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MA Thesis

Betrayed by Nuclear Power

Transforming the Community and Collective Memory of Fukushima's Evacuees

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I: Introduction

The town of Futaba is nestled between the beautiful ocean and the mountains. It is part of the Hamadori region in eastern Fukushima. The people have always been proud of the beauty of their land and their own town. Futaba.

> There's no more town. Just land. It'll turn into a burial ground with a sign that says, once there was a town here called Futaba. There was a town called Okuma, and a town called Tomioka. And now, in that valley between those mountains, there lies the wreckage of Reactor 1, buried right there. And still, there's puffs of radiation coming out. It was over there somewhere, and that's where the Town Hall used to be. I don't want to picture it, but… I can really see what it'll be like 20-30 years from now.

This first quote is taken from an old tourist video tape about the town of Futaba. The second is a quote from one of Futaba's evacuees, several months after disaster struck in March of 2011.

Futaba hosted several of the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors, after the disaster 96% of Futaba was still designated as a no-entry zone due to high radiation levels. In the wake of Japan's 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis, henceforth referred to as '3.11', recovery efforts have taken on all shapes and sizes. Some evacuated areas have been repaired, some are being reconstructed from scratch, and some have been forsaken temporarily (Matanle 2011). In addition to the direct physical dimension of loss and costs, as well as the personal psychological trauma many victims suffer, the implicit local social impact must also be considered. These communities have been abruptly uprooted. They have lost places

and objects that had individual and communal meanings. They have lost a large part of the community itself and its inherent sense of belonging and togetherness. They are forced to adjust to foreign, often uncomfortable environments. The list goes on.

At the time of writing almost five years have passed since 3.11, and with the initial shock having passed, how are people looking back at it? How have the tragic events that transpired settled into history, into national consciousness, into victims' personal memories? The truth is that these processes have only just gotten underway, as 3.11 is in a sense too new to be history but too old to be news. Although on the grander national and global scales 3.11 is all but forgotten and being digested in the background, for most of the victims this disaster is still affecting daily life in a myriad of ways. The question this thesis will focus on is: What exactly has been disrupted through this disaster on a social level; how do communities and individuals that have been abruptly uprooted by a nuclear disaster cope; how do they reconstruct their collective and individual memories and identities; and how do they reframe nuclear energy, something that initially brought them prosperity but eventually led to them losing their homes indefinitely.

The 3.11 disaster is undoubtedly one of the most striking events in modern Japanese history, and the Fukushima crisis has affected the national consciousness deeply, having developed into a situation that can be described as a nationwide *moral panic* due to fear of radiation (Cleveland 2014, 509). There have also been significant effects on the level of citizen activism, mobilizing massive protests that will be touched upon later in this thesis. After a brief summary of the details of 3.11, Chapter II will discuss the importance of community and explain memory on the individual and social levels, in order to set up a theoretical framework, and tying it in with established disaster research. In Chapter III the history of 'nuclear towns' such as

Futaba will be put into perspective through an exploration of Japan's complex history with nuclear power. All this material will provide a basis that will frame this research's main objective, which is analyzing Japanese film director Atsushi Funahashi's documentaries *Nuclear Nation* (2012), *Radioactive* (2013), and *Nuclear Nation 2* (2015). This director followed the lives of Futaba's evacuees starting a month after the disaster until over three years later. In his approach he mainly observes these evacuees and allows them to tell their stories. The films' focus shifts back and forth from highly personal individual interviews, to the community level, recording political debates concerning the treatment and the future of the evacuees. The director's personal input is minimal; his primary aim is to give a voice to these relatively silent victims, and present those voices to the world. A world that after all these years has all but forgotten about them. Both the interviews and images put forward in these films as well as an original interview performed with this director will function as data in an examination of Futaba's community in the years following the disaster. This research will draw upon disaster ethnography, memory studies, and a variety of social studies in an attempt to explore diverse post-disaster coping strategies on the community and individual levels. In doing so this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion of post-3.11 recovery as well as more wide-ranging discussions about disasters and collective memory, and perhaps shed new light on the micro-level effects of past, current, and future government policy.

Disaster Background

On March 11th 2011, at 14:46 Japan Standard Time, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake occurred about 130km off the coast of Miyagi Prefecture. This is the strongest earthquake ever recorded in Japan, and the fourth strongest ever recorded worldwide. This resulted in a magnitude 6-7 shock throughout Miyagi, Fukushima, Ibaraki, and Tochigi Prefectures, and was observed nationwide

from Hokkaido to Kyushu. Hundreds of magnitude 5 or greater related aftershocks followed in the months thereafter. The earthquake triggered a tsunami that at its climax reached a height of over 9 meters (Japan Meteorological Agency 2012) and washed over Japan's northeastern coastline. Entire towns, ports, industrial, and commercial zones were severely damaged if not completely destroyed.

As of December 10th 2015 the recorded number of casualties stands at 15,893, of which 9,541 in Miyagi Prefecture, 4,673 in Iwate Prefecture, and 1,612 in Fukushima Prefecture. In total 2,565 people are still missing, and 6,152 were reported injured as a result of the earthquake and tsunami. The number of buildings completely destroyed amounts to 121,782, among them 82,999 in Miyagi Prefecture, 19,597 in Iwate Prefecture, and 15,148 in Fukushima Prefecture. Many hundreds of thousands more have suffered major to minor damage (National Police Agency 2015). The recorded number of people still living in evacuation shelters on December 10th 2015 is a staggering 190,541. 75,440 of these evacuees are from Fukushima Prefecture, 73,796 from Miyagi Prefecture, and 30,289 from Iwate Prefecture (Tasukeai Japan 2015). As these statistics show, the earthquake and tsunami hit Miyagi the hardest. Nonetheless Fukushima has the largest number of evacuees, this is due to the dangers of radiation that has leaked and is in fact still leaking from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in the Futaba district.

The nuclear accident was triggered by the tsunami, as it knocked out the main electric supply as well as the backup generators. This power failure shut down the six nuclear reactors' cooling systems, resulting in a meltdown of three of these reactors. Nuclear fuel melted through the containment vessels causing a leak, while hydrogen explosions demolished the plant's buildings even further. Nuclear material seeped into the ground, was released into the air, and desperate attempts to cool the nuclear material down with seawater have led to irradiated water

flowing into the ocean. Now, almost five years later, the plant's leaks are still not fully under control, and it will likely take decades for the plant to be fully decommissioned. An initial 3 kilometer evacuation zone was quickly expanded to 10 and then 20 kilometers, and residents up to 30 kilometers urged to not leave their house. On April 12th the Nuclear Industrial Safety Agency raised Fukushima's nuclear crisis to level 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale, alongside 1986's Chernobyl accident. In the wake of this disaster nuclear power plants nationwide were temporarily or completely shut down, and the catastrophe inspired shutdowns and major changes in nuclear power plants worldwide (Matanle 2011, 824-825).

II: Theoretical Framework

Communities

Humans are social beings. We know this all too well. People are members of certain groups that often have boundaries and rules, whether these are clearly outlined or unspoken. We live in societies where normally every individual fulfills some sort of role. Members of a certain society, group, or community, are therefore interdependent. One's experiences are by and large linked to the experiences of others (Brown 2000, 35).Furthermore, it is generally accepted that we define the bulk of our identities, our selves, through other people (Aronson, Wilson & Akert 2007, 148). By contrasting and comparing, by mimicking and resisting, and by a whole host of other social processes, our identity and in fact our living reality takes shape. Now, as human beings in modern society, we are usually official or unofficial members of countless of different groups on many different levels, often overlapping (Tonkin 1995, 106). Awareness of this membership varies as well. Relevant to this thesis are some of the most salient ones: family, local community, and to a certain extent also the nation. These are examples of social groups which greatly affect social identities, and in turn personal identities and self-esteem (Brown 2000, 315).

Concerning the nation, and its associated nationalism, Ernest Renan and Benedict Anderson have authored several core texts, explaining how people come to associate with, and care about, larger collectives, of which one will never personally know each individual member. One of their main points being that "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in

an undivided form" (Renan 1996, 52). This spiritual principle is what holds larger collectives, the nation in particular but a variety of it can readily be argued to apply to a range of other groups, together and inspires affect. In short, the communities we are a part of influence us on all levels, mental and emotional. For this thesis the main focus will be on the local town community.

Community Attachment

In the early 20th century it was argued that, through urbanization, 'true' small-scale communities were disappearing; a *community lost* perspective. This perspective was later challenged in academia and led to the opposite; a *community saved* perspective. This argued that close social bonds and a strong sense of community actually do persist in modern life, by means of smaller neighborhoods and communities that are embedded in the larger context of the city. The *community saved* perspective became theorized as *community attachment*, which relates to "the density of established kinships, friendship and acquaintanceship networks". This concept is occasionally confused with *social capital*, but whereas social capital refers to the network structures, community attachment denotes sentiments about place. A place that embodies the sentiments of social activity within those network structures. Under normal circumstances community attachment frequently affects individual well-being in positive ways, promoting mental and physical health (Cope, Slack, Blanchard & Lee 2012, 874). Nevertheless said attachment can also have adverse effects, such as when the community is suddenly uprooted, leaving the individual in a state of loss. This will be touched upon in a later section discussing disaster research. Prior to that, however, an understanding of the role of memory in a social context needs to be established. Memory can be regarded as a key mediating term between individual and society (Tonkin 1995, 98). As Renan mentioned above, a legacy of memories plays a large part in the constitution of a community. Jill Edy described this by saying: "As our

society continues to dissect itself into small, competing groups, our possession of a past in common may be one of the few ties that bind us as a whole" (1999, 71). What is arguably more important than concrete current aspects of community such as place and specific people is the larger abstract story that is told. The story that a community tells itself and others. How it interprets and reinterprets its past, present, and future. This brings us to the concept of collective memory. Collective memory is a contested concept and has interchangeably been referred to as social memory, cultural memory, historical memory, historical consciousness, et cetera (Madsen & O'Mullan 2013, 60). The following section will provide theoretical background on this concept and its usages throughout the past century before applying it to the context of disaster specifically.

Collective Memory

The conceptualization of collective memory starts with Maurice Halbwachs, a former student of Émile Durkheim. He set out from a notion that an individual's memories are not acquired in a vacuum but in the context of a society, and this is also where they recall, recognize, and localize their memories (Halbwachs 1992, 38). He noted that there is a collective framework of memory in a community or society that entails more than the sum of its parts. A collective's memory is not constructed by mere combination of the memory of its members, but is rather a framework that entails an image of the past, reflecting the predominant thoughts of the collective. These collective memories nonetheless can only clearly manifest through the voice of individuals who place themselves in the perspective of the group, which is in a sense the equivalent of the memory of the group realizing itself in individual memories (Ibid. 40; Kansteiner 2002, 180). When recalling collective memory "we adopt the attitude common to members of this group and pay attention to the memories that are always in the foreground of its way of thought"

(Halbwachs 1992, 52). Collective memory operates not primarily through the archiving and preserving of the past, but rather its reconstruction using material and oral traces with the addition of recent social and psychological data (Ibid. 119). Language as a social process is vital here, Halbwachs summed this up clearly: “There are no recollections to which words cannot be made to correspond. We speak of our recollections before calling them to mind. It is language, and the whole system of social conventions attached to it, that allows us at every moment to reconstruct our past” (Ibid. 173).

Individual memory, thus, relies heavily on frameworks of collective memory. Because memory is continually reconstructed in the process of recollection, many facts and details can get distorted and forgotten. There is a reciprocal dynamic between individuals and groups that can revise and recover these respective types of memory. The most important aspect here, what persists over time, is that communities need unity even if this occurs at the cost of continuity (Halbwachs 1992, 182). This is achieved through revision and commemoration, but also through an active process of forgetting and so-called *mnemonic silence* (Stone & Hirst 2014, 314). This connects to the discussion of the imagined community of the nation as well: “The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, but also that they have forgotten many things” (Renan as cited in Anderson 1991, 6). The preservation or non-preservation, and reproduction or non-reproduction of an individual’s memories through a continual relationship with them is a vital component of individual identity construction and perpetuation, and parallels can be drawn with collective memory and a collective’s identity (Stone & Hirst 2014, 315). This makes sense when one considers that collective memory is strongest amongst homogenous groups (Kligler-Vilenchik, Tsfati & Meyers 2014, 496), while nevertheless emphasizing the agency of individuals.

What this tells us more than anything is that memory is not static. Memory on all levels is, in fact, a dynamic fluid process. One must be mindful that, valuable as it is to analyze individual and collective memories, collective memory does not equal history (Kansteiner 2002, 180; Olick 1999, 335). According to Tonkin the missing term in Halbwachs' initial account is socialization, which he defines as "the ways and means by which we internalize the external world. Memory for [Halbwachs] is like an album of photographs. He does not analyze it as a structuring and creative process" (1995, 105). The very act of memorization and recalling on the individual level feeds into, and expresses, the collective consciousness and this is central to communities. In conclusion, the working definition for collective memory that this thesis will lean towards is what Kansteiner refers to as social memory, which are shared memories that "originate from shared communication about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective" (2002, 188). In the remainder of this thesis, this shared communication might also be referred to as a *narrative*.

Disasters

In anthropology a disaster is defined as "a process/event involving the combination of a potentially destructive agent(s) from the natural and/or technological environment and a population in a socially and technologically produced condition of vulnerability" (Oliver-Smith 1996, 303). As opposed to a view wherein they are regarded as wholly unpredictable and extreme events, it is acknowledged that every human settlement lives with a certain degree of calculated risk. Some areas are more prone to earthquakes, tornadoes, or flooding, and modern expert systems have roughly mapped these recurring phenomena. Despite not being able to precisely predict disasters occurring, in the big picture they are rarely without precedent. Over time most communities have adapted and built resilience against 'their' specific recurring

disasters, but nonetheless can still be caught off-guard, ill-prepared, and evidently overwhelmed by large-scale catastrophes. Unfortunately hazard risk assessment and disaster management are complex processes because of the countless social, political, logistical, and economical factors that come in to play. These fields are constantly in flux not only through shifting theoretical debates but most importantly through learning from the endless stream of case studies that occur worldwide.

A number of things happen when people's lives and communities are disrupted, or uprooted in a disaster. It is not just the actual victim's community affected but the larger collectives it is a part of as well. Notably the nation, and this is where the media comes in. The way in which journalists and historians talk and write about the courses of events starts a much larger discourse that informs the national, and even global memory, and the place of the victims in it. This is why the importance of the stories being told by the direct victims should not be understated, as they inspire deeper reflection and renegotiation of much larger narratives: "The stories of the past create the social memory of the present that influences how communities respond in the future", and the re-telling of these stories has the potential to become as influential as living the experiences themselves (Madsen & O'Mullan 2013, 68-69). In turn, such larger narratives can affect the smaller-scale ones as well, there is a fluid dynamic of constant renegotiation following a disaster, which slows down as time passes but never completely.

Though not a conceptual focus of this thesis, certain narratives associated with a group's identity can contribute to the *resilience* of a community (Madsen & O'Mullan 2013, 62-63). There are different strategies that can be applied post-disaster, whether maintaining the existing collective narrative, shifting it into a recovery-focused narrative, or moving away from it (Sakamoto, Kimura, Matsuda & Matsuoka (2009). The collective narrative determines how the

community describes itself, their circumstances and prospects and thus influences how it responds to a disaster, and how it recovers (Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2011). Memory is triggered by material evidences with personally evocative significance as well as people and actions (Tonkin 1995, 108). This is why losing a dear personal possession, not to mention one's house, can be a traumatic experience that no financial reimbursement can truly compensate. Certain collective narratives can definitely be fruitful when speaking of rebuilding homes post-disaster. Though they do not provide the resources, a positive self-reliant attitude that at least sees rebuilding as possible, perhaps based on past experience of the community, can lead communities to start rebuilding quicker and more effectively (Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2011, 277-278; Yamamura 2010, 1019).

Disaster situations have oftentimes been referred to as a natural laboratory (Oliver-Smith 1996, 304). Most large-scale natural disasters can cause a number of people to be either voluntarily or forcibly displaced. It has been established above that place and spatiality play a vital role in the construction of individual and community identities. Hence, abrupt community displacement can have major traumatic consequences in a number of ways (Ibid., 308). Depending on the scale of a disaster, social ties can actually be increased, which mitigates the adverse consequences. People banding together and supporting each other: the smallest of supportive gestures are appreciated more than ever. However when a disaster is highly destructive and disruptive these protective features of social connectedness are unlikely to be enough to compensate for the severe negative impact. On the individual level not only the psychological trauma the destruction itself (Usami et al. 2014), but the mere effect of relocation itself increases depression risk (Najarian 2001) even up to the point of suicide (Matsubayashi, Sawada & Ueda 2013).

This brings us back to the discussion of community attachment, which is almost as much about the place as it is about the people. To many, and one might argue the relatively elderly rural community especially, the concept of 'home' is essential to them. The core of a displaced community will always want to return home, despite being aware of the natural risks that go hand in hand with the place. In a 2012 paper Ueda & Torigoe examined a small town coastal community that was also struck by 3.11's tsunami. They asked the question: why do victims of a tsunami return to the coast? Their answer was that people who live in these environments perceive the existence of a certain balance. Many people in these communities are involved in fishing or other ocean-related industries. Their income depends on the 'blessings' the ocean gives them. These people know that they cannot have the fertility of the sea without its severity. These are "two sides of the same coin" (Ueda & Torigoe 2012, 28). Their coastal existence is vital to their personal and communal identity. Unfortunately as this thesis will show, returning home is not always that simple. Sometimes rebuilding the old is rendered impossible, as is the case for the residents of Futaba for the foreseeable future. The following chapter will provide background into the history of nuclear power in Japan. The nuclear power that defined Futaba as more than just another coastal town. But also the nuclear power that now prevents them from returning home.

III: Japan's Nuclear History

> There are two of them around town. Near the entrance of the Town Hall and by the community center. Those banners boasting the town's partnership with nuclear power. It was supposed to be this prosperous co-existence.

Postwar Nuclear Allergy

Japan's relationship with nuclear power is a unique one. As we all know, Japan is the only country to have fallen victim to the destructive power of nuclear weapons. The horrific destruction that took place in Hiroshima and Nagasaki shocked the world and abruptly put an end to World War 2. How did both the Japanese government and its citizens come to seemingly embrace nuclear energy in the wake of these terrible events, only about two decades later? The truth is that directly after the war, a major part of the Japanese public was actually unaware of the horrific realities of what had happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki due to censorship by the American occupational forces. After the end of the occupation in 1952 public awareness slowly grew through some forms of popular media, but it wasn't until the Daigo Fukuryu Maru incident in 1954 that public outrage started flaring up. In March that year the US performed a hydrogen bomb test which led to a crew of Japanese fishermen to suffer from severe radiation exposure. In Japan's major newspaper 'Asahi Shinbun', this incident was framed as Japan "being a victim for the third time". Following this incident, a petition movement for the ban on nuclear trials spread throughout the country. The number of signatures reached a third of Japan's population at the time by the summer of 1955. So there was a huge spike in public attention thanks to this petition (Yamazaki 2009). Also, inspired by the Daigo Fukuryu Maru incident, the film 'Gojira' or

‘Godzilla’ was released in 1954. The Japanese public was fearful of uncontrolled and unpredictable nuclear technology, and this fear was symbolized in Gojira: a giant monster mutated by nuclear radiation who goes on a rampage through Japan. As its producer Tomoyuki Tanaka famously stated: “The theme of the film, from the beginning, was the terror of the bomb. Mankind had created the bomb, and now nature was going to take revenge on mankind”.

Meanwhile, after Eisenhower’s 1953 United Nations speech on ‘Atoms for Peace’, changes to Japan’s national budget allotted 300 million yen for the promotion of science and technology, over 85% of which went into nuclear energy research. The Japanese government, however, had no choice but to take note of the public resistance and in December 1955 the Atomic Energy Basic Law was implemented, ensuring nuclear energy would only be used for peaceful purposes. Nonetheless, people were still fearful of nuclear technology as a whole and there was of course major resistance from Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors (Yamamoto 2012), so how could the Japanese public accept this law? It was achieved through a pattern of denial, cover-up, and cozy bureaucratic collusion between industry and government. Pro-nuclear power forces at the time by managing to make the public believe that there was a major dichotomy between the physics of nuclear power and that of nuclear weapons. Those who opposed were regularly ridiculed for their so-called ‘nuclear allergy’, suggesting that there must be something seriously wrong with them, how else could they be so ignorant to the benefits of technology.

At this point the pro-nuclear movement was actually not unified, but instead consisted of a mix of politicians, businessmen, scientists and representatives of the media. Influence from the US should also be considered as, at the advent of the Cold War, Japan’s identity was transformed into a junior member of the US-led alliance against the communist threat. Japan served as a host for some of the US’s atomic arsenal in secret, as well as a democratic and capitalist example to

the rest of Asia. They had a large stake in Japan's industrial and technological development. In 1955 the pro-nuclear forces in Japan became more centralized and established through the Atomic Energy Commission, the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute, and the Japan Atomic Industry Forum (Dusinberre & Aldrich 2011, 688). Eventually, in conjunction with the general movements towards Japan's astonishing industrial boom that was to follow in later decades, the nuclear industry was commercialized. This resonated with a Japanese population that was beginning to enjoy the benefits of postwar recovery (Kelly 2015, 55-57). Prime Minister Eisaku Satō approved the commission of the first nuclear power plant in 1966.

Localized Pro-Nuclear Strategies

On the local governmental scale the financial benefits were alluring. Promises of subsidies for the improvement of infrastructure, for instance, were clearly appealing incentives for impoverished rural areas (Aldrich 2014, 194-196), as were other official and unofficial economic boosts associated with hosting a nuclear power plant. In 1974 the Three Power Source Development Laws were established which allowed among other things for taxes paid by electricity users to be funneled back into the host communities over a five-year period (Dusinberre & Aldrich 2011, 692). Japanese local governments have always been fairly, if not completely, dependent on central government funding (Aldrich 1999, 71-72). It makes sense to think that local nuclear host officials perhaps thought that in the long run this would make them more financially independent, with their infrastructure boosted and the labor market expanding. An unforeseen consequence, however, was that these host communities would eventually turn out to become dependent on the nuclear industry themselves, requiring constant expansion (Hasegawa 2014, 289), this will be explained in the next chapter through the example of Futaba.

By way of strategies implemented by all the pro-nuclear parties, the mass media especially, campaigns to convince the public penetrated the daily lives of all civilians. Opinion polls started showing that a significant portion of anti-nuclear citizens were young women and mothers. As a result a lot of advertisements were aimed directly at this target group, showing young mothers with their children smiling, and reassuring them of the safety of nuclear energy (Aldrich 2014, 193). Nevertheless national organized resistance grew, and by the 1960s the approach of convincing the public became more focused on the specific locales where resistance would be the weakest, being impoverished rural areas. An example of such targeted approaches were subsidized scientific studies conducted to prove that nuclear power plants proved no significant risk to fishing industries. Furthermore there was a variety of campaigns implemented to familiarize potential host communities with nuclear power. The local officials and other town folk were taken on free 'study trips' to already existing nuclear facilities, which supposedly involved as much alcohol-induced fraternizing between these potential hosts and the nuclear power company representatives, as actual studying. Within these small town communities "the structure of civil society meant that an ordinary citizen's pro-nuclear decision was as likely to be based on social, political, and even historical obligations as it was on a clear grasp of atomic energy issues" and these strategies proved to be highly effective (Dusinberre & Aldrich 2011, 700). The eventual cure for so-called 'nuclear allergy' was found in the right combination of "the management of local civil society, the fear of hometown decline, the intervention of a power company in daily life, the attraction of central government subsidies, and not least the bypassing of a debate about safety (Ibid. 703). Opinion polls in the mid-1970s showed that almost 70 percent of respondents were in support of Japan's nuclear energy policy (Ibid. 693).

Post-disaster Nuclear Discourse

On March 11th 2011 there were 54 nuclear reactors in Japan. Altogether these reactors were responsible for generating almost a third of Japan's total electricity supply (Kingston 2014, 249). After 3.11 a confusing period of shifting blame and pointing fingers from government officials to representatives of the plant's owner: the Tokyo Electric Power Company (henceforth: TEPCO) followed, with nobody willing to take full responsibility for this enormous disaster. But in late 2012 TEPCO confessed that they failed to adopt proper safety measures, and could have prevented the nuclear crisis if they had done so. They had downplayed tsunami risk and resisted international safety standards. Also not all employees were properly trained for emergency situations. Reasons for this being that TEPCO "feared that any measures to improve safety at the Fukushima plant would stoke the anti-nuclear movement, interfere with operations, raise costs, and create legal and political problems" (Kingston 2014, 247).

After 3.11 public outcry concerning the abolishment of nuclear energy flared up. Mass-protests in Japanese had been practically unheard of since the politically turbulent 1960s, but in the months following the disaster there were several demonstrations held in Tokyo counting around 15,000-20,000 participants. On September 19th a planned 50,000 strong rally for the abolition of nuclear power was attended by 65,000 (Hasegawa 2014, 292). Smaller demonstrations have persisted, but eventually to no real avail. The long-term effects on Japan's energy policies are surprisingly minor. Although in the wake of 3.11 many advanced industrial nations such as Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Belgium have started to move away from nuclear power despite the significant economic costs, Japan actually might not. Prime Minister at the time of the disaster and the first half year of its aftermath, Naoto Kan, expressed a desire to end Japan's dependence on nuclear power. He ordered stress-tests of Japan's nuclear reactors

which prompted a temporary shutdown of all of them. Nonetheless in June 2012 Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda approved the restart of two reactors (Aldrich 2014, 202-203). Although as of November 2015 there is only one fully operational active power plant in Japan, many others are being prepared for restart. Current Prime Minister Abe Shinzo is a resolute advocate of nuclear energy as well, and the general policy as it stands is aimed towards significantly improving the safety of nuclear reactors, and thus phasing it out completely at some point does not appear likely any time soon (Kingston 2014, 247).

As far as controlling the public opinion is concerned, there have been many claims that negative coverage of the nuclear industry after 3.11 was curbed by certain major media companies. National news broadcasts downplayed the severity of the nuclear accident for some time, while the government itself was being vague as well. Within Japan political, business, bureaucratic, and scientific circles are infamously closely intertwined. In the meanwhile international media actually was reporting more accurately on the nuclear meltdown, hence a great deal of confusion emerged. (Ibid. 250; Cleveland 2014; Endo 2012). By now this confusion is clearing up, but there has been a great deal of successful lobbying from pro-nuclear forces and the general public is slowly accepting that from an economic perspective nuclear energy is a necessity, at least for now. As a result of the history described in this chapter, Japan has become a *nuclear nation*, and is dependent on it. Changing this would therefore require a massive change in government. As Daniel Aldrich notes: "Japanese leaders and civil servants envision public opinion as malleable; in this approach, the people's perspective should be changed to match the perspective of the administration rather than elevated as a guidestar which should be followed" (Aldrich as cited in Kingston 2014, 263). The public remains skeptical as polls show (Ibid. 265) but with civil society apparently diminishing again slowly and the majority of the public in a

sense bowing their heads to the government's policies, change is far off, despite this world-shocking disaster (Arase 2012).

IV: Analysis

Atsushi Funahashi is a director who creates both fiction and documentary film. He was in New York when 9.11 happened and this spurred him to make his first documentary. He returned to Japan, filmed two more fiction films and was planning to shoot his next one in the coastal town of Hitachi. During pre-production this town was hit by the 3.11 tsunami and production had to be halted. Observing the media coverage on the disaster and the way the government was handling it, he became frustrated. He heard about the citizens of Futaba, housing several of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactors, which were evacuated to an empty high school all the way in Saitama, 250km away. He visited them in the beginning of April 2011. Talking to these people he soon found out, to his embarrassment, that all of the power generated in these nuclear power plants was sent to the Tokyo metropolitan area. This struck him to his core on a personal level. He decided to keep filming the conversations between him, who was using this electricity, and the people of Futaba, who had been providing this electricity and now lost their homes as a result. The hundreds of hours of footage he shot eventually resulted in the first 2012 film, Nuclear Nation (original title: '*futaba kara tooku hanarete'* meaning 'Far removed from Futaba'), its 2014 sequel, Nuclear Nation II ('*futaba kara tooku hanarete dainibu*'), as well as a 2013 short film titled Radioactive. These films provide a unique perspective. Funahashi was allowed to spend time among the community of Futaba evacuees when most other press was not. He formed bonds with his subjects and won their trust. He approached the production of these documentaries in a very open, semi-structured, manner. His intention was to observe these people and film them telling their stories in natural, intimate, conversation. The following section will briefly introduce and summarize the films separately, and lead into an analysis of their story and content as a whole.

Nuclear Nation (2012), or NN1

Nuclear Nation observes the Futaba evacuees between spring and autumn 2011, as indicated by occasional on-screen text. The amount of people living in the high school shelter in Saitama starts out at 1436, and drops down to 1001 in June, 880 in August, and 673 in November. The first scenes of the film consist largely of the people going about their lives there, one man speaking about losing his house and people that perished in the tsunami. Then, the town's mayor Katsutaka Idogawa is introduced. Idogawa is the most central character throughout this film, and will be discussed in-depth below. As the film progresses the viewer is introduced to several other evacuees, some which open up very broadly about the disaster and their experience, and others commenting only briefly on how they are being treated by the government and how they feel about nuclear power in the wake of this disaster. The living conditions in the shelter are cramped and undesirable, and the government's and TEPCO's apologies do not appear to be perceived as sincere at all. Months after the disaster families are allowed a temporary return to the exclusion zone for the sake of attempting to recover items or paying their respects to the deceased. This provides us with some of the most emotional and evocative shots of the film as a the camera is a first-hand observer to these people returning to directly face the devastation of their house, their town, their home. Throughout the film the director switches between showing the life at the shelter, intimate encounters with evacuees, and the mayor Idogawa as he struggles to come to terms with what happened, and moreover struggles at several official meetings to lobby for the interests of his town's inhabitants. The film ends on a depressing note, showcasing the destroyed Fukushima landscape, and the final words: "Residents have yet to be compensated by the government or TEPCO for the loss of their homeland. They continue to live their lives in limbo".

Nuclear Nation 2 (2014), or NN2

The second film continues roughly where the first left off; in the winter of 2011/2012. The subsequent pace is a lot higher starting out with 627 evacuees left in the high school, moving through the seasons of 2012 in quick succession, and 133 people left in March 2013, reaching zero in March 2014. There seems to be more focus on the political aspect than in the first film, as mayor Idogawa is forced to resign in January 2013 and replaced by Shiro Izawa. Two months later the official location of the Town Hall is moved to Iwaki, a town geographically on the Eastern coast and significantly closer to Futaba. Around 1444 Futaba evacuees are living in temporary or permanent housing in Iwaki at this time. The director switches between the Saitama location and this location a lot, observing how people are getting on in life. Many are still struggling and the temporary housing in Iwaki is only a slight improvement from the shelter in Saitama. Here in Iwaki is where they establish a so-called "Temporary Town". On December 27th 2013 the last five people leave the shelter in Saitama. There is also another visit to the exclusion zone, and some more personal stories, but the two mayors' stories garner the most attention, and tell a story reflecting the larger discourse concerning nuclear power nationwide. The discourse of the *nuclear nation*.

Radioactive, or RA (2013)

Using footage recorded during his time with Futaba's evacuees, Funahashi also put together this short film running under 40 minutes long. Here the interview material, activities, and meetings focused on are all related to the dangers and fear of radiation.

Futaba

As described in the previous chapter, towns that are hosts to nuclear power plants have enjoyed great benefits, at least initially. Now we take a closer look at Futaba based on information

provided in the films. Before the nuclear power plant called Fukushima Daiichi was built, Futaba was a small and impoverished village. It was a desolate place, so its land was used for a variety of agricultural purposes throughout its history. At some point it was an airfield, later it was used for salt-production, and then halfway through the 20th century TEPCO started surveying the land and purchased the property in 1960. In 1966 the Prime Minister approved the construction of the first reactor, which began the following year. Mayor at this time was Seitaro Tanaka, claiming (NN2, 0:53:57) “We need the nuclear plant to keep this town afloat”. At this time most people were excited that a huge corporation was in town, and in line with how nuclear energy had been promoted as discussed above, the most of the town ended up not perceiving it as a major risk and went along with the mayor’s proposition. There was a huge initial economic boost associated with the first four reactors built in the Futaba area, and in 1979 reactors 5 and 6 were put into operation. Mirroring the general Japanese economic flourishing at this point in time, partially thanks to nuclear power, the town became rich and shopping streets became lively.

A sample of testimonies from some of the elderly evacuees, present in Futaba throughout these decades (NN2, 0:55:00): “People didn’t have to leave town anymore to find work.”, “People thought the plant was good because it meant money. Farmers would go there to do some weeding whenever they had spare time. They got extra cash from the plant.”, “I used to run a coffee shop. And there would be these lineups to get in. We were making money hand over fist […] My income doubled every year.”, “It provided the town with money, even if we trash-talk it now. So for those 40 years, it was a godsend”. They speak proudly of those days, and this pride even has its physical manifestations in two large banners on the main roads into Futaba boasting how nuclear power is good for the community, society, and the nation. This is reflected in how Futaba’s elderly evacuees speak of the ‘good old days’, their positive memories are an essential

core aspect to the town's identity. Or at least they were. But now their attitudes towards nuclear technology has been flipped upside down. The collective memory of the town, the town's identity, and people's individual memories and identity beg modification in the wake of 3.11. The most well-documented case of this process is found in the town's mayor, as he was an active proponent of nuclear energy before the disaster, and faced a personal struggle afterwards.

Mayor Idogawa: Representing the Collective

Katsutaka Idogawa, mayor before and after the disaster confirms the testimonies given by the elderly residents. He also explains how the town used to be self-sufficient, claiming that 'nuclear money' was roughly half of the town's income for some time. However he also sheds more light on what happened after the initial financial boom. The major benefits were actually short-lived. The property value surrounding the nuclear power plant started dropping quickly. The five-year period tax re-funneling mentioned in the previous chapter ended. As a result construction projects initiated enthusiastically during the boom were halted, and from the late 80s onwards the town spiraled towards bankruptcy. By 2007 Futaba was one of the 10 poorest towns in all of Japan. This led to new plans for building more reactors, to secure more income for Futaba. These plans halted for a while in the 2000s when it was uncovered that TEPCO had been falsifying maintenance reports. Nevertheless, Idogawa pushed for those plans again, secured the funds, and ironically enough the construction was scheduled to begin in April 2011. Idogawa was clearly a strong advocate of nuclear plants before the disaster, they brought his town and its people wealth. So how has the disaster impacted his attitude and memories?

Right after the disaster, in the beginning of the first film, Idogawa's main concern is providing as much care, resources, and information for the evacuees as he can. During some private conversations he contemplates the past as described above, and the regretful tone in his

voice is tangible. Later in 2011 he seems determined to resist the government's plans to buy up the land, an effort for decontamination should at least be made instead. He is willing to fight for the town, to reclaim it as soon as possible, stating (NN1, 1:05:05): "I won't let Futaba get wiped off the face of the Earth. People who've had their homes taken from them, how these people are feeling, living in the shadows, has become painfully obvious to me […] It's that refugee feeling that I never want to pass on to future generations". In late summer 2011 a yearly meeting of municipalities from across Japan that host nuclear plants is held to lobby the government on the issues affecting them. Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Banri Kaieda as well as Minister of Environment Goshi Hosono are present, except both leave right after making the opening statements, due to other obligations. The camera picks up Idogawa with a downturned, contemplative expression. Only after the Ministers leave is the floor opened for comments from all the municipalities' mayors. Idogawa's brief but powerful speech is as follows (NN1, 1:08:30):

> I'm representing Futaba. I want to know why we're being made to feel this way. It's frustrating. It's honestly humiliating. What were we believing in all this time? Why did we bother trying to improve our town? We used the subsidy money to carefully maintain our town's infrastructure. And we've left it all behind. Was the money put to good use? What were we thinking when we accepted a nuclear power plant into our community? I think about it day and night. What does the nuclear power committee think? When you came and explained it to us, you lied, by saying that it was safe and secure. But we, who trusted and believed you, can no longer live in our own town. All we really want is to live the way we did before all this happened. Please let us do that. We're tired of all the waffling. We're sick of it. I've been exposed to radiation. We've been asking the

> government to test us for radiation exposure. But nothing's been done, "You are the priority.", "We'll do it. We'll do it right away.", "We'll do something so please just wait.", we believed those words and waited patiently. Who's responsible for this? You people need to smarten up.

Contrasting his attitude towards nuclear power now, to how he explained the benefits and his advocacy in the past, it is a powerful, though not completely unsurprising shift. He is nearing the end of a process of transforming his attitude, his memory, and his identity, in order to come to terms with the recent harsh reality. Moreover he has become vigilant and by confronting the crowd gathered at this meeting is challenging them to reflect deeply as well. At the end of the first film he summarizes to the camera (NN1, 1:24:30):

> The power plant only did us 40 years of good. And in those 40 years Futaba went in the wrong direction. And accumulated a lot of debt. I've been thinking about the pros and cons of nuclear plants. I don't know what kind of reparations TEPCO has in mind. But we have to take back what we've lost. Just covering damages isn't enough. We won't be benefitting in any way. Our town's image is down the toilet. And then there's discrimination too. Children and their young parents are saying they won't live there anymore. That means families are uprooting. Now I realize that the cons far outweigh the pros. I've come to think that it was wrong to invite the nuclear plant into our lives. I have a feeling that ever since the plant was built we in Futaba were swimming in radiation as a community. But the people in Tokyo who weren't being soaked with radiation? They prospered.

He provides the key narrative of the past, as framed from the present. Being in a sense the foremost representative of the town, one might regard this person as an embodiment of the

collective mind, or at least its majority. The complete u-turn is evident, and town and its community will clearly never return to the way it was.

Sadly, more than a year later, as progress has been limited, mayor Idogawa is forced to resign due to a vote of no-confidence by other members of the Town Council. As he leaves there is an emotional goodbye with dozens of townspeople giving him flowers and applause. He reassures them that he will still do what he can to support them and their children.

Decontamination Waste Storage: Taint vs Absolute Loss

One of the main issues relating to Idogawa´s resignation was the storage of contaminated waste resulting for decontamination efforts. He wanted a different solution than what the government was posing, which was having a designated zone in Futaba where this soil would be stored and piled up. As a community representative explains in a meeting attended by Prime Minister Naoto Kan, in the short film (RA, 0:29:40): "The decontamination work is pointless. Do you know where all that contaminated soil goes? They pile it up and put a tarp over it, but it's half-open, a meter above the ground. […] You'll never be able to eliminate all the radiation. Not unless you cut down all the trees in the mountains first. You can't imagine our pain". The government's plan for the interim storage site does include the condition that the waste will be disposed outside Fukushima after 30 years. Nonetheless it is clearly far from ideal. Even if the storage site was not there, Futaba would retain an image of being 'tainted' for decades to come. Add in a zone with thousands upon thousands of large black bags, even if contained inside sturdy walls, it changes the face of the town completely even if the rest were to be rebuilt to a pre-disaster state. As strong as the community attachment and the desire to return home might be, this plan throws a major shadow over even the most optimistic of recovery visions.

The Futaba community appealed this plan, and when a congressman attempts to give them the government's perspective he more or less gets booed away by the residents. There is a major dilemma here. Given the current scenario, what would be better? Wait until enough time passes, which will mean many decades in most of the town, until the radiation drops down to an acceptable level? Support the government's current decontamination effort? Which really just means concentrating it to a specific area within the town as much as possible. Or give up on ever returning to Futaba at all? None of these are ideal or even satisfying in the slightest to most of Futaba's evacuees, and making a choice is extra difficult considering how the official information and estimations keep changing. In an information meeting in the spring of 2014 concerning the interim storage site former mayor Idogawa voices his frustration one final time (NN2, 1:45:20):

> I am extremely upset about this. You have no right to tell us to do such-and-such after taking away our town. We are all living within the law, but you people are a different story. What are you even doing here? We're all dead-set against this. How did we even get to this point? It's absurd. We're here because of TEPCO's negligence. Why aren't they represented here today? And I want to remind you that the Town of Futaba never agreed to this. And we've been voicing our opposition since the beginning. But here we are at this outrageous information session. I'm extremely angry about this. Even while I was still mayor, I've never had a sincere word from any of you at the Environment Ministry. How is this info session even happening? You call this a democracy?

Another speaker from neighboring town Okuma adds the bold statement (NN2, 1:46:33): "It's wrong to make us bear the brunt of this disaster. Final disposal should be in Tokyo, since they used the power we produced". Another noted: "So you'll compensate up to here, but if we're

over there, we need to go back? Are you crazy?", and "Do you have any idea how many times our community has been divided? Divided by compensation rules, by radiation zoning… and here we go again. Now you say you'll pay us off with subsidies to compensate for our homes, but wait a minute. That money depends on the fact that the town exists and that we all live there. What the hell happens to us if the town disappears?". In response, all the Ministry's representatives seem to be able to muster is "We currently don't have an alternative plan available".

With no alternative plan available, the current plan appears to move forward, and the community seems powerless to oppose. By the end of the second film the director and the new mayor, Shiro Izawa, visit one of the trial sites for the decontamination effort, showcasing a vast sea of black bags filled with irradiated soil. Even now, radiation levels are still over 60 times higher than before the accident, and it only gets worse the closer to the plant one gets. Mayor Izawa and his assistant take a walk through Futaba's main shopping street, the picture of a ghost town, and nostalgically points out certain shops and restaurants and his memories associated with them. One restaurant in particular he remembers as being a place where you can sit down and talk with anyone, an important location in the community. Most of the owners of these shops survived and have moved on to different locations throughout Fukushima. He laments (NN2, 1:37:00): "All our lives changed because of the earthquake and the nuclear accident. Our community's been torn apart". He longs for the past, as does almost all of Futaba. Just like the previous mayor he clearly has the people's best interest in mind, but virtually powerless as he is, he seems to reluctantly accept the government's storage plan. They will have to find a place for it in the narrative of Futaba, because giving up on returning for ever is not an option, the community attachment is too strong, at least for the core community. If and when they can start

returning to the town, which might be decades away, Futaba's identity will have to be reinvented. One perhaps incorporating victimhood, but also with potential mnemonic silence concerning issues such as the storage site.

The Elderly: Futility

The following sections shall focus on the evacuees in their varying post-disaster experiences. How do they attempt to come to terms with the disaster and their current unstable living situations as refugees? In the first half of the first film they are mostly seen, and talking about, their current situation. The living standards at the shelter in the high school are low. The people are crowded and uncomfortable and the food is bland, as attested to by both the camera and several brief testimonies. This is only a month after the disaster, clearly the evacuees are still processing the enormous initial shock, and focus on their basic survival at the moment. Throughout the next few months their lives appear quite dull. Though there are some communal activities being organized occasionally, such as morning group exercise, most of their time appears to be spent doing nothing. A ninety year old lady points out that she does not want to die here in this shelter. This is followed up by more images of seniors sleeping. Japan's aging society tends to be overrepresented in rural areas, and the Futaba community is no different. After the disaster some of them are left without families, such as one elderly lady who celebrated New Year's (a typically family-oriented holiday in Japan) with a handful of others in the same situation, reminds us that (NN2, 0:11:40): "People with family are fortunate. Despite everything". In spring 2013 it is announced the high school shelter in Saitama will be closing down. At this time there are 123 residents left. Reaction of an old man (NN2, 0:52:00): "What's closing down? This place. When? … But I have nowhere to go". For these elderly residents more than anyone the sense of futility of holding on to potentially returning becomes more and more apparent. In

one of the debates in the second film surrounding the storage of decontamination waste a Futaba man now living in Iwaki exclaims (NN2, 0:48:20): “We’re all gonna die here. In 30 years, most of us will be 100. We haven’t got the time for this”.

Temporary and Core Communities

Again it becomes abundantly clear that these people are stuck in limbo. For years they have been living in subpar conditions, receiving unclear information, if any at all, about whether or not they can return to their hometown in the foreseeable future. The concept of *home* by this point is too muddled and essentially has become hollow for these people. As dear as they may hold its memory, their old home is gone, their current location is both temporary and not even a place most of them want to call home, and their future is a big question mark. Unless they relinquish their emotional ties to Futaba as they knew it. Move on. But that would mean sacrificing an integral part of their identities. At another meeting in 2013 a community leader points out the essential issue (RA, 0:21:15): “The government needs to admit that we can’t go home. Because it’s stopping us from moving on. They should apologize, buy up whatever land is a write-off, and let us move forward with our lives. Life is short, it’s only a few decades. It’s shameful if they keep us in limbo for 4-5 years. Once they decide there’s no going back, it’ll be hard to take, but we’ll accept it. Everyone will find a new direction. But our hands are tied”. This is something that has likely been on everyone’s mind but now is finally being spoken out.

On the other hand, it is important to note that, having little or no family and having been uprooted from their homes, in shelters like these all these people sometimes have is each other. As such, new, small, communities manifest. However, these communities are for the most part only temporary. One by one people have to move out of the shelter, and only a core community remains. As mentioned earlier this core community that remains together ends up in Iwaki. On

New Year's Day 2013-2014, in the Temporary Town in Iwaki a Futaba festival dating back 300 years was held in the main housing complex. It features a Dharma doll, a symbol for good luck. These sort of events are vital to holding what is left of the community together. Preserving long-standing rituals that are vital to the collective memory and community identity. Despite being in a different place, people joyously participate. This is exemplary of how the people carry the community with them. They still wish to return to Futaba, but they do the best they can do, and in the end one might argue that it is chiefly the shared activity of a group of people that manifests their local culture and identity. Now this thesis will take a closer look at several specific cases of evacuees that are followed more closely throughout the films, reflecting different strategies of coping applied by the people of Futaba that either move on or remain with the core community.

Nakai Family: In the Face of Absolute Loss

Many have lost loved ones in 3.11, such as Yuuichi Nakai, a man in his thirties, and his father Ichiro Nakai. Yuuichi's mother was swept away by the tsunami and her body had not been recovered at the time of their first interviews. She had been taking a stroll near the ocean just as disaster struck. Because of the dangers presented by the nuclear power plant, they have been unable to search the area for the remains of missing people. They are unable to give their mother and wife a proper burial, and blame the nuclear power plant directly, as Yuuichi states (NN1, 0:20:45): "If you look at it like that, nuclear power plants are just wrong aren't they. If there was no power plant we could've searched right away, and if she was alive she might've made it". As Yuuichi and Ichiro go on their first temporary visit to the exclusion zone they carry a camera with them, and some of their footage is included in the first film. They go to their old house, or where it used to be. Nothing is left in this area but bare foundations of houses. It is an emotional return. They brought incense and flowers to pay respect to the mother that passed away. As

Ichiro is placing these while Yuuichi is hurrying him. Unfortunately their time is very limited so they are forced to be very quick about it, also having to visit friends' houses. This is all the ceremonial grieving they can do right now, a rushed and frustrated effort whilst also processing the unimaginable shock of seeing a vast landscape of nothingness where their home, their town, and their community used to be. For them it seems that there truly is nothing left to return to. Despite how it seems, when they end up moving out of the shelter into temporary housing, they deliberately choose in a location in Fukushima, to be closer to Futaba. Ichiro claims to still want to return someday, with a surefire expression. This father and son have literally lost everything except each other. Nonetheless they are still drawn to return home, even to the point of finding comfort of simply moving geographically closer. Their hometown is part of who they are, and they cannot imagine relinquishing it.

Suzuki Family: Salvaging Treasures and Moving On

Shizuo Suzuki appears to be a man in his late fifties, with his wife bound to a wheelchair. He worked as a subcontractor for TEPCO for 27 years, processing radioactive water. Spending almost three decades dedicated to the nuclear power plant, it was clearly a significant part of his life. They explain how this shelter is the fifth place they have been evacuated to within the span of about three months, and now he and his wife leave the shelter for temporary housing where they will live alongside his daughter and her family. Shizuo actually appears reluctant to leave the shelter, likely because he enjoyed the temporary community they were in. However, being with their family seems to comfort them a great deal. Adjusting to the geographical surroundings, away from the ocean, might be the hardest thing for them now. After wondering whether fish will still taste good this far from the ocean, he says at the dinner table (NN1, 0:26:00): "It feels like we're slowly getting back to normal. Little by little. But it's hard to get used to this land. We

can't get used to it", his wife nodding in agreement adds: "Yeah, the difference is like night and day". They have been part of a coastal community for their entire lives, it is something they would clearly prefer to hold on to, but given their situation, they seem somehow accepting of having to move on. Interestingly, a different coping strategy they employ that also gives us a new perspective on memory is ties to objects.

Shizuo's daughter Maki return to their old house in Futaba, which is still standing, but trashed and has clearly been flooded by the tsunami. They are retrieving a list of items as per every family member's request. They are only allowed to bring one garbage bag per person, two persons per household. Special attention is given to Shizuo's DVD collection and a specific jacket for his wife. Though this area was not completely destroyed like that of the Nakai family, it was highly damaged nonetheless, and is still within the highly irradiated exclusion zone. On the bus ride back Maki and her husband sit in silent contemplation for a while, until she says to him (NN1, 0:55:35): "I don't need to go back there. Do you disagree?", to which he replies: "We have no choice". Their next stop is a graveyard where their grandparents' graves are situated. Half of the graves have been knocked down and swept away, though theirs are still standing. When Shizuo and his wife receive their retrieved items they are highly content. They reminisce over memories linked to these items. They watch the recovered DVD's of their daughters' weddings, a part of their family's collective memory manifest. Also other articles like the clothing get them very emotional, the wife mentioning she cried when she first saw her special jacket again. Shizuo says (NN1, 1:01:39): "You don't realize how attached you are to something when you can see it or use it whenever you want. But when you can't have it… It's great to have it back". Overall this family seems to have been adjusting well to their new house. Though it is still temporary housing, it is a longer term location than their five previous shelters. At the end of

the first film Shizuo declares (NN1, 1:23:25): “We’re not going back […] Our lives won’t be any different. If anything, things might get worse. We’ve already moves our lives out here. We live here now”. Essentially a practical attitude to have, which stands in stark contrast with many others. The Suzuki family appear to have accepted to loss of Futaba, and finds comfort in the few salvaged pieces of personal property.

Widow Umeda: Holding On to What Remains

At the outset of this analysis it was mentioned that when construction of the power plant began decades ago the public was in favor, nonetheless there was an opposing minority, of which Takako Umeda’s late husband was a part (NN1, 0:54:00): “We opposed it. We were against construction, but… He said that if there was an accident, even the pro-nuclear people would abandon it. It’s not something you can escape. And he said we’d never be able to go back. He predicted that Futaba would be split in two”. He passed away in 2006, before seeing his gloomy prophecy actually coming true. As a result of what happened in the present, the memory of this man from the perspective of the community as well suddenly transforms, his status elevated. Takako mostly reminisces over the time they used to run a textile dyeing shop together. She holds on to those memories whenever she cannot sleep and they bring her comfort. In spring 2013 she goes back to Futaba for her 11th temporary visit. Her house is standing but a complete mess on the inside. It seems like every time she comes back she cleans up bit by bit, as much as she can with her frail body and the less than two hour time-limit. The camera observes her sweeping up dust, and replacing rodent repellent packets. She finds a picture of her late husband and ponders leaving it in the house or bringing it with her (NN2, 1:02:44): “I think I’ll leave it and have him watch over the house. Sorry darling, forgive me” she says as she place the picture in an upright position on the floor. As she leaves the house we see her putting duct tape on the

sliding doors from the outside. (NN2, 1:03:25): “I know this is pointless, but…”. And as she walks away she utters: “Boy is it ever lonely, not having family, not having kids. I’m all alone”. She wants to preserve and protect what she still can here. Despite being aware that it might be futile, perhaps never able to actually move back there. But the memory of her husband, much of which seems to be tied to this house as well, are essential to her. She ends up leaving the high school shelter and moves into a rental home in Iwaki, apparently joining herself with the core community there that seems most strongly set on returning some day.

Saito Family: Forsaking a Legacy

The Saito family is one of the oldest in Futaba, going back 600 years. Their ancestors were samurai warriors belonging to the Soma clan. The mother of the family explains (NN2, 1:25:00): “We’ve had the farm for 16 generations so we were asked to do our best. And we tried. What a sad state of affairs. I’m full of regret”. As she is asked about her house in Futaba she responds: “I’m sure it’s been taken over by weeds. We had all these pine trees and boxwood bushes too. They’re hundreds of years old. Our ancestors planted them, so we took good care of them. I worry about all those trees too”. She shows pictures of the house. “[It has been there] from 1927, the year I was born. The lumber was cut in the first year of the Showa era, all the materials were prepared, and it was built in the second year”. She goes on in detail about the construction and layout of the house. The place where she lived for 84 years, until the disaster happened. In this family all weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies took place at this house. They even held film screenings for the community. The Saito family’s farm has a superbly rich history, central to the community and, moreover, this place could not be more essential to the identity of the Saito family. It has a place in the collective memory of the entire town, but what now? The house is located inside the area that has been designated for the interim waste storage site. The family has

received a property evaluation from TEPCO. Before the accident it would have been worth $500,000-600,000. Now they will get compensated less than a third than that. The material loss is great, but the emotional loss perhaps even greater. Her son adds (NN2, 1:29:35): “It’s the central government that ruined our way of life. They need to take the lead on this. This can’t be settled with just buying and selling. It’s totally the wrong mentality. And that mentality pisses me off”. There is no clear explanation of what it is instead that he is expecting. This too seems to be a returning issue. People are stuck in limbo, and a lot of people do not know what exactly they want. They want their old Futaba back, their old town and its community, but this is definitely impossible. Some move on, but some remain paralyzed by the losses, in this indeterminate state of wondering where to go from here.

Farmer Yoshizawa: Unmoving

The final case to be discussed is an oddity. Fourteen kilometers from the nuclear plant, within the official exclusion zone, lives a livestock farmer who refuses to relocate; Masami Yoshizawa. There are signs put up around his farm exclaiming phrases such as “I’ll die for my herd!”. His 350 or so cows roam freely in the desolated area now, and come back when they please. He acknowledges being exposed to radiation, but he could not escape because he could not leave his cows behind. The government wants them culled, but he is committed to letting them live. He feels his destiny is linked with theirs. For him it seems not so much to be the homeland itself that he cannot relinquish, but his stock. For the sake of argument one might say that we can regard these living beings as a community that he is the leader of. This is not an issue of memory, but a community attachment to these cows that truly have nowhere else to go, as nobody will take in a bunch of irradiated cows. In the second film three years later he is still there, looking after his herd, ignoring official orders to leave. The cows are showing more and more signs of a range of

radiation-induced ailments such as cysts. But as long as they can “eat, sleep and shit” Yoshizawa deems them happy and refuses to abandon them.

V: Conclusions

At the outset of this thesis the following questions were posed: What exactly has been disrupted through this disaster? How do communities and individuals that have been abruptly uprooted by a nuclear disaster cope? How do they reconstruct their collective and individual memories and identities? And how do they reframe nuclear energy? To the first question the answer is brief: what has been disrupted is the status quo. The normal state of being that, to elderly rural residents especially, is something that in general has been quite stable dozens of years. Futaba's firmly rooted community has been displaced and falling apart ever since, and only a core community of perhaps a tenth of the original community remains in the Temporary Town, their sights set on returning some day.

A number of coping strategies have been examined. Through the discussion of the five cases of residents' personal stories it became abundantly clear that there is a large variety. Some move on, and some hold on, in different ways. Those that move on might do so reluctantly, such as the Saito family that is all but forced to sell their historically important house. A house with a significant place in Futaba's collective memory, that survived 3.11 but nonetheless will disappear. Some others that move on do so slightly more readily from a pragmatic approach like the Suzuki family. Their attitude is one of not having much choice in the matter. Interestingly, they seem to be content with salvaging their dearest personal objects. Their focus is not so much on the town's community as it is on the preservation of their family, and retaining their precious personal memories, honoring the past but moving forward.

Now there is a core community that actively tries to fight to get Futaba back as soon as possible in the best shape possible. But there are also those on the sidelines, such as the father and son of the Nakai family who have lost both all their possessions as well as the third member

of their family, yet still yearn to return. This exemplifies what has been described as community attachment in the abstract sense. We actually do not even see them interacting with anybody else, but they are still pulled towards Futaba. What they want to return to is something intangible, the feeling of the town and its community, the sentiments that the collective memory of the town embodies. Then there is the widow Umeda, who describes herself as having nothing left, except for the house in the exclusion zone that she lived in with her husband for so many decades. She cherishes the house and maintains and protects it. While the Saito family is going to lose their house, she might still be able to return to hers. But the chances of it happening in her lifetime are slim and she knows it, yet still she holds on to hope. Lastly, there is the farmer Yoshikawa who actually never left. His identity, and therefore by his own choice his destiny, is tied to his cows. On the surface this might appear as foolish denial instead of coping, but rather it is complete acceptance. He knows the risks but he does not leave. He does not even seem interested in when or how Futaba is rebuilt, it will clearly not happen any time soon, but he appears at peace with it, he is happy as long as his cows are happy.

As these cases prove, there are many different ways in which memory is bound to either a place, people, or objects. Where the highest importance is placed is an individual issue that depends on the person and the context, and how flexible they deem their own identity. Shifting the perspective to the collective, however, additional answers surface. Mayor Idogawa's story is arguably the most essential and unique piece of data these documentaries offer, and he represents the community in different ways. He was personally responsible for pushing Futaba towards even more nuclear reactors, despite the risks. The economic promise was too great and too necessary to pass up, just as how they were made to appeal to nuclear host towns throughout Japan for decades. He did what he thought was best for the town at the time, and truly all he did

was expand on the already established identity of the town as being proud of its relationship with nuclear energy. After the disaster the betrayal by the nuclear power he and his town suffered shattered his identity, as it did the collective's. In reconstructing this identity the town's memory of nuclear power was completely overturned. It was not worth it. Now all he wants, and all they want is to be rid of it. And yet even in the best case scenario they will be stuck with the radiation and its waste for decades to come.

The mayor is the link between the various levels; between the individual and the community, and between the local community and the nation. In addition to taking effective action that shapes the future narrative of the town, it is the mayor's job to put the core community's collective memory into words, and in doing so creates the narrative that spreads into the rest of the nation and the world. Aided by media, such as Funahashi's documentaries, these stories feed into the larger collective. A larger collective whose attention towards these issues is unfortunately dwindling, which is a process that should be resisted. Japan's highly convoluted history with nuclear energy shows that the capitalist elites somehow always tend to get their way by managing the public mainstream discourse. More independent sources such as these documentaries are therefore vital to keep a transparent debate surrounding nuclear power going, with the whole nation engaged, because nobody wants another 3.11.

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