality is discursive and the discursive is material, these two aspects are not mutually exclusive. Yet, operationally in this paper, the results shown in this section will be defined as more related to materiality. Firstly, the heteronormative patterns in distribution of local responsibility will be shown. Then, cis-gendered patterns in knowledge production and sharing will be visited. The knowledge here is about their land management and farming techniques, both of which are intertwined and relevant in rural governance.

6.3.1 Heteronormative patterns in distribution of local responsibility

It has been considered crucial for rural communities to acknowledge the members of the communities who are affiliated with their household unit. The positive effects of this as the social capital have been pointed out such as enhancing disaster resilience (Akitsu et al., 2007; Matsuoka, 2011; Yamamoto, 2017). An insight drawn from the data suggests that the heteronormative patterns embedded in this system undermines its effects.

C and D, a gay couple, moved to this rural town, and started farming. They decided not to participate in the local farmer's association (i.e. J.A.), because what they wanted was more of agricultural livelihood that they expected would provide "freedom". To gain such a lifestyle, they felt the need to live near their farmland, which meant that they needed to get along with their neighbors. They call this local region a village/"mura." There are multiple layers of groups for regional governance. For anonymization, in this paper, I call them layer 1 to 4 local groups. The image below shows the inter-group dynamics.

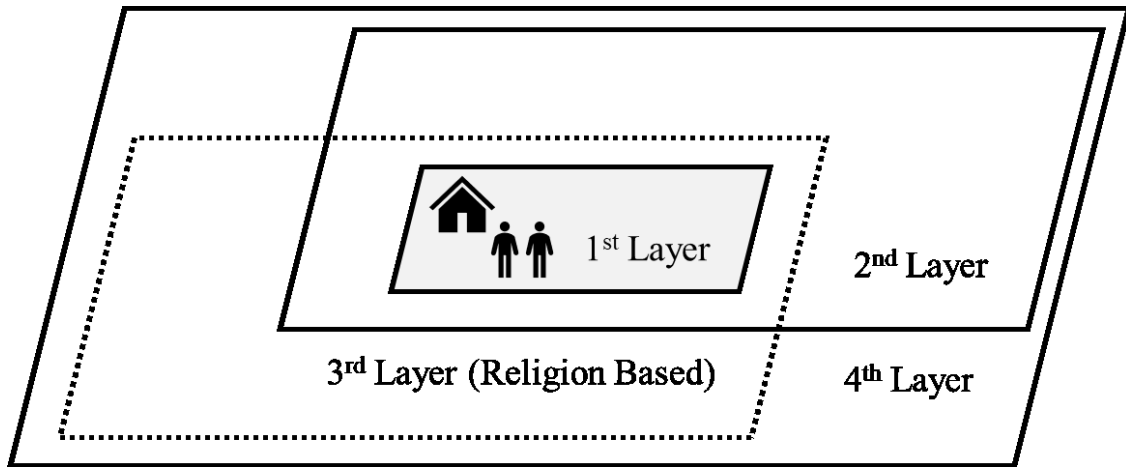


Figure 1: DIFFERENT LAYERS OF RURAL GOVERNANCE (C,D’S CASE)

These groups are not necessarily connected to each other. Governance of each group is technically independent from the other groups. Where C and D lives lies where all these groups’ geographical responsibility overlap. The higher the layer goes up, the larger the geographical coverage of the group becomes (e.g. 1st layer covers 5 households, 2nd layer covers 15, 4th layer covers 30, and so forth.) 3rd layer covers almost the same number of households as 2nd layer covers, but it is more related to local religion. 4th layer technically has an authoritative position because it is initiated by the municipal government, and yet it does not necessarily mean that it has the utmost influence on the local residents.

It is hard even for the local residents to fully understand which group is responsible

for what job, but these groups distribute communal responsibility such as cleaning up the neighborhood infrastructure (e.g. cleaning ditches, weeding, etc), maintaining the local community centers, and hosting small scale local events for strengthening local bond. Heteronormativity manifests when they demand the membership of new commers, and distribute the communal responsibility. C mentions:

C: Even if I was cis-gender and straight, it would be too hard to move to this town, live by myself, and participate in all the residential communities. The operational presumption is based on, say, three-generational household, because there are diverse responsibilities like organizing local events, and organizing local festivals and so on. These are supposed to be taken care of by family members. I recently heard that the elders living by themselves for whatever reason, like their family left them, or their family passed away, are exempted from doing certain local jobs. They wouldn't survive without these considerations that the local people make for them.

たとえ自分がシスジェンダーのストレートでも難しいんじゃないかと思う。ここの自治会的なものに加入して生活するっていうのはもう一人じゃ無理。この運営の前提が多分、一家三代くらいの人がそれぞれ分担して、自分は盛り担当自分は祭り担当...色んな協力をしあって成り立ってるから...最近話聞いたのは、高齢者がもう単身になって周りが出ていたり死んだりして、一人になった人がもうどうしようもなくなってる。だからもう、

役は勘弁してあげようとか、草刈はちょっとだけとか、色んな配慮がなかったら生きていけない。

This shows that there are not only the psychological obstacles against the queers to live in a rural setting, but there are also systems that are not designed for those who do not have access to household systems. Given this, the fact that C and D moved in as a couple seems to have a certain effect. These systems are designed for monogamous couples, hopefully with their kids and/or parents. Furthermore, the volume of responsibility distributed to one household seems to presuppose multiple sources of work force, usually more than two. When they cannot provide the workforce that amounts to that of two persons, the local community makes special consideration for them, which implies its relationship with the local monitoring culture. For distributing the local responsibility, the smallest unit is household, not individuals, meaning these special considerations are made for each household unit, instead of each person.

There are also gender-based local communities that are in charge of diverse local demands. The link between the gender-based local communities and the imaginary of rural heterosexism (i.e. psychological obstacle) has already been dealt with in the previous section. Therefore, in this section, I would like to focus more on its systematic aspect. Gender-based local communities seem to be strongly tied to the implementation of

heteronormative patterns of governance at local level.

D: Surprisingly, I was invited to join the local women's association! I asked them if I was counted as a wife/woman(*Fujin* 婦人), and they said yes! They are all women!

Me: So, you were the only one invited? C was not invited?

D: [C] participates in different levels of local groups, so I am guessing the village recognized him as the man/husband. Male-figure/Husband-figure. It seems that the village recognized me as taking the woman/wife('s figure) without asking me! (laugh)

D であの、この間婦人会に誘われたんですよ、僕衝撃すぎて。でなんか、僕婦人なんですか?ってフジンなんやって。女性ばかりの団体に(...)

Me そうですよ。お二人にお誘いが来たんじゃないかと、Dさんだけ?

D (C)が(地域の活動)とかしているんで、彼の方が多分男性っていう風に認識...村は認識したとおもうんですよ。男性役。で僕は女子役っていうふうに勝手に認識されてるんかなって思って。まさかの、婦人会。ちょっとこう...

This case shows how heteronormative assumption is exercised. As a combination of two men who are labeled as a monogamous gay couple, the local community is trying to apply

the already existing framework to incorporate them, assigning one a husband figure and the other a wife figure. Obviously, this would not work for all queers.

The existence of these gender-based groups are reported by the other interviewees as well. Yet, most of the cases are tied to the imaginary of rural heterosexism, which shapes the normative obstacle against them. The imagined rural heterosexism deters them from participating in the first place, and thus the comments dealt with in this section concentrate on C and D's case. C and D's case shows that, even after they overcome this, the heteronormative assumptions embedded in the rural systems will show up as another obstacle⁶³. It also shows that the heteronormative assumptions and power are not necessarily exercised with hostility at the local level.

Participating in these current rural networks comes with the responsibility to contribute as the local resident, which can end up in sacrificing one's privacy affiliated under the household for interaction with the community members. The insight drawn from this section suggests the need to reimagine and rebuild a new system so that it will preserve the effects of the system (e.g. resilience against disasters), as well as avoid heteronormativity and cisgenderism. In other words, the sexuality and gender lens enables us to critically distinguish the essential effects of the rural systems from the possible harms of these systems. These can be intertwined, and thus they might look difficult to change.

⁶³ This does not mean that the other interviewees did not experience or observe similar heteronormative patterns.

Yet, the consequences of incorporating this insight's effects will surely not be limited to queers, as it is calling for queering the system.

6.3.2 Gendered and heterosexualized knowledge production and sharing

Making a living embedded in a certain locality requires locally specific knowledge. The locally specific knowledge is essential for various reasons such as securing the local community's disaster resilience, and maintaining the regional capability (Kitō and Fukunaga, 2009; Fukunaga, 2017; Yamamoto, 2017). However, the data shows that these knowledge production platforms are gendered and sexualized, which again undermines the system's effects both by deterring queers from staying in the region, and by limiting its capacity in spreading the information. Specifically, from this research, the cisgenderism and heteronormative local knowledge production concerning local agricultural produce is observed.

H travels from thirty minutes to an hour every day to his farmland, where his parent lives. As a local produce farmer, he needs to update the knowledge concerning the product, pesticide, herbicide, and farming techniques which are specific to the species. However, the cisgenderism significantly deters him from attending these gatherings, which makes him travel extra miles to attend other seminars held elsewhere. The problem is that these seminars do not cover specific knowledge he needs for his products. The citation below is

slightly long, but it shows his struggle well.

H: You know, when there was a seminar for and by local farmers, I was imagining using my assigned name, which has been registered until recently. At that time, I could not go to these seminars, because I was scared that they might judge me and ask me if I was a man or woman. I could have used my current name, but if there were some extra document to fill in, my registered name at that time was different, so they would require some explanation about it. Now that I have changed my name, I still cannot go to these local seminars, but I started thinking of going, and go to some of the seminars held a bit far. [...]

Me: I see. I am assuming that these seminars at the different level, say, at the prefectural level, are held less often. Am I correct?

H: Correct.

Me: And, the local seminars are made specifically for the local produce, so if you go to these seminars held a bit far, does it happen that the seminar topic does not match exactly what you want to know?

H: Yeah, it does. So, I need to choose the seminars featuring topics somewhat relevant

for me, like how I deal with bugs that might affect my plants. The locally held gatherings are the best in terms of the species I grow, but I can choose the other topics like bugs, how I can avoid the usage of herbicides, and such. I can still learn how to fertilize my soil, sunlight, how to manage the surrounding natural environment [if I go to the seminars held far from here]. I can still learn how to farm in general, instead of how to grow well the specific species I grow.

H 講習会とか勉強会とか(...)の間までは、名前が生まれたときの名前だったので、生まれたときの名前で申し込むと、「え、この人男性じゃないの？」って見られるし。名前を変更してなくても、(変更後の名前)で書いてたら、何か他の書類で名前が必要だった時にいちいち説明をしなきゃいけないとかがあって、いけなかったんですけど。で、今は(名前を変更したので)近い地区の勉強会には行けないけど、他の圏内とかの勉強会には行けるかもしれないな、とか。(…)

Me なるほど。例えば県、とか少し遠い場所で行われる講習会ってあまり頻度が多くないんじゃないですか？

H そうですね。

Me それに、その地域の作物に合わせて講習会があるんでしょうから、例えば今育ててらっしゃる製品の事が聞ける講習会っていうものが、別のところで受けなきゃならないって

なると、内容的にマッチしないんだけど、みたいなことは起きるんですか？

H そうですね。なので例えば(この品種に)何の虫がつくのかっていうのが分かっててその虫にどう対策するのかで、僕は選んでたまに行ったりするんですけど。品種だと、自分の地区が主に講習会が多いんですけど、他の、虫、とかどうやってなるべく除草剤をまかずに草を成長させないとか、ポイントを違う所において...この品種とかだったらなかなか(ここから)遠いところでは講習会はないので、虫とか、どうやって土を作るかっていうところで勉強会に行ってます。そういうところで土とか太陽とか環境づくりとかそういう...品種っていうよりもどうやって農業やっていくかっていう講習会には参加しています。

This does not only show that the local knowledge production is gendered. This also shows that the opportunities like this are not solely for knowledge production, but also working for legitimatizing mutual monitoring. This can be interpreted as strengthening the local social bond, but it also enables the mutual monitoring culture to function.

6.4 Discussion from the Analyses

Thus far, I have discussed the imagined, real, and lived ruralities that the rural queers socio-geographically in Japan have experienced, and their strategies either to cope with, or to fight back against the associated heteronormative and cis-gendered aggressions. The elements of the rurality shown in (6.2) are made up both with their lived ruralities and their

imagined ruralities. Both of them are so intertwined as if a lens (i.e. the politics over rurality and sexuality) converged the complexity to a focus (i.e. oversimplification of their struggles under the word “rurality”). How should this be concluded? This section tries to comprehensively analyze the insights provided thus far. The source of data (i.e. the chapter and section numbers in this paper) will be articulated in brackets (e.g. if this paper refers to Subsection 1 in Section 1 in Chapter 6, (6.1.1)).

To simplify what has been discussed to bring the mechanism to light, let us suppose three types of “rural queer” agents⁶⁴: (X) those who stay in a rural area, (Y) those who are coming back to their rural hometowns, and (Z) those who are moving into a rural area. This can be seen as conflicting against the deconstruction efforts of metronormativity. However, following Keller’s (2015) rural queer theory, I believe that this is also part of both types of efforts in approaching the “real material situations of queers” (Keller, 2015, p.158) and in subverting metronormativity by depicting rural queers.

When they face against some obstacle, they exercise various strategies, such as the ones shown in (6.1). What strategy they (can) take depends on the attributes such as their desire, their sexuality shaped by concepts such as SOGIESC⁶⁵, their imagined and experienced rurality, how dependent they are on the target others (e.g. significant others,

⁶⁴ I cannot emphasize more the comment from Edward (2018, p.ii). This also does not mean or suggest that all of those who identify themselves as queers need to go and live in so-to-speak ruralized areas.

⁶⁵ It cannot be emphasized more that their feeling the need to question their identity and to answer the questions imposed by the dominant regime is already the consequences of the power structure oppressing the minoritized.

local community etc), what political institutions they can rely on, their background (refer especially to Chapter 5 and 6.2.1), and their access to resources. As discussed in (6.1), in this paper, I interpret migration as a turning point in their life, and having jobs that expects local relationship-based resources makes it distinct from simply transferring one place to another. The analyses also imply that heterosexual and cisgendered meanings are attached to the certain lands in their imagined and real “rural” areas, which can be the key for them to realize their wanted rural lifestyles. Significant kinship/familial bond(ie イエ) and local bond (mura ムラ) are the typical examples of this.

What have been discussed in (6.2) suggest the obstacles against them in realizing “rural” livelihoods. Obviously, their lived experiences manifest as rurality shown in (6.2). However, the information circulated in and outside of the queer communities, which possibly includes mass media, can also feed into making up the elements of rurality as imaginary. These can both further deter them from realizing rural livelihood, and further feed into ruralized heteronormativity and cisgenderism. The strategies in (6.1) are woven by the interviewees from their daily practices with them indulged in the heteronormativity and cisgenderism tailored in diverse local contexts.

Firstly, allow this paper to visit the agent (X). For some, rurality represents hometown, where they grew up in a farming family in a productive landscape. For them,

the rural element of family, or equivalent kinship, can easily overlap with, and be strongly tied into, the element of local community (6.2.2) and the one of a natural landscape (6.2.3). The first obstacle against them is the relationship with their family or those who are in the equivalent kinship. What is tricky about it is, as the previous research has suggested, every family, or the equivalently significant relationship, is not free from the social expectations from the local community and oftentimes the ideologies spread by the municipal and national governments, especially within the “rurality” as Japanese rural sociology has studied (Tsutsumi, 2015a; 2015b). This intertwining has also been seen in the interviewee E’s comments.

Amongst them, those who can and want to leave once leave their rural hometown for an urban area to access queer communities. (There are also those who stay (X), and of course those who are not from ruralized areas (Z).) They struggle, and gradually gain their sexual identities which are sometimes unfixed. There are those who miss their rural hometown like E. Their feeling of missing might derive from their desire to reconstruct or keep their bond with their place of origin such as family or equivalent kinship, but it also derives from their feelings toward the landscape they lived through. Especially if they grew up in these landscapes, they might presumably have witnessed and naturally succeeded the local ecological knowledge, for example, through “minor subsistence/*asobishigoto* (Kitō and Fukunaga, 2009, p.19)” jobs. There are also those who get to need to go back to their

rural hometown to take care of their parents, or significant others, even though they prefer staying in an urban city.

Either way, once they get back, they first need to resolve the issues in relation to their families or significant others. As the previous research point out (Muta, 2006; Kazama and Kawaguchi, 2010; Tsutsumi, 2015a; 2015b), the spaces for families after modernization was constructed heteronormatively. As has also been pointed out by the other scholars (Ishida, 2019), coming out and reconstructing relationships with their families, or those who are in a close relationship at the equivalent level, are large obstacles against the sexually non-conforming population. In addition, as the interviewees of this paper also suggest, heteronormative aggressions can be done on daily bases by their family, close relatives, and the significant others. The closer they are and the higher their desire is to address these nicely, the more difficult the interviewees felt in confronting these remarks. In order to overcome this obstacle, as seen in E, key-informants B and L's comments, there need to be other places, communities, resources, and opportunities for them to easily get away from, or temporarily evacuate from, their close familial, or equivalently significant ties. This is where the strategies (6.1.1) and (6.2.2) mainly come into play.

This can be harder to be done by those who need to stay in their hometowns for some reasons, whether it is finance, social expectation, or something else. In addition, if the significant others for them is made up with their “ie/いえ” family, which connotes highly

valued familial blood including headfamily(honke 本家)-branchfamily(bunke 分家) dynamics, the boundary between within-the-household and the community can be more blurred. This does not contradict with Kawaguchi (2016)'s finding in terms of their strategical efforts in familial politics.

The second obstacle against them is the process of moving into a “rural” town. The imagined hostilities cannot only deter them from moving to rural towns, but also deter those who are already there from confronting rural heterosexism. The homosocial and hostile imaginaries (6.2.4.1) construct the imagined hostile rural places. The rural imaginary is constructed based both on what they have witnessed as they grew up in their regions and the other anecdotal evidence that they are exposed to in and outside of their queer communities, possibly including mass media. This is also sometimes confirmed and reproduced by the sexual majority population, as seen in C and D's case (5.3).

For those who move in from the outside (Z), in the process of moving, they first need to choose which area to go in, and find a new place. The housing agencies and owners' discriminative attitudes, whether it is imagined beforehand or actually experienced, significantly limit the options they can possibly choose from as seen in C and D's case. They started from the online housing services where they did not need to talk with the agent in person, and avoided the options that can possibly cause them troubles, such as having

signature from their guarantor. They need to register their information at the new municipal government. This can have slightly different meaning, which is possibly more hostile, for (Y) as pointed out by the previous research and the interviewee E, especially when their hometown is there (Yamashita, 2015).

How the first obstacle and this second obstacle manifest of course differs amongst individuals, and yet this research found out that it is a significant attribute whether they need to go through the “home” as rurality, which (X) and (Y) would do. In this case, the elements of rurality (6.2.1) and (6.2.2) are so intertwined that this intersection can hold completely different meanings than if these were separately considered. When these two are intertwined, the rural queers are induced to project the politics over their familial, or equivalently close, ties through the communal ties, and vice versa. As this chapter shows, these two aspects of rurality seem oftentimes confused by the rural queer population as well, which seems to be causing confusion within the rural queer movement. Compared to (X) and (Y) who need to go through the “home” as a rural experience(6.2.1); (Z) does not have to experience the “home” as rurality⁶⁶.

For instance, for the interviewees C and D, the landowner had already left the town and started having a new life outside of the community. This had also taken off the

⁶⁶ This does not mean they need to go through, or deal with “home” as heteronormative space, but it means the component can be separable from rurality.

heteronormative expectation (i.e. intergenerational succession) attached on the land (as the original landowner had already virtually abandoned the land). The land once became a commodity circulated on the market, which weakened the intergenerational expectations socially attached to the asset. This is particularly comparable to E and F. They both avoided succeeding land from their parents, with F telling their parents that he would not want to meet up with their parents' expectations. H mentions who (which oftentimes connotes 'what family') owns the land is well-known by the rural community.

This becomes more obvious by introducing the U-turn, I-turn, J-turn framework (Headquarters for Overcoming Population Decline and Vitalizing Local Economy in Japan, 2015.). The agent (Z) indicates that making I-turn migrations are not felt as difficult as imagined by the rural queers in the case that the heteronormative and gendered difficulties in the process of moving to the town and participating in the community have been sorted out.

This also indicates that making a U-turn is a completely different issue for queer people (Y), as they need to first negotiate with their family and their experiences within the heteronormative households. As for J-turns, since (Y) tends to already strongly associate their rural imaginaries with the "home" as rurality overlapping with the other imaginaries and experiences, some of them would avoid choosing moving to any rural town.

At the same time, if there is a way for them to distill the preferable rural components

for them and to consume environmental services avoiding their imagined, and/or expected⁶⁷, dangers; they possibly actively choose to move to a certain ruralized area except for their hometown, and realize the in-between-ness lifestyles (6.1.5). These different types of migration have clarified the point this paper tries to make here, but this should not overshadow those who are already in the ruralized places (X) and choose to move to these places for the other reasons.

The third obstacle against them is the communication with the local community (6.3). Even if the rural queer (Y) and (Z) decide to come out to the community and have their lives openly embedded in the locality, there are the rules and structures that exclude the queer families such as distribution of communal responsibility based on household unit, and managing the local production of knowledge in a gendered and sexualized manner. Rather, participating in these systems highly likely does not allow them to keep closeted. These systems seem also being supported by the mutual monitoring culture that has been legitimized, though it comes also with its considered functions⁶⁸ to strengthen the bond and resilience of the local community (Assmann, 2015). How it manifests or is implemented should differ depending on the history of the community, but the “special consideration”

⁶⁷ “Expected” to imply that it is based more on their experiences in the lived ruralities.

⁶⁸ As explained elsewhere in this paper, I recognize that the malign functions of these systems are valued. What this paper is trying to do is to distill these functions and queer them so that the power embedded in the process will be questioned and subverted.

seen in C and D's case (5.3.) can represent an example of this.

What is tricky about the third obstacle is that there is a danger to be coupled with homonormativity (Ingraham, 2016) even if the queer agents in the context do not wish or claim so. For example, as the local community seems to welcome them in C and D's case, their presence itself can be an opportunity to subvert the locally penetrated heteronormative and cisgender assumptions and systems. However, it is also true that this process is a negotiation, so the dominant regime can overwhelm the rural queers so that it ends up in preserving the systems rooted in the community, instead of making it open to anyone with any identities. The dynamics of this process is written in (6.3.1).

In relation to this, about H, he decided to engage in farming in his hometown. He first negotiated with his family. To simplify the discussion, let us suppose this state as representing (Y') for whom the "home" as rurality (6.2.1) came not to be an obstacle any longer, even though this is also a constant negotiation process actually for the interviewee H. As for the resources coming via the local communities such as local knowledge about the specific species, and that about the land, (Y') currently depends on their family in gaining resources and information from the local community. Whenever they themselves need to gain relevant information, in order to avoid unwanted aggressions, they need to come up with some alternatives such as their parents attending the meetings, and them participating in the gatherings held far away from their local communities. This leads to the

state that the local order is unquestioned by their family participating in the community as a heterosexual unit. From this (Y')'s point of view, the home as rurality is no longer a threat, but the local community is still there. The way they avoid microaggressions is to find alternatives to gain necessary resources, or to rely on their family to access these resources. This does not, however, necessarily allow them to avoid all the opportunities to be exposed to the local communities. This is not only to suggest that the heteronormative assumptions in local governance should be altered, but to suggest the need for the public and civil organizations to enrich opportunities for local farmers and residents, with any identities and backgrounds, to gain local knowledge where they feel secure in gaining local knowledge. To summarize the third obstacle, the lived experiences of the rural queers who currently engage in local community activities except for local queer community activities, clarify the possible heteronormative and cis-gendered patterns in local governance that structurally make their participation harder. This is not merely about the physical and verbal aggression against them, but about how the community governance operation is constructed with the assumption that participants are heterosexual and cisgender people.

The fourth obstacle is about the access to queer infrastructure. Given the expanded definition of the term provided in (6.2.3), of course, even after they overcome the difficulties concerning participating in the local communities, the next obstacle is the access

to diverse queer infrastructure and the conditions to enable their access to the infrastructure(e.g. labor opportunities) as described by H and J. These are typically problematic when they want to access medical cares to realize their wanted gender expressions. This paper's findings suggest that the significance and order of the obstacles depend on various attributes. Above all, their sexuality seems important. This is summarized well in the transman H's comment below:

H: Those who leave say their parents do not accept them. Also, they leave because they want to have medical care. They cannot earn enough [here]. The local companies pay their labor low. They typically go to cities like Nagoya to get a job at, say, a factory. They earn first, and have medical care. Sometimes, the fact that their family just understands and accepts them is not enough. The low salary is an issue for us...

あとは治療をどうしても始めたいとか。ここに居てもお金が、給料とかが安いから大きい工場名古屋とかに行つて、一気に稼いで手術をする、とか。家族の理解があつてもやっぱり、収入っていうところも少ないから

To sum up, the first obstacle is the familial, or equivalently significant, bond; the second appears in the procedure of choosing and moving to a new place; the third appears in the process of participating; and the fourth appears in relation to the access to queer

infrastructure, which I have expanded the meaning of.

The reason I have left (X) up to this point is to rearticulate the struggles shown mainly by E. E has mentioned the conflict between “those who made a U-turn migration and those who had always been there.” This explanation is simultaneously somewhat misleading and accurate. It is misleading as it assumes the impression as if the ruralized area was always oppressive and conservative where rural queer people are oppressed; but it can be also accurate as it points to the conflict amongst the different strategies rural queers take in reference to their own situations. In relation to this, Kazama (2019) explains how oppressive tolerance affected the conflict amongst gay men over gay rights social movements in Japan. According to this book chapter (Kazama, 2019, pp.67-69.), tolerance can be a type of oppression against those who are “tolerated” as it has the following two functions: (1) the discretion is reserved for sexually conforming (or those who have the dominance over authority), not sexually non-conforming (or those who are minoritized); and (2) the privilege to be *tolerated* functions as a “hostage situation” as it silences subversive efforts. The second function works both between the sexual conforming and the sexual non-conforming, and among the sexual non-conforming people; because some of them internalize the privilege to be tolerated.

Coming back to the case shown by E, some would argue that the explanation shown

in the previous paragraph is convincing enough. However, I will try to suggest an additional interpretation to this. Let us suppose this conflict shown by E as the one between (X) and (Z). The cause of the conflict is possibly the failure of realizing localized “performative justice (Jamal and Hales, 2016, p.177).” As shown in Chapter 6, the rural queer agent (X) is embedded in the localized politics that is multi-layered. Following Keller (2015, p.158)’s argument that sheds light on the “real material situations of queers”, the reluctance and opposition from (X) against (Z) can also contain their claim against the unnegotiated metronormative logics. This is well represented in E’s cited comment “those who once left this town do not understand our hardship. They don’t understand how it feels like to be stuck here and unable to leave.” Given the complexity of rural governance, tolerance as oppression itself does not explain the overlaid oppression to a sufficient degree, and thus the analysis provided in this paper will provide better understanding. Furthermore, as seen in this paper’s attempt to simplify the structure of localized rural heteronormativity, it is presumably extremely difficult for those rural queers who currently engage in the complex situations to analyze and simplify dynamics affected by numerous attributes.

The endeavor in working out a tailored performative justice is felt extremely difficult as shown in E and key informant B’s struggles, which also possibly functions to silence and oppresses rural queer movements. Again, problematizing the overarching problem (i.e. heteronormativity) and negotiating specific situation are two different actions, but they are

required to work on both. Pointing out this, however, is not intended to discourage the endeavor in subverting the heteronormativity and cisgenderism. The data of this research suggests that governmental and legal transformation such as diversifying source of information about localized knowledge (e.g. C and D's story about the raccoon), and legally guaranteeing queer families; can lead to enhancing capability of rural queers. Again, revisiting Leslie (2017, pp.765-766), "the onus of confronting heterosexist acts (remains imposed) on queer and gender queer, rather than on heterosexual and cis-gender people." This insight is also to remind that sustainability science to work on rural issues requires reflexivity, which requires critical mindset adapting gender and sexuality lens.

These findings are to support Leslie(2017)'s argument that we need to reimagine rurality where sustainability efforts are mainly pursued; through reimagining family, agriculture, work, and locality. With the specificity shown in this paper, the possibility in pursuing this endeavor in Japan is hopefully articulated. Reimagination leads us to point to obstacles against securing local populations, workforces, rights to the ruralized environment, and queerness. As seen in this paper, this reimagination process needs to be regionally specific. Ideally, this research would have been conducted on a smaller scale. Though I have only succeeded doing so on a larger scale (i.e. socially-represented ruralized areas) in this paper, the contribution is significant given the general imperceptibility of rural

queers in Japan.

Given the multi-layered obstacles, rural queers combine and exercise different strategies as shown in (6.1). The implication drawn from here is how much dependent they are on the local community and their family, or the equivalently significant others, affects what combination of strategies they (can) take. If the dependency is high, resuming (6.1.1) is the most feasible and safe strategy to take.

If they want to problematize their rural hardships, the next strategy they take is the problematization (6.1.3). However, this strategy poses the most of threat on them. As for the general difficulties concerning sexual identity and contributing to social movement, refer to the previous research, such as Horie (2015). Thus, typically, they need to distance themselves from the local community when participating in the queer social movement. As seen in E, it has the potential to overcome the root cause of the problem, which is the widely shared heteronormativity. However, if they want to avoid exposure in and to their local communities, they avoid sharing the specificity of their locality. This can mean that their discourses get gradually distanced from the actual experiences of queers embedded into their own ruralities.

This section has summated the analyses done in this chapter. It has shown the mechanism why discursively and structurally the sustainability of rural queerness in Japan

is jeopardized, which can further jeopardize sustainability of rural communities in Japan. The strategies the interviewees are taking begin to negotiate and subvert metronormative assumptions including the erasure of rural queerness. However, if we do not pay attention to the diversity of the rural queers' experiences, the different issues (i.e. oppression within households, oppression within local governance, and distribution of wealth in terms of necessary facilities such as gender clinics) are left confused and unsolved.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This research has tried to understand the diversity of rural queer lives and how these can be sustained, assuming that these voices are left imperceptible. In this paper, I have also tried to show the possibilities regarding how sustaining rural queerness also leads to sustainable rural communities, which enable the researchers (which also could be multi stakeholders in transdisciplinary sustainability studies (Spangenberg, 2011)) to reconsider the heteronormative and cisgendered mechanisms that function only for a certain group of people and exclude the others who are not necessarily limited to those who loosely identify themselves as queers. Shedding light on their experiences per se is already one way to confront metronormativity as the effort deconstructs the status quo, and yet this research pursued more in positioning their voices to point to the fallacies of the current system concerning Japanese rurality that can encompass farming landscape. If rural queers in Japan

are imperceptible, it can be also assumed that there is a scheme that silences their voices, which I believed must not be limited either to discourse or materiality. The endeavor in deconstructing and subverting metronormativity per se is necessary as can be also seen in the increasing number of the literature in this lineage. The emerging endeavor in capturing the “real material situations of queers” (Keller, 2015, p.158) by adding certain attributes such as farming (Leslie, 2017; 2019; Edward, 2018; Wypler, 2019), both subverts metronormativity, and negotiates an alternative “grounded”(Keller, 2015, p.158) justice. I hope this research has successfully lied in this position too, and yet this has been, and will be, exposed to ceaseless inquiry as “there exists no singular representation of “queer individuals”, “farmers”, and/or “queer farmers”” (Edward, 2018, p.ii).

The previous research has thus far shown the general necessity and benefits of incorporating gender and sexuality lens when studying sustainable communities (Leslie, 2017). However, the questions are left concerning the specificity of following statement that “the promise of queer sustainability lies in the creative ways that queer farmers [turn] the challenge of overcoming heterosexism into alternative path in work, home, and family” (Leslie, 2017, p.756). By capturing the possibilities of their strategies, which must be just part of their potentially wider variety, this paper has shown specific possibilities as to what these can be in rural Japan’s context. This specificity is necessary to point to the systematic

errors of the localized rural heteronormativity as these strategies are taken to confront, avoid, or live in the systematic errors. In this research, their endeavors in exercising these “creative” strategies have been articulated: dodging/ resuming, creating-safe-space, strategical problematization, negotiating their ruralized queerness, and “in-between-ness.” It is also not entirely accurate to call them “them” (which can indicate “social othering” (McLelland, 2011, p.147)), as no one is free from sexual and gender inquiry (Shimizu, 2013).

The previous researches have pointed out how queers in Japan are making their own effort in creating spaces relatively safe from heteronormativity and cisgenderism (Sugano, 2019). This research adds onto them and has shown the queer possibilities that they participate in, and negotiate with, the local communities where heteronormativity and cisgenderism are dominant. Here, the partial acceptance of heteronormative institutions can overwhelm their rural queerness, but it also has the potential to subvert the locally tailored heteronormativity, which also shows the possibility that the heteronormatively constructed spaces will not be destroyed, but alternatively queerly sustained.

These strategies are woven affected by the complexity of their imagined, lived, and real ruralities. The different elements of imaginary of Japanese rurality overall deters rural queers from settling in and moving to a ruralized area. As for the mechanism, by assuming imaginative agents, this research has revealed how heteronormativity, cisgenderism, and

metronormativity are institutionalized in different stages for queers to realize “rural” livelihoods in Japan where lots of sustainability efforts are being made. The third (i.e. the heteronormative and cisgendered patterns in local governance) and fourth obstacles (i.e. lack of queer infrastructure) illuminate that these obstacles are not limited to discourses but also can be material. This is not to state that their discursive elements of rurality are merely the images they have. Rather, as this paper has shown, these are lived through their bodies. These insights drawn from this research will enable reimagination of the entirety of rural livelihoods including “work, home, and family (Leslie, 2017, p.754)”, which further advocates for reconsideration of policies toward rural communities in Japan.

As Herring (2010) has also warned, the abovementioned effort needed to be contextualized in a localized setting, including its social, cultural, historical, and economic backgrounds. This is also a negotiation process, as Akitsu et al.(2007, pp.5-6.) argue that “revealing one by one of the details will not necessarily transform the intertwined system”, which I interpret is based on the belief that too much of specificity can encompass too much of (micro)politics that deprives the suppressed (e.g. in Akitsu et al.’s case, it is the gender minority) of words⁶⁹. The same sort of feelings have been expressed by the interviewees of this research (e.g. 6.1.3). Assuming a general tendency within Japan in this

⁶⁹ Refer also to Fukunaga (2016, pp.1-2.).

paper, however, I have succeeded in taking a first step in recontextualizing rural queerness within Japanese rurality, which furthered the step toward reimagining and re-politicizing sexuality and rurality, though this has been a rudimentary step and will be an ongoing endeavor. Further research needs to be done on more localized environments⁷⁰ (Cuervo, 2016), and the other minority issues which are not mutually exclusive from sexuality.

I also believe that this research has partially contributed to bridging the gap between queer studies, rural queer studies in Japan, and rural studies in Japan. The tendency seen in the rural queer studies in Japan to solely stick to *chiho*(地方) in approaching rural queer issue in Japan can reduce the art and effects of the concepts, metronormativity and rural queer, by making the definitional contours of these concepts static (Herring, 2010; Keller, 2015). To sustain both rural queerness and rural communities, the diverse lifestyles, which I have only succeeded showing the contrast mainly between the “in-between-ness” (Powell, 2016, p.182) and the locally open and embedded (6.1.4), need to be articulated and protected. I believe that my argument shares an interest both with (1) rural studies scholars such as Orito (2014; 2019), and Edward (2018); which have shown the differences of rationality and identities between the farming world and the capitalistic world, both of which are constantly influencing each other; and (2) sexuality studies scholars such as

⁷⁰ As already stated in Chapter 2, numerous researches have been done to (re)imagine the relationship between queerness and topics that can appear irreconcilable. (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010; Dave ,2011; Asaka ,2019)

Kazama and Kawaguchi (2010); Horie (2015); Kikuchi et al. (2019); which take various approaches to confront sexuality and gender-related norms, including heteronormativity, and cisgenderism.

To conclude, I would like to discuss the relationship between (just) sustainability and queerness. This line of discussion has developed especially over how we should think about the future. The anti-social turn of queer theory led by Edelman (2019) overall argues back against the social pressure on the queer-identified population so that they need to be good citizens (Fujitaka, 2019). This series of discussion itself needs to be left open, but I would like to pose an interpretation that the sovereignty over future, or intergenerational imaginaries of rural queers especially in Japan, has not been reserved for queers. Given the anti-social turn of queer theory, Muñoz (2009) argues for the relationship between the future and queer theory. I believe that there is an extreme similarity between the sustainability conception shown in “transforming our world” (UN General Assembly, 2015) and the following line from the book:

QUEERNESS IS NOT yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The

future is queerness's domain. (...) The here and now is a prison house (Muñoz, 2009, p.1).

I believe that thinking about (just) sustainability involves reflexivity (Spangenberg, 2011), awareness of the possibility that one cannot be fully aware of fallacies, and endeavor in basing itself on the “quotidian lifeway aspirations” (Fukunaga, 2019, p.133). Through this research, I need to emphasize again both that (1) sustainability needs to be self-reflexive incorporating queer perspective as sustainability easily encompasses “governmentality”⁷¹ (Fukunaga, 2014, p.91)”; and (2) the statement (1) should never be confused with the statement that queer individuals need to contribute to the achievement of sustainability. This paper is to warn that the current effort in (re)constructing the conceptions of sustainability in rural Japan possibly remain heteronormalized and cis-gendered, and these will destroy the exact knowledge they try to protect by arbitrarily judging the ones held by “queers.” There are none who are incapable of succeeding and updating the knowledge, but there are just systems that deprive people's capability of preserving and updating the knowledge they already have, and yet this does not mean to pressurize the queer-identified population so that they need to be “good” citizens. The institutionalized heteronormativity and cisgenderism keep underpinning both the rural sustainability and these rural queer possibilities (by “these rural queer possibilities”, I mean that they of course are open to

⁷¹ Translated from touchisei 統治性

discussion). These are not the knowledge coming with the imperial sensibilities and urban habitus from the outside, but the (queered) rural and local knowledge that are being lost. Transformation does not have to be brought about by coming up something drastic. It can be done by protecting the possibilities and guaranteeing the capabilities that they already have.

Taking it onto this research's ground, these possibilities are diversely posed by the interviewees (Chapter 5). By queering the rurality, some activities are both preserving and transforming the Japanese rurality. These cases are reimagining the familial and communal bonds, opening up their future possibilities of sustainability in Japan and of rural queers in Japan.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

インタビュー内容例：

インタビューの進行によって、必要・または関係があると思われる質問をする場合があります。現状の想定として、下記のような質問をさせていただく場合がございます。(任意回答・インタビューの進行によって下記以外の質問もする可能性があります。)

質問項目	質問例
基本情報（年齢、最終学歴、団体、活動に関して）	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・あなたの年齢を教えてください ・差し支えなければあなたの最終学歴を教えてください ・団体での活動内容／目標などに関して教えてください
出自と過去の生活空間の認識と、その認識の意味づけ・経験・自身への影響について	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・あなたは、どのような場所で育ちましたか？ ・その場所で育ったことは、今のあなたにどのように影響していると思いますか？ ・その場所の環境とそこでの経験について語るとしたら、どのように説明しますか？
性自認、性的指向、アイデンティティ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・あなたの性自認(gender identity)について教えてください

<p>について</p>	<p>ください</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・あなたはあなたの性的指向をどのように説明しますか？ ・先ほど教えていただいた育った場所での経験に関連して、ご自身のセクシュアリティ・ジェンダーに関わる経験があれば教えてください。 ・ご家族との関わりについて
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また活動の内容と SDGs が関係する場合、下記についてもお伺いする場合があります

質問項目	質問例
<p>“SDGs”“サステナビリティ”の認識について</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ・「持続可能性」又は「サステナビリティ/SDGs」について聞いたことはありますか？どのように知りましたか？ ・あなたの“コミュニティ”“団体”での活動に、どのように関係しますか？ (・なぜサステナビリティ(または SDGs) を活動の一環に取り入れようと思いましたか？) ・SDGs を使用し始めてから、活動の内容に変化はありましたか？

(English Version)

Interview Guide :

The table below shows the questions that the researcher is most likely to ask.

Additional questions that the researcher perceives are necessary and/or relevant will be asked depending on how the interview session proceeds. (The interviewee will not have to answer all the questions • additional questions might be asked)

Category	Example of Question
Basic information (Age, School history, Activism, etc)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age• Explain your school history• What is your goal through activism?
Lived experiences in one's hometown, sphere of everyday life etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would you explain what sort of place it is where you grew up?• How does your experience based on the place influence you?• How do you describe the environment of the place where you grew up? How does that relate to your experiences?
Gender identity, sexual orientation,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Would you explain about your gender

etc	<p>identity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your sexuality and sexual orientation? • In relation to your experiences in the place you have described, would you share stories that shows the relationship between your sexuality and your experiences in the place if there is any? • About the relationship with your family
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If your activism relates to SDGs, the researcher will also ask the questions in relation to the ones listed below:

Category	Example of Questions
Perception of SDGs and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you heard “sustainability” or “SDGs”? <p>How did you get to know about it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does that relate to your activism? (• Why did you consider relating your activities with sustainability and/or SDGs?) • Do you notice any change since you started

	using SDGs?
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