# "They don't understand how we feel"
# An affective approach to improving the 'best practice' of community-based post-disaster recovery


**By:**

Anna Vainio


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School of East Asian Studies


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# Abstract

This thesis presents a critical investigation into the community-based approaches on post-disaster recovery, approaching the subject through the case of Japan after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Community-based approaches form a part of the general participatory turn over the last decades, with the purpose of engaging citizens into decision-making processes by following four key principles: participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity. The popularity of these approaches has given rise to their status as the global 'best practice' in the field of development, and post-disaster recovery more specifically, thus warding further attention and investigation.

Despite the popularity of these approaches, I will show how community-based approaches often lead to inconsistent outcomes, and communal dissatisfaction toward the processes themselves remain prevalent. In Tohoku, this dissatisfaction was emphatically articulated by majority of the participants through the utterance *kimochi ga wakaranai* (they don't understand how we feel). The thesis therefore asks, why does dissatisfaction remain rife despite the adoption of community-based recovery in Tohoku? While many authors propose that this dissatisfaction is primarily a procedural problem leading from a gap between theory and practice, I argue that the problem is related to the epistemological and methodological starting points of recovery that divide recovery and trajectories for the future into endogenous and exogenous domains and discourses.

Where the exogenous discourse of the authorities emerged from motivations to understand how this disaster was able to take place and how in the recovery vulnerabilities that led to its onset could be minimised, for the locals it was the affective intensities of their personal experiences and intimate daily existence within the post-disaster landscape that drove their understanding of the events and desired shape for the future of their communities. Through the ethnographic data analysis, the research finds the dominant exogenous discourses did not resonate with their localised daily experience of the recovery, with the discrepancy in the visions creating tensions and dissatisfaction toward the recovery process and paradoxically distancing the communities from the 'community-based' recovery.

# Notes to reader

***On the spelling of Japanese names***

All Japanese names in the thesis use roman transliterations as provided in the source text. When full Japanese names are provided they follow the Japanese conventions of surname, first name.

Gender is indicated throughout the text by use of pronouns she/her and he/him, as well as through titles Ms./Mr. Gender is indicated to show the reader the consideration the author has placed on representation in the selection of quotes and episodes from across the pool of participants. Marital status is omitted from the titles as it is not relevant to the study and presents no analytical advantages.

***On anonymisation of interview participants and places***

Place names and the setting of events and episodes presented in this thesis are the real locations in which this study took place. The author finds this to be important for contextual accuracy and transparency of the research process. All individuals referenced in association with a specific location are genuine people and place connections.

To protect the anonymity of the research participants, all real names have been omitted from the pages of this thesis. All interviews are listed in the appendices and each interview is provided with a reference number that is used throughout the text to provide reference when the interviewees' words are quoted either directly or paraphrased.

e.g. "*QUOTE*" (REF XX).

When stories or episodes involving specific individuals are explored in more depth in the text, the interviewees are referred to using pseudonyms, primarily in the format 'Mr./Ms. + surname'. The pseudonyms are selected randomly from a list of common Japanese surnames, with none of the surnames utilised coinciding with the actual surnames of any of the individuals interviewed for this study. The passages including reference to individuals with pseudonyms are also referenced using the referencing system explained above in order for the reader to trace the specific interview being used in the passage. The pseudonyms are listed in the appendices.

e.g. Ms. Shimizu (REF XX) explained...

***Ethical approval***

The research was granted ethical approval by the University of Sheffield: 005375

***Alphabetisation***

List of references is alphabetised using the Nordic convention for names beginning with Å, Ä and Ö listed at the end.

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# Acknowledgements

As I am writing this, we are mere days away from the second wave of industrial action of my PhD degree. In 2018, I stood with colleagues and PhD Students across the university in the blistering cold, demanding an end to the devaluation of our pension funds. And in the weeks to come, I will be standing outside again, continuing the fight for pensions security, but also against further casualisation and precarious contracts within the Higher Education sector. These actions and the current working culture, pressures, and monitoring within the Higher Education sector have made me weigh my future and prospects within British academia. Working to contract should not be a strategy for exerting pressure against the employer, but a norm, that along with decent wages, working conditions and reasonable expectations can create for a vibrant working environment from which socially valuable research and teaching can emerge. As I begin to build my future in the academia, I will strive to maintain the lessons of solidarity I absorbed on the picket line as my career guide, over personal gratification and advancement.

This research emerged from primarily small and personal motivations of trying to find a way to combine my two passions: the one for Japan, and the one for communities. Before this journey I had never been to the Tohoku region before, and in 2015 when I began my field work, I was nervous of the prospects of landing in this unfamiliar region. All the contacts I made in Miyagi are unique and special, with every encounter not only impacting my research, but me as a person. However, as the reader will note on the pages of this thesis, the man who will be referred to as Mr. Takeda throughout, more than deserves special mention (and his neighbours would undoubtedly agree). Without his patient, enthusiastic and warm support and guidance, my field work would still most likely have been successful, but the depth and paths I was able to follow as a result of our conversations would not have been there had it not been for the friendship I was able to forge with Mr. Takeda.

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Thank you

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# Introduction

Communities in Japan's North-Eastern region, Tohoku, have for a long time lived in a state of incremental disaster brought on by socio-economic decline and depopulation. The loss of a school one day, a hospital another, the merger of municipalities, shuttered streets and the diminishing sounds of playing children. These everyday losses have been constant companions for most of Japan's rural regions for decades, with wider narratives of precarity and national decline intensifying their sense of loss and failure. Communities in Tohoku have lived with a sense of creeping disaster for a long time, with the anticipation and anxiety over the eventual death of communities existing as constant white noise in the background. These issues become all the more severe when the specter of a potential future socio-economic losses meet the realities of a cataclysmic event. On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake shook the region, triggering an 'unprecedented' tsunami, and giving rise to a nuclear disaster and bringing this background noise to the foreground. The sense of incremental disaster of rural decline among Tohoku's residents collided with the immediate and sudden disaster of 3/11, bringing people face to face with problems they had perceived as existing only in the distant future.

For Tohoku to recover from both the disaster and its long-term decline, the Japanese Government has actively promoted a 'community-focused' recovery (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a), that has been enshrined as one of the key principles of the recovery, and built into the financial, operational and legal structures of the reconstruction and recovery

administration. By 'community-focused' the government refers to a process where the municipalities function as the main actors in the recovery, planning, designing and executing the recovery, while engaging local residents into the process in order to provide affected populations a voice in determining the future of Tohoku. This position follows the logic of 'community-based' development approaches which emphasise the importance of localised development, and are widely promoted in a number of fields, representing the global 'best practice' today, (Maskrey 2011, Longstaff et al. 2010, Twigg 1999, Edgington 2017). As a process, community-based approaches can be summarised as taking place close to the community to enable engaged and effective communal participation, through which local communities become empowered to take ownership over the recovery and build more resilient communities. The community-based logic highlights the advancement of four key principles of participation, empowerment and resilience, and proximity with the community lying at the heart of the development, both as the main beneficiaries and actors.

Yet, despite the government's active promotion of Tohoku's post-disaster recovery as 'community-focused', dissatisfaction among the disaster affected communities has remained wide-spread (Kimura et. al. 2014, Tsuchiya et al. 2014, NHK 2015). This paradox in Tohoku's post-disaster recovery is not an anomaly, as similar reports of popular dissatisfaction and failure of community-based and participatory methods have been reported elsewhere as well (Cleaver 2001, Sou 2019a, Davidson et al. 2007, Curato 2018). Authors in several fields note that there appears to be a gap between theory and practice when development moves from abstractions to applications (e.g. Carr 1980, Murphy 1991, Elliot et al. 2002, Kielhofner 2005). Despite the theoretical centrality of the community in the 'best practice' of post-disaster recovery, I began to wonder why are reports of dissatisfaction and voicelessness in post-disaster recovery settings consistently present? And what is the shape, intensity and projections of the voices that are remaining unheard?

For this purpose, as I will further elaborate in this thesis, I carried out a 13-month ethnography in the Miyagi prefecture in north-eastern Japan between September 2015 and October 2016. My analysis centres on 39 in-depth conversational interviews with 45 individuals residing in the disaster affected region of north-eastern Japan, where I did 32 field visits into selected four coastal communities (Minamisanriku, Onagawa, Higashimatsushima and Ishinomaki) and

collected observational and participatory data alongside the aforementioned interviews. Throughout my fieldwork, I spent considerable amount of time in the disaster region, observing the developments and having both structured and non-structured conversations with local residents about their experiences of the disaster and the recovery. From these conversations, and the sheer presence in the post-disaster landscape, an endogenous discourse about the daily experiences and a vision of a common future began to slowly emerge. Both the performance of daily lives and vision for the future that was communicated through this discourse was one centred appeasement with the natural world and the restoration of human and non-human relationships that would enable an affective state of settledness and belonging to emerge. Standing sharply against this hopeful notion, there was however one utterance that I heard time and time again in Tohoku: "*kimochi ga wakaranai*", 'they don't understand how we feel'. This utterance was in particular reference to the authorities, and one that I heard from the mouths of the young and old in each location I visited. The more I heard this, the more I began to wonder why were so many people articulating their experience of the recovery in the same way, despite the apparent simultaneous sense of renewal that their words and communications otherwise exerted? This question seemed to represent the aforementioned sense of voicelessness so often encountered in post-disaster spaces, standing in stark opposition to the 'community-focused' recovery promoted by the Japanese authorities.

While the sense of voicelessness was palpable in Tohoku, I also wanted to understand what locals wanted to convey instead? What were the voices they wanted people to hear, and how they were transmitting their stories? And what could *kimochi ga wakaranai* as a reflection of the constellation of emotive, affective and articulated sense of voicelessness tell us about Japan's community-based approach to recovery? I carried out a thematic data analysis upon return from the field, focusing on residents' views about the community, disaster experience, the post-disaster recovery process, visions for the future, and roles in recovery. My research was carried out in an inductive manner, drawing methodological elements and rationale from grounded theory, exploring the lived experience of individuals and communities under long-term recovery and reconstruction. I found that while there were several competing imaginaries emerging from the post-disaster space, produced by individuals, communities, authorities, civil society actors, and policy-makers alike, there was nevertheless an inherent

duality in the telling of Tohoku's recovery; one produced by the authorities, and one by the local populations themselves, developing into two distinctly separate discourses about the recovery and the future. The local communal understanding of recovery diverged greatly from the meta-narratives produced by the formal agents of reconstruction planning, such as authorities, experts, academics and technocracy, despite their community-based commitments. These latter visions were neatly packaged in reconstruction plans, policies, working papers and reports, aiming to provide a detailed path into the future built on the foundation of scientific and socio-economic knowledge and expertise. Despite the local populations often recognising the logic of the recovery presented to them in the formal plans produced by the municipalities and the government, these plans nonetheless did not resonate with their localised daily experience of the recovery; nor what they hoped for from the future. This discrepancy in the visions not only created tensions and dissatisfaction toward the recovery process among those most affected, but also made it hard to argue for the recovery being 'community-focused'.

Illustrating the lack of understanding by the authorities, frustrated utterances like "come and see for yourself how we live" or "none of them [civil servants] even live here", that I also heard multiple times from local residents gained new urgency and meaning. What these utterances communicated was the imperative of physical presence in these communities in order to understand the intensity and intimacy of the local experiences and desires for the future that resided not only in words, but emerged from the direct bodily and sensory experiences with the local context, the performance of daily life, and the visible reminders of the absence of the past. The story that was being told needed to be heard but also felt for it to be fully understood as local knowledge and aspirations for the future. Against the exogenous discourse of the authorities, driven by efforts to understand how this disaster was able to take place and how in the recovery vulnerabilities that led to its onset could be minimised, for the locals it was the affective intensities of their personal experiences and intimate daily existence within the post-disaster landscape that drove their understanding of the events and desired shape for the future of their communities. The endogenous discourse emerged from the diffusion of bodies and landscapes, the physical context of the recovery, where the performance of everyday life within the context and the interactions of the space shaped this discourse as a deeply affective one.

For the locals, the meaning of the words and descriptions that were uttered could only fully be transmitted when they were juxtaposed with the landscape of simultaneous destruction and regeneration. Without spending time in these spaces, the formal recovery plans were not able to capture the affective intensities that determined the discourses of the local residents, leaving them feeling voiceless and unheard. Exogenous discourses, and their tangible manifestations in national and local recovery plans and architectural designs, were literally external to this affective communal experience, developed in isolation from being physically affected by the intimacy of the context and the people within. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the disconnect and tensions between the exogenous and endogenous discourses for the recovery, and ask how can we make better sense of Tohoku resident's experience of recovery in the context of ongoing demographic and economic concerns, in the landscape of broad-scale national plans for Tohoku's recovery and revitalisation that are conflict with the personal and communal aspirations and future orientations in the local level?

My research therefore addresses the practitioners occupying the space between theory and practice, who as researchers, development workers, policy makers and civil servants, try to navigate and understand the movement between the raw lived experience and the abstractions that we create to communicate these experiences and their meanings. As I will explore in more depth in Chapter 1, despite the good intentions of the 'participatory turn' that gave rise to community-based approaches as a way of understanding local needs and desires (Bherer et al. 2016, Mansuri & Rao 2004, Peterman 2000, Eliasoph 2011), merely applying community-based concepts, principles and language to the recovering context does not guarantee the capturing of local sensibilities and meanings of recovery. While conceptual and theoretical development are vital for improving cross-disciplinary and transnational understandings of phenomena, reapplying these concepts and theoretical principles (such as participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity) back into the unique localised experiences taking place in diverse socio-economic, cultural and political contexts may not always produce practical outcomes that meet the hypothesised objectives. I argue that the reason community-based approaches have remained untransformative is because they have continued to be transfixed on understanding local experience through fixed categories of abstract meanings, rather than trying to create meaning for those categories from the local

experience. As a result, by continuing to subordinate the local experience, community-based approaches are trying to fix a problem before the nature of the problem can be understood.

Conceptual development and clarity are not therefore rejected in this research, as Tim Ingold (2018) writes, "knowledge seeks to fix things within concepts and categories of thought, to hold them to account, and to make them to some degree predictable" (p. 17), where the certainties written into the into language and categories can give us comfort in the direction of travel. However, my research notes that such certainties might also make us blind to the directions that others seek to travel. In my analysis, I have not rejected the key concepts of participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity, but have instead focused on contesting their value as externally applied categories of meaning, rather than emergent notions of the reality on the ground. Throughout the following chapters, I will emphasise that it is not enough for researchers and practitioners to be reflective in order to situate theoretical knowledge into diverse context (Nicholls 2009), they also need to employ methods that: i) are able to uncover competing discourses that emerge from different epistemological positions; ii) lead to diversification of understandings of how different actors construct knowledge and the surrounding reality; and iii) help uncover research and development agendas as acts of power in themselves (Kingdon 1993, Kessler 1990, Majone 2006).

The thesis is therefore not suggesting that we forgo concepts like empowerment, participation, resilience and proximity altogether, but rather that we approach our understanding of them through endogenous ways of knowing and the embodied experience of their performance. I propose that starting from the affective everyday experiences, spaces and individual articulations of the meaning of events and phenomena can build an understanding of what empowerment, participation, resilience and proximity mean in each context for the people most affected. Doing so allows us to better understand how people perform the above principles in their unique contexts and life worlds. By bringing together affect, discourse and context, the thesis approaches affect not as a *theory*, as it is so often described, but as a *methodology* that can be helpful in uncovering the intensities through which people navigate their shaken-up worlds and create articulable meanings for their experiences. Throughout this thesis I will show how a focus on the endogenous does not necessarily threaten the premise and principles of 'community-based' recovery itself, but can

help practitioners to employ new starting points from which to inquire into the processes through which we seek empowerment, participation, resilience and proximity with and within the subjects of development. Importantly, this focus can expose the human costs associated with the affixed certainties within the terms and concepts that we use to develop knowledge about recovery and development practices; and the imperative for their destabilisation.

## The endings and beginnings in the 'post-disaster' space

Within the landscapes left behind by large scale destructions, be they wars, environmental catastrophes, or tsunamis and earthquakes, both beginnings and endings are often seen. The past has been annihilated, while the future needs somehow to emerge from the wreckage. Despite the sharp characterisations of disasters as 'watershed events' or 'blank slates', the space of the post-disaster destruction is neither spatially nor temporally as clear cut as these nomenclatures would have us believe. Disasters present as 'cosmology events', where a sudden loss of meaning caused by a catastrophic event, leads the established system, or what is considered the 'normalcy', to lose its rational order (Weick 1993). What is witnessed in this temporal and physical space, is not emptiness, but what Foucault (1998) terms as 'heterotopia', a space that is more a reflection of what remains outside of its remit than of itself. A disaster can "lift veils" (Curato and Ong 2015), uncovering the development of vulnerabilities and resilience, and how they impact, are experienced, and performed across different communities, revealing power structures that lead to injustices and inequalities to take shape the way they do. While a post-disaster heterotopia can reveal the order and structures of things, offer alternatives, and challenge the existing structures, it is simultaneously the site of governmentality where the existing structures are reinforced (Boano 2011). The duality of Tohoku's recovery that my thesis refers to, is an indication of this tension between the alternative and the normative approaches that operate in the post-disaster heterotopian space.

Disasters are a universal phenomenon, emerging from naturally occurring environmental conditions, human intervention, or accidents. They can be long-term or short-term, sudden impact or gradual. Whatever shape disasters take, today disasters are primarily seen as

sociological events (Crutzen 2006, Quarantelli 1999), where they impact upon human settlements, infrastructure and social and communal life draws the line between characterisations of naturally occurring phenomenon and a disaster. While the impact of natural hazards from a sociological perspective is the greatest in densely populated and urban areas, disasters of course regularly take place in depopulating, ageing and economically struggling communities as well (e.g. Cartlidge 2010, Barrios 2017, Smith & Cartlidge 2011, Scott et al. 2012), with the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami being particularly significant as a disaster, affecting a region in a state of socio-economic decline. Despite decades of recognition and research on urban-rural inequalities and efforts to revitalise declining communities, it took a large-scale disaster to shed light on the persistence of discrimination, exploitation and peripheralisation of Japan's rural regions.

This socio-economic context has complicated the region's post-disaster recovery in terms of long-term sustainability, growth, and the cost-effectiveness of rebuilding. By focusing on the endogenous in this context, my thesis thus aims to draw attention to the alternative framework through which to critically examine processes of meaning-making and rebuilding in the wake of disasters and sudden sociological upheavals. My research presents critical discussion on Tohoku's recovery through examples of problematic management structures, policies and practices on the ground, but the purpose of the research is not to present a critique of Tohoku's recovery as the main objective. Rather, through this research I want to direct discussion toward the dominant development practices, through an ethnographic exploration of the experiences of populations affected by a landscape-scale disaster in Japan. Naturally, this does not mean that the Japanese disaster is not unique, or that the institutional and social characteristics present in the country do not produce specific characteristics for recovery to take place. Rather, I emphasise that all disasters present unique environments for recovery and argue that despite individual experiences being individual, they can nonetheless offer us concrete ways of beginning to see the way larger frameworks of post-disaster recovery and development operate. A useful methodology for this approach is to reflect upon the experiences, feelings, intensities and affects that those structures induce in people across disaster affected regions and localities.

While the demographic and socio-economic conditions of Japan are unique due to their extremity (Tsuya 2014, Anderson et al. 2014), many nations particularly in the global north, are expected to be heading down a similar sociological development path of further accelerating decline in birth rates and rapid ageing. Despite these socio-economic and contextual differences however, the approach to post-disaster recovery and reconstruction in Japan nevertheless reflects international guidelines, learning and 'best practice' (e.g. the Hyogo Framework for Action), and has provided a context of study from which a large number of studies aimed at international disaster recovery communities have been produced (Gaillard & Gomez 2015, Gomez and Hart 2013). With notions of vulnerability, resilience, adaptation and mitigation at the heart of international debates on combatting disaster events and recovering from them, Tohoku's socio-economic conditions, regional peripheralisation, poverty, unequal development and government accountability (e.g. Jacobs 2011, Rausch 2012, Kohara 2007, Aldrich 2010) nonetheless contribute to these debates in multiple ways. Tohoku's disaster, among other landscape-scale disasters, has therefore played an important role in how international organisations approach the question of disaster recovery, adaptation and mitigation, and what we can learn from the differences and similarities found in the local recovery approaches across a variety of contexts.

The purpose of this research however is not to equate the impact of disaster events and recovery contexts between the global north and the global south, but rather to highlight the way in which knowledge and learning becomes homogenised in international debates, while at the same time demanding localised heterogenisation of practices. This intertwining of the global and local is sometimes also referred to as 'glocalism' (Hartman 2017, Roudometof 2016). While the directionality of these discourses is often north-south, today, wealthy nations of the global north are increasingly struggling to rescue their populations when natural hazards occur, provide emergency assistance, and support the efforts of victims to rebuild their lives and communities. Critical analyses of the practices that emerge in the global north and are proliferated to the global south under the auspices of 'progress' and growth are thus urgently needed to challenge and renegotiate the community-centred narratives and the global north/global south directionality of development (Bankoff 2001, Nakano 2019). It is pertinent to recognise the problems (in the case of Japan, nuclear safety, infrastructure failures, and slowness of recovery, for instance) that are increasingly dividing populations in

some of the richest economies in the world, their weaknesses revealed when faced with disaster events, and to challenge the established division of the societies into recipients and projectors of global knowledge and learning. While the critical discussion on community-based post-disaster recovery in this thesis is therefore carried out through the specific Japanese case, the research invites practitioners, researchers, and policymakers on various levels to fundamentally rethink the principles that guide global post-disaster recovery processes. Not merely the processes of recovery, but the processes that lead us to develop those processes and plans in the first place. The ultimate aim of my research is to contribute to the critical debates on international policies and discourses of 'best practice', precisely through its examination of a disaster in the global north, thus helping researchers explore the problematic aspects of these globalised discourses and raise key questions about the sustainability of such models.

To link my findings into the broader intellectual narratives, the thesis draws from anthropology, development studies (both community and international), and conflict and disaster literature, while situating itself within the geographical context of Japanese Studies. Within the development sphere, community-based development refers to philosophies, methods, and approaches to development that centres on the community-level, where theoretically the community members become both the beneficiaries and instigators of development (Narayan 1995). As noted above, community-based approaches are the common accepted wisdom in development, being heavily influenced by the participatory turn and diversification of actors involved in the development processes (Bherer et al. 2016). While development studies have adopted the ethnographic emphases on local context and participation, anthropology has gone on the interrogate the everyday experiences and lifeworlds of individuals at the centre of development processes. Throughout the thesis I will be utilising the strengths and intellectual traditions of both fields in carrying out both the data collection and analysis for this research.

As noted above, there is a sense of duality in Tohoku's recovery, driven by exogenous and endogenous discourses. I will show in this thesis, how this duality also has a hierarchy, with the realisation of exogenous and endogenous aspirations allowed in a sequential order, with the official recovery having come to stand in the way of the realisation of localised, communal

and personal objectives. By drawing on literature and insights on 'affect', the thesis explores how the personal fits within social and institutional responses to the disaster event. While affect has been widely *theorised* over the last two decades, my thesis on the other hand explores how affect can function as a *methodology*, helping to understand the affective intensities from which a lot of the development goals and aspirations emerge for the people who are intimately experiencing the challenges that recovery processes are trying to solve. As a result, I will explore affect in conjunction with discourse and socio-physical context of the post-disaster space, focusing on the process through which affect becomes transmitted, arguing that this endogenous transmission process is largely ignored in the formal recovery process, leading to a sense of voicelessness among disaster affected communities.

The thesis concludes that as practitioners and researchers, we must resist the urge to make determinations and try to fix problems, before we understand the nature of those problems. I argue that we cannot fully understand the nature of problems from an exogenous position. By listening to the local stories, narratives and anecdotes, a discourse begins to emerge that can help us understand these problems and how they affect the personal and communal lives of individuals who are directly impacted by them. While through my field work it became clear that the disaster had induced immediate destruction and long-term lingering trauma for those directly affected, I could not ethically escape the positive interpretations of the natural hazard itself and the reflections on the meaning of the recovery that for the local residents appeared to override the common desolate imaginary of the 'post-disaster'. For the local residents, the disaster was not a mere anomaly, or a wrinkle in time, but a profound experience where the survivors felt a 'duty' to reimagine a different kind of a future, both personally and collectively. Both locally and globally. In this thesis I will explore this 'duty' to reimagine through various endogenous notions on the meaning, purpose and process of recovery, and exploring how local residents are developing a cohesive discourse for their collective future. In the empirical chapters of this thesis, I will show how the key principles of community-based approaches, participation, empowerment and resilience, and proximity can be found in the endogenous notions and ideas that emerge from the affective experiences in the recovery space and how they are articulated and transmitted by local residents. Through listening to individual stories, we can learn to build a community-based discourse and practice without imposing our understanding upon the situation.

These concluding remarks and future directions of action resonate with Nabeel Hamdi's (2014) call for 'beginnings that count'. Following Hamdi's argument that development processes often begin from 'big plans' that are developed in order to identify the chronologies, priorities, and objectives of the recovery, but where individual losses are evaluated through the lens of abstract and objectified notions of equity and justice, rather than the real affective losses that people have experienced. Hamdi argues that instead by focusing on the 'small plans', and small stories, we can learn to understand the larger structures that govern the sense of loss in the present, and the direction of the recovery into the future, while simultaneously making difference in the lives of affected populations here and now.

## Locating the narrator

It was a warm summer afternoon when I sat at a restaurant with Mr. Takeda, one of my research participants I had come to know early on in my field work and who will feature heavily in this thesis. We were waiting for dinner with him, his wife, and their granddaughter who they were looking after for the weekend. The granddaughter, a girl of about seven years old, was getting bored waiting for the food to arrive, and to entertain her we started pulling out the contents of our bags and purses. She insisted on seeing my driving license that I happily supplied, followed by a similar request to her grandparents. Upon seeing the pictures of her grandparents in the small pieces of plastic, she noted: "you both look really tired". Mr. Takeda explained to his granddaughter that the driving licenses were quite new, because of what happened in Tohoku: "the pictures were taken right after the disaster, so we were indeed really tired". These experience of the disaster, imprinted upon the faces of Mr. Takeda and his wife in those small images on the driving licenses and still mirrored in their complexions and manners five years later, was picked up by their granddaughter who had no memory or experience of the disaster herself. Suddenly, through this brief and intimate interaction, the pervasiveness of the disaster experience upon the affected populations became clear to me.

This episode is but a small event in the sea of experiences and perspectives that were shared with me during my field work in the Miyagi Prefecture's Sanriku Coast between 2015 and 2016. Yet it was the intensity of these quotidian encounters that suggested that a more grounded understanding of the recovery process was needed. Things such as place attachment, familiar landscapes, social relationships, learning and understanding, how to remember and be remembered, the morality of one's own survival, one's personhood and position within society, all came together in brief exchanges such as this one that cut across generations and geographies on that summer evening. My thesis draws its strength from these personal stories of the affected populations, both those directly affected by the disaster event itself, and those who were affected living in recovering towns afterwards, including the views and experiences of the new arrivals who established their lives in the region after the 11th of March, 2011. The subjectivity of experiences is an important factor in the narrative of this thesis, as it is the often precisely the personal stories that can expose the links with the larger structures and histories that exist around each individual life. It is these structures that affect the way life is experiences, and it is these life experiences that reflect those structures. It can be beneficial to offer a varied and balanced view of phenomena from diverse perspectives, for instance between the affected populations and the authorities in this case.

Although I contrast the perspectives of the affected populations and the authorities, I do not see these positions as mutually exclusive or in full competition with each other. Throughout this research, I have tried to recognise the good intentions of the governmental actors, prefectural government, and local municipalities; specifically, the individual civil servants, community development workers, policy makers, and local residents assuming public roles in the recovery at all levels of recovery governance. Their daily pursuits have undoubtedly been motivated by bringing the recovery to a successful conclusion and supporting local residents in realising their dreams and aspirations. Despite the critiques, and even anger, expressed toward the officials in recovery, the recognition of the element of 'service' toward the recovery by the civil servants was widely recognised both by residents and official recovery actors themselves. My aim is not to dehumanise the individuals who are working for the official recovery, but rather highlight the strong institutional guidance that the recovery has assumed despite its supposed community-focused nature. I do so while trying to question the narrative that has driven this development and its eventual operation in practice.

I have therefore centred the research and discussion on the perceptions of the affected populations, and how they construct their own life trajectories within and outside of the lived reality of the physical reconstruction and the future that is envisioned in the exogenous story of their recovery. How do local residents interpret those trajectories when they become entangled, affected, directed, and enabled by the recovery process happening in their communities. This thesis will show through its empirical analysis, how affect plays a central role in making experiences internally meaningful for individuals and communities, and how those meanings become transmitted and understood only by engaging with the affective through the narrative and contextual aspects of endogenous discourse. The purpose is to understand how local populations are trying to transmit the emergent, yet largely unheard, endogenous discourses about their past, present and future.

## Organisation of the thesis

To weave the above themes into the fabric of the thesis, I will begin by tracing the conceptual, procedural and theoretical background of the notion of 'community-based', with Chapter 1 beginning with an exploration into the context of natural hazards and the disasters they induce, as well as the guiding principles and practices of post-disaster recovery. The discussion is contextualised through the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 2011, with impact, level of damages, emergency management, role distribution between authorities and affected populations, and the foundations of the post-disaster recovery process discussed through the specific case of Japan. However, throughout this description, the specific disaster that took place in Japan is linked to broader narratives of theories of recovery and the notion of 'best practice' as reflected in the Japanese case. The chapter concludes that the post-disaster recovery process in Japan closely follows international guidelines, with the institutional framework within which Tohoku's recovery is carried out, rendering the 'community-based' recovery to a technocratic rather than an embedded and transformative process.

Following this contextualisation of the events of the disaster in relation to notions and theories about community-based and participatory practices, Chapter 2 then explores the entanglements of affect, context and discourse. The chapter outlines how the post-disaster setting gives rise to multiple discourses about the future, but focusing on two: the formal 'community-based' recovery discourse built upon the established learning and 'best practice'; and, the local discourse that emerges from the intimate affective experiences with the disaster and recovery context. I embed my discussion of the context of Tohoku through the work of Japanese and foreign scholars, specifically anchoring the discussion to Numazaki Ichiro's desire for the greater localisation of recovery processes in Tohoku, as well as Uchiyama Takashi's call for the recovery to take as its objective for local residents to reach a place where they can "die in comfort", a deeply affective notion in itself. The chapter presents a theoretical framework for arguing that there is a dissonance between the localised notions of recovery emerging from individuals and communities, and the grand vision for Tohoku presented in the official reconstruction plans on multiple levels of governance. The chapter sets the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the duality of recovery with two distinct domains, demonstrating the resonance between the above-mentioned call by Hamdi for a practical approach in development, with a starting point residing in the affective perceptions, experiences and stories of the local populations in Tohoku.

Following the methodology chapter outlining the research locations, participants and the data collection process, the analysis of this empirical material is presented in chapters 4 through 7, where I critically examine the presentations of entanglements between affect, context, and discourse in how local affected populations are structuring and creating meanings for their disaster and recovery experiences as an endogenous narrative. These experiences are then mirrored and discussed in conjunction with the exogenous narrative for Tohoku's recovery as an example of a community-based approach to post-disaster recovery. Each chapter therefore focuses on the oscillation and tensions between the endogenous and exogenous discourse for the recovery, with the discussion structured around each key principle of community-based approaches to post-disaster recovery: participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity. The key principles of community-based approaches form the uniting thread between the exogenous and endogenous discourses in the discussion, with the analysis centering on exposing the points of discomfort in how the meanings for these

principles become constituted as both knowledge and practices. The oscillation between the exogenous and endogenous narratives shows how despite the overlapping articulated objectives, aims and intentions, the meanings for these principles can be constructed and performed in markedly different ways by authorities and affected populations. The empirical material shows how local affected populations constructed their meanings and discourses primarily through affective experiences. It also shows how the exclusion of these vital characteristics from the formal side of the recovery affected local populations engagement, ownership and motivations in the recovery.

The implications of these findings are discussed in Chapter 8 with the thesis concluding that by setting the life worlds of those most affected by phenomena such as disasters as the starting point of inquiry, practitioners can construct more fitting meanings for empowerment, participation, resilience and proximity. While these findings are not unique as such, with a growing corpus of critical literature existing on the weaknesses of participatory and community-based approaches (e.g. Mohan and Stokke 2000, Williams 2004, Chambers 1994, White 1996, Cannon 2008), I connect these critiques to the growing imperative in understanding the future, and the relevance this bears to community development practitioners. The future in this context is not treated as a mere tangible chronological entity whose on-coming we need to prepare for, but as a philosophical orientation through which we construct meanings for politics, public discourse, and social systems, that is increasingly being steered by notions of uncertainty and risks. Nowhere is uncertainty and the urgency for development more present than in the post-disaster context, but we should treat these events not as mere warnings of what could go wrong, but as sites where structures that induced the catastrophes become exposed, vulnerable for exploration and subject to the search for alternatives. Returning to the discussion of Hamdi's call for "beginnings that count", the thesis further calls for a heightened consciousness of the starting points of community-based approaches among theorists and practitioners. Focusing on the everyday life worlds, knowledge and daily struggles can show us the structure and dynamic of problems better than grand scale strategic planning developed from abstracted theoretical positions. Approaching affect from a methodological perspective can help to challenge and even unlearn established practices, thus aiding the exploration of new and radically different

epistemological positions from which community-based post-disaster recovery processes can be constructed into better and more transformative narratives for development.

*Chapter 1*

# Disasters as more than hindsight: from technocratic analyses to local imaginations

This chapter will problematise the universalist metrics and characterisations of recovery in extant disaster approaches. This is not to say that definitions do not matter, in fact they matter a great deal in disaster contexts. Like Strömberg (2007) states, "the decision about what to call a disaster and how much relief provided depends on who is suffering" (p. 200), with the language that we use about disasters, recovery and the actors within is of vital importance and worth spending some time debating. In order for us to understand the point of entry or a particular position from which we view the suffering in disasters, I will show throughout the unfolding of this chapter that accepting the complexity of viewpoints and their hierarchies has become of particular relevance and importance for recovery and development discourses. In the context where the narrative around disasters today is increasingly centred on the communities directly affected, settling for a specific terminology may be less relevant than exploring tools and methods of enquiry that help us bolster the approaches developed by recovering communities themselves. This chapter, and in fact the entire thesis, will eschew seeking precise answers and definitions, in order to explore the multitude of potential meanings within the complex phenomenon that is disaster.

Within this chapter, I will firstly outline the nature and complexity of the events that saw their onset in Japan on 11 March 2011, debating the relationship between the disaster and its

ensuing recovery. Secondly, I will outline the genealogy of disaster studies through the shifting foci from the physical environmental hazards to the social, cultural and economic context of human societies, and the impact the disciplinary expansion away from technology and engineering centeredness toward social sciences, and the temporal projections of disaster research. Finally, moving from the theoretical positions to that of recovery practice, I will offer a critical exploration into the development of community-based and participatory approaches to disaster recovery, outlining the gap between theory and practice. Returning the conversation to the notion of language, the chapter will conclude that the gap between theory and practice in community-based approaches appears to be a semantic one, where the meanings attached to disaster and recovery-related terminology are bound within separate domains, occupied by actors who speak the same language without understanding each other.

To understand the sociology of Tohoku's disaster, it is however important to place the event within the physical parameters of disaster events in order to understand the scale and impact of the event that I am discussing. The disaster hit Japan at sea off the coast of Honshu at magnitude 9.0, approximately 130km from Sendai and 370km from Tokyo affecting Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures on the afternoon of 11th March 2011 (USGS 2011a). The earthquake was caused by a large plate-boundary slip at the hypocenter off the Tohoku coastline (Chester et al. 2013). It was the largest earthquake in Japan's recorded history, and the fourth largest in the world since 1900 (USGS 2011b). Aftershocks were experienced days after the initial impact and their frequency remained high (JMA 2011). The ensuing tsunami waves reached Japan's entirety, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, with tsunami waves ranging from 10m to 40m across 400km the Tohoku coastline, reaching more than 5km inland (JMA 2013, Reconstruction Design Council 2011a). The tsunami was responsible for the majority of material damages and fatalities, as well as a compounded disaster where Fukushima's nuclear power facilities were damaged (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a). The resulting nuclear incident was recorded at 7, the highest level on the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES), the same scale as Chernobyl (NEA 2014). However, although similar in magnitude to Chernobyl it is argued that the events are different because Fukushima did not cause widespread and immediate health effects (NEA 2014). The true impact of the incident, however, may only be revealed years or decades later.

The Great East Japan Earthquake has been characterised as unprecedented, cascading, complex, and a mega-event, with each characterisation bringing different aspects of the disaster into focus. Large scale environmental disturbances can be referred to as 'landscape-scale disasters' impacting large geographical areas and whose effects are multi-dimensional, affecting the stability and functions of social, political, economic, cultural and psychosocial conditions (Howitt 2012). The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, while in many respects an event that is one of a kind (Smits & Dengler 2011), reflects the consequences environmental disturbances can inflict upon even the most resource-rich nations in the global north. We are witnessing an increasing number of environmental disturbances across the world, with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction reports increases of 40% in flooding, 28% in storm and 8% in earthquakes between 1997 and 2017 (UNDRR 2018). While the vast majority of damages from disasters are sustained locally by local populations (Quarantelli 1999, Paton & Johnson 2001), 'landscape-scale' events such as the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in 2008, and Haitian Earthquake in 2010 have local, national, and global consequences. In the case of Japan, aside from the losses and damages sustained by the local populations themselves, nationally, the breakdown of disaster mechanisms brought on legal and structural changes and catalysed major shifts in public discourse. Further still, the Fukushima nuclear accident triggered an active global discussion on nuclear safety and the viability of the entire industry, leading some countries like Germany to turn to a path of total decommissioning of their nuclear facilities (European Commission 2011, Joskow & Parsons 2012).

Japan lies in one of the most geologically active regions of the world, subject to a variety of natural hazards, some of which are subject to seasonal changes (e.g. typhoons), but most of them constant threats to life and habitation on the islands (e.g. earthquakes). The exposure of everyday life to hazards, combined with rapid post-war economic and technological development has made Japan into one of the best prepared countries against disasters. Yet, the triple disaster left 23,000 people dead or unaccounted for, 470,000 people evacuated out of which 300,000 lost their homes and were forced into long-term evacuation, with the majority of them still unable to return home in 2015 (Reconstruction Agency 2015). More than 500 square kilometres of land was flooded, leading to contamination of agricultural land

and fresh water sources through salination, siltation of canals, and up to 200 million tons of debris (World Bank 2012, UNEP 2011). The initial report to the Prime Minister from the Reconstruction Design Council released in June 2011 estimated the cost of reconstruction and recovery at 16.9 trillion yen, making it the most expensive disaster in the world (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a, UNEP 2011). While some of the blame can be placed upon the unprecedented nature of the disaster, clear failures took place both in the human and technological sides.

Preventative technologies too have their own life cycles (Mileti 1999), with the effectiveness of seawalls against tsunamis for instance being subject to specific conditions on the ground (Nateghi et al. 2016). A tsunami wall in Miyakoshi City was already damaged by previous tsunamis by March 2011 and could not sustain the impact and protect communities behind what was locally dubbed as the 'Great Wall' (Yamori 2013). Many deaths in Tohoku were related to overreliance on such technologies that seem to have suppressed local knowledge and instinctive evacuation (Coulmas 2012, Nakahara 2011, Ando et al. 2011, Suppasri et al. 2013), despite the latter options offering the best protection against adversities (Twigg 2002, Hall 2007). However, as Morris emphasises in a passage from an autobiographical article by Morris (2013) of his experiences from the Great East Japan Earthquake: "Ultimately the success or otherwise of the system depends on how the recipients of such information react, which is a problem beyond the realm of science and technology" (p. 34). Preventative technologies are only as effective as the human response to them.

While studies conducted after the earthquake and tsunami confirm that early evacuation was most effective in saving lives, linked to effective pre-disaster evacuation information and drills conducted in various localities (Yun & Hamada 2012, Sawai 2011, Mimura et al. 2011), there were nevertheless problems in the conveyance of both local and technical information into successful actions. Disaster risk in Japan has increased over the last 50 years, with rural areas being more prone to hazards than highly urbanised regions (Matsunaga et al. 2018). However, prior to the disaster, anticipation for the Tohoku event remained low and the most inundated areas were not designated as high-risk in hazard maps (Geller 2010, Stein et al. 2012), and the local populations did not have prior personal experience of earthquakes of this magnitude in the region. Geller (2010) notes that overall the Japanese government's disaster hazard

predictions have proven inconsistent with real life events and over the last 30 years "Earthquakes that have caused 10 or more fatalities in Japan have occurred in places that it [the government] designates as low risk" (p. 408). Evacuation efforts therefore led to mixed results. Where some relied on local knowledge of tsunamis not reaching so far inland, as was the case with the tragedy that took place at the Okawa elementary school, leading to over 70 children perishing in the tsunami (Suppasri et al. 2013), in others, communal action based on historical tradition resulted in what came to be known as the 'Kamaishi Miracle', where rigourous training and decisive action were the key principles that saved the students and staff at the Kamaishi school (Government of Japan 2013, Suppasri et al. 2013). These incidents reveal a gap, or a clash, between information provided by authorities through hazard maps and warnings that did not always correspond to the unfolding of the actual event, and community knowledge passed on through historical narratives to seek refuge on higher ground after heavy earthquakes (Government of Japan 2013, Suppasri et al. 2013, Asahi shimbun 20.3.2013).

The frequency of natural disturbances to human habitation and communal life in the country is an important factor that makes this research relevant for the Japanese context. As a cascading disaster where a tsunami and nuclear disaster quickly drove the disaster out of control, the events in Tohoku presented multiple challenges not only to the logistics of the disaster response in the hours and days following the tsunami (Holguín-Veras et al. 2014, Taniguchi & Thompson 2013), but also to the still on-going recovery efforts related to permanently displaced communities in Fukushima (Maly 2018), the on-going psychological trauma and the reconstruction and recovery of areas that are rapidly ageing, and in a decades long state of socio-economic decline (Dimmer 2014, Okuyama et al. 2017). Yet Tohoku speaks beyond the Japanese context and helps us address some of the most pressing issues we face globally. The Japanese case exemplifies how some of the wealthiest countries in the world are battling with disaster preparedness, failed safety measures and prolonged recovery periods. One of the central contextual questions within this thesis is therefore why is Japan, despite resources, education, and technological advancements, facing these challenges?

We have associated developmentalism for decades (if not centuries) with the global south, with the donors and recipients of development divided into the global north and the global

south. The way we discuss hazards and disasters on the whole is largely subordinated to modernist cultural discourse, with large parts of the world outside of the global north being generalised as vulnerable and hazard prone (Bankoff 2001). However, as the productivist models of the global north give rise to increasing number of crises that have global consequences, the universality of these models to produce wellbeing for humanity needs to be questioned (Nakano 2019). Similarly, ethical questions and resistance to universalist valuations of development have raised criticism of 'disaster capitalism' (Klein 2007, Sou 2019b). In light of these failures and critiques, an openness to explore alternative visions for the future have also emerged.

In 2012 Ichiro Numazaki a Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Tohoku University published a reflection based on the personal experiences of 3/11 during and immediately after the disaster. He dubbed the events that were still unfolding in his native Miyagi as "too wide, too big, and too complicated to comprehend" (Numazaki 2012). Today disasters are primarily seen as social events, where a disaster is a process causing disturbances to human life and habitation, triggered by an external catalyst, often an environmental one (Mileti 1999, Susman et al. 1983). When we refer to a 'natural disaster', a hotly contested term in itself today, we tend to speak about short-term events caused by an environmental disturbance. If we accept this causal conceptualisation, then the element of a 'disaster' in Tohoku's itself becomes increasingly easier to comprehend. In the case of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, we know where and when the physical process of the cataclysmic earthquake began, how it unfolded, and why it reached the coastal communities with such force. We also know the social and cultural factors that led to unprecedented amounts of death and destruction in these communities: the emergency procedures were not ready for a disaster of this magnitude, people made mistakes in evacuation, and some physical safety measures simply failed under the stress of the oncoming waves. From this perspective there is not much that is inherently complex about the physical sequence of events that took place on and around the March 11th 2011, leading to catastrophic consequences.

However, disaster events remain in crowded and intimate association with complex and often overlapping vocabulary. We talk about approaches to recovery and disaster mitigation that demand 'participation' of local communities to 'build resilience' and 'reduce vulnerabilities'.

Aside from the procedural terminology, we also battle with more foundational concepts of what we mean when we say 'local' and 'community', not to mention 'recovery' and 'disaster' themselves. Disaster, recovery and the associated concepts have remained subject to intense debate and fluidity (Pateman 1970, Rowlands 1995, Davidson et al. 2007, Quarantelli 1999), at times argued to insufficiently capture the full breadth of the phenomenon under investigation (Sou 2019b). What Numazaki's reflection perhaps aptly illustrates, is the sustained complexity of the human experience in interplay with environmental and social forces that haunts individuals, communities, and nations. It is therefore not the question of 'what happened?' but 'where do we go from here?' that rises before us with all its complexities. Curato and Ong (2015) write that "disasters can lift veils", where the accepted reality comes into question, activating our responses, adaptive capacities and bringing about post-disaster growth (Cretney 2016, Shaw & Goda 2004, Sakamoto 2012, Berkes & Ross 2013, Siegel et al. 1999), showing the force of resilience, networks and social capital (Aldrich 2012, Aldrich & Meyer 2014, Paton & Johnson 2017, Norris et al. 2007), uncovering social vulnerabilities and inequalities that expose different populations to different levels of damages (Cannon 2008, Tanida 1996, Elliot & Pais 2006), and opening new avenues for understanding how societies and communities cope with the post-disaster trauma (Hikichi et al. 2016, Neria et al. 2008, Spurrel & MacFarlane 1993, Bourque et al. 2006). Disasters can open doors for novel responses, where a new society is envisioned, but equally they can entrench us into conservatism in search of stability and familiarity amidst difficult changes (Morris-Suzuki 2017, Koikari 2017, Nilson 1995, Mullins & Nakano 2016). Disasters have therefore become accepted as intense sociological moments of humanity and community, often telling us much more about our societies than they do about the disaster itself.

It is not merely the disaster as a physical force of nature that haunts us, with the majority of research focus having moved toward mitigation and preparedness. In this process ways of accounting for complex futures becomes crucial. The interplay between the devastation in the present, left by the physical phenomenon, and the ensuing recovery creates a complex entity. This entity becomes all the more complex when we try to account for its human aspects, which include sociocultural, affective and temporal imaginaries. The moment of the disaster in Tohoku was a seismic shift not only in the crust of the earth, but in the lifeworlds of individuals and communities, through which their pasts, presents and futures became

reassessed and recombined. While Numazaki reflects upon the complexity of the *disaster*, what he actually achieves through his argumentation, is a critical call to understanding the disaster in this larger historical context of Tohoku, its role within the nation, and the significance of the disaster for the future as an on-going long-term process of re-evaluation and recovery. It is therefore not the disaster itself that emerges as a complex entity, but the sociology of the communities within which disasters take place, and how they rebuild their lives from the destruction.

### 1.1. Disaster Gold Rush and the sociology of disasters

Disasters tend to generate a rush of public, academic, media, and creative interest into the various aspects of the disaster experience and recovery. While disasters and post-disaster recovery have today moved from a enviro-technological frame to a sociological one, in order to understand how future is envisioned from the destruction onward, it is important to critically examine how we produce knowledge on disasters, recovery and development in the first place, and what that knowledge looks like for different actors. Throughout this section I will outline how our understandings and foci of disaster events has shifted and show how political and social contexts have become importantly reflected in the language and framings of the directions post-disaster recovery should take.

Gomez and Hart (2013) writing about academic research activities, refer to the rapid and immediate interest in disaster events as a 'Disaster Gold Rush', referring to the short-term nature of research efforts after disasters. Similar trends can be witnessed in creative fields as well, where the Tohoku disaster alone has become subject to hundreds of documentary films since the tsunami. Fujiki (2018) scratching the mere surface, lists 25 such films in his analysis about their contents. The main concern presented by Gomez and Hart (2013) and further by Gaillard and Gomez (2015) toward the disaster gold rush is the quality of the research produced, and the ethical considerations of this behaviour when compared to the benefits the immediate entry to the field might reap, such as access to perishable materials and immediacy of the experience, as argued by others (e.g. Stallings 2007, Bourquet et al. 1997). The disaster gold rush effect has resulted in the trend-like development of disaster research

with a greater number of studies being published on the initial response efforts, with less attention paid to the long-term reconstruction, recovery, and development efforts.

The main concern here lies in the development of concepts and language through which we approach disasters as an intellectual and practical experience. After 3/11, in 2011 and 2012 the number of tsunami-related publications stood at 1300 and 1200 respectively compared to the average of 800 per year in the five previous years, with approximately 60 new publications made available to readers each month (Gomez & Hart 2013, Gaillard & Gomez, 2015). They estimate the average length of the gold rush being two years from the impact, with similar trends noted after other landscape-scale events, such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami (Gomez & Hart 2013, Gaillard & Gomez 2015). With recovery from landscape-scale events normally taking years, a decade as estimated in the case of Tohoku (Reconstruction Agency 2017), it becomes questionable to what degree we can develop an understanding of long-term recovery if the majority of the intellectual outputs are carried out within a two-year window? Iuchi et al. (2015) argue that one of the main contributions from the Government after the 2011 disaster in Japan was the development of common concepts and vocabulary through which we discuss the disaster and recovery. However, from an ethnographic perspective this can problematic, as the concepts adopted at the initial stages of recovery form a register upon which further intellectual outputs and experiences from the communities themselves are often indexed, dwarfing the adoption of concepts and ideas that may incrementally emerge at later stages of recovery, particularly those emerging from the on-going lived experience of communities themselves.

This is not to say that vital research is not being produced in the context of disasters of course, and researchers and practitioners dedicated to the field of understanding disaster events are constantly producing high quality critical outputs and innovations beyond the "gold rush" window (e.g. Barrios 2017). Equally, disaster researchers are increasingly calling attention to inaccurate or misleading terminology, such as 'natural disasters' (Nexo 2015, GNDR 2015, Crutzen 2006), which is still the most commonly used term for discussing disasters caused by natural hazards, despite decades of research into the sociology of disasters and recovery. However, the problem lies in the proliferation of often government and local authority led terminology and their application into practice at the very early stages of recovery. I argue

that this conceptual fixing is part of a broader problem in the field of disasters, and relevant to our understanding of what we mean by the terms 'disaster' and 'recovery' in more general terms, how their relationship to one another is structured, and the relationship these processes have to the everyday lifeworlds of communities.

The word 'disaster' appears frequently in public discourse and media reporting. It is attached to a number of phenomena, ranging from large scale events such as sudden environmental hazards, terror attacks and oil spills to community and family level incidents such as pollution, loss of employment, and poverty. Disasters are both sudden and incremental that pose individual and existential threats. Overall, the word 'disaster' has a negative connotation that tends to induce emotional responses among the immediate sufferers of disasters, and those following their unfolding from afar. Despite decades of research into disasters problems in the conceptualisation of disasters have nevertheless remained 'fuzzy', that in turn induces consequences in the context of disaster mitigation and public policies. We repeatedly find ourselves asking "what is a disaster?" (Quarantelli 2005, Oliver-Smith & Hoffman 1999, Kroll-Smith et al. 1991, Perry 2007) and tens of thousands of studies have been produced trying to understand how humanity can best prepare for and recover from their increasing threat. We have gained tremendous amounts of knowledge from different disasters and how to prepare for them. But the proliferation of short-term immediate research simply cannot convey the role and direction of recovery in the cycles of disaster events that span across generations.

The centrality of humans in disaster events, and human involvement in constructing the conditions for disasters to emerge is broadly emphasised today. For instance, Picou and Martin (2006) divide disasters into natural and technological disasters, with the former being out of control of the human subject, while the latter one is caused by humans, both having negative consequences to the human habitation and society that is affected. Another characterisation is human-induced and environmental hazards (Furedi 2007). One of the most commonly cited ways of describing disasters comes from Quarantelli (1999), whereby disasters are not disasters unless they have an impact on the human settlement either through negative effects on the built environment or the social fabric of the community (through death, homelessness, and loss of livelihood). In this respect, their view reflects one posed by Mileti (1999), arguing that disasters always take place within the intersection of the

nature, the social and human community and the built environment. The human-centredness of the conceptualisations alone is distancing disasters from the 'natural'.

Through the sociological turn in disaster studies the focus has shifted from disasters as physical phenomena to the human/society-environment relationship which is intimately attached to arguments for a geological era of the 'anthropocene' (Crutzen 2006). Disasters in the era of anthropocene are approached as human phenomena beyond their physical capabilities and impacts, highlighting the centrality of human agency and suffering in rendering naturally occurring processes as disasters. Due to many human activities today having outpaced natural ones draws attention to the destructive forces of humanity itself upon the rest of the living environment (Crutzen 2006). However, focus on the social aspects of the anthropocene in disasters contexts does not have to exclude the environmental and non-human aspects of recovery and risk mitigation (Dominey-Howes 2018), but can perhaps help to highlight them. Human subordination to nature and the environment for instance was a strong theme that arose from the reflections on the disaster and the recovery among the local populations in Tohoku, as was already outlined in the introduction to this thesis.

Focus on the sociological aspects of disasters also changed the way we view post-disaster recovery, not as a mere process of restoration and reconstruction, but as a long-term process of change and adaptation. However, perhaps due to the deep integration into the social, cultural, political and economic life of communities and societies, post-disaster recovery is still considered to be one of the least well understood phases in disaster cycles, involving overlapping processes of physical, social, cultural, medical and psychosocial recovery (Passerini 2000, Olshansky et al. 2012, Quarantelli 1999, Alesch 2005). Several attempts to understand the structure of post-disaster recovery were made in the late 1960s, mainly focusing on the organisational capacity, structure and relationships after disasters (Joakim 2008) followed by a more systematic investigation into the recovery process with an attempt to build a disaster recovery model (Haas et al. 1977). It was not until White and Haas (1975) provided a groundbreaking shift in disaster recovery thinking by discussing the social aspects of disaster response, preparedness and mitigation that was a diversion from the earlier emphasis on physical infrastructure and scientific engineering aiming to prevent disasters. This shift moved the discourse toward an emphasis of making living environments more

resistant to disasters (Mileti 1999, White & Haas 1975) and thus broadened, as well as complicated, the focus post-disaster recovery needed to take. No longer was the purpose of recovery mere restoration or reconstruction, but rather recovery turned into a process of building better and more resilient communities with reduced vulnerabilities to natural hazards. As I will discuss in Chapter 6, this is also the narrative used by the authorities and local populations in Tohoku who view the recovery as a 'chance' to build something better than what was. In this manner, the discourse in Tohoku aligns itself with the broader narrative of disaster as a 'window of opportunity' (e.g. Becker and Reusser 2016, Mochizuki & Chang 2017) that emerged from the sociological turn of disaster studies, with a greater focus on recovery and mitigation.

After disaster events, change in communities is inevitable, not only in terms of physical infrastructure, but their economic, social and demographic shape that may transform drastically after extreme events (Alesch 2005). However, the change is often not equally distributed across the disaster affected area or demographic groups as vulnerabilities such as age, gender, economic conditions and access to decision-making across different groups. In many cases, disasters also accelerate the pre-existing patterns of social development (Chang 2010, Rubin & Berbee 1985), increasing disparities between social groups that affect change and equity (Brown & Westaway 2011, Mileti 1999, Quarantelli 1999), polarise existing power and economic patterns (Cannon 2008), and deliver unequal destruction where certain units (such as an individual, family or neighbourhood) or geographic areas may be entirely devastated while others remain virtually unharmed (Quarantelli 1999, Aldrich 2012). Inequalities and access to resources also affect the way people are able to adapt to post-disaster contexts (López-Marrero 2010), and exacerbation of inequalities and vulnerabilities have been readily found in the post-disaster contexts of Hurricane Katrina (Hawkins 2009, Yarnal 2007, Weber & Messias 2012), Puerto Rico (Garcia-Lopez 2018) and Honduras (Barrios 2017) to name a few. Individuals, social groups, and geographical areas are therefore impacted by the disaster in varying degrees that also affects the successes and failures of their recovery, resulting in high degrees of variability between even neighbouring communities.

Vulnerabilities therefore do not simply emerge from the strength of the impact but are experienced heterogeneously depending on everyday community practices and conditions.

Strength and diversity of livelihoods, measures of social protection, equality of resource distribution, and poverty (Cannon 2008), or demographic and economic decline such as is the case in Tohoku (Dimmer 2013, Matanle 2011) are the foundation for daily and chronic risks in communities (Sen 2000). Recovery today is seen as reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience to disasters, bringing issues such as geographical location, demographic character, and socio-economic composition of the communities intimately into the centre of the recovery process. Recovery is understood as a localised process that is defined by the overall needs of the community beyond immediate physical reconstruction and socio-economic restoration. Instead, for many researchers, recovery and disaster risk mitigation are no longer treated as an isolated activity from the rest of the communal and social life (Mileti 1999, Paton & Johnson 2001, Godschalk 1999, Tierney & Oliver-Smith 2012, Fordham 2012). For example, the socio-economic and demographic issues of rural Japan, particularly in Tohoku, are central features in the recovery from the 2011 disaster in Japan. Taking issues such as these into account through the case of Japan has the potential to become a point of transferrable knowledge, as many nations are experiencing similar demographic and socio-economic trends.

In a context of stagnation or decline, such as exists in rural Japan, it is often the issues that are strictly not about the recovery that arise as the main concern for the local residents. In the face of questions where giving definitive answers is impossible, hope, and utopian visions can be offered (Chamlee-Wright 2010, Barrios 2017). This has led to a conclusion that disaster risk mitigation and resilience building should move towards growth rather than hazard-oriented activities (Paton & Johnson 2000), such as improving people's baseline livelihoods, the value of local building stock, environment and social life, and building up people's sense of power, belonging, competencies and relations to one another while reducing inequalities are inherently resilience building activities that would reduce risk outside the context of mitigating the immediate environmental hazards (Paton & Johnson 2001, Cannon 2008, Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2011). While disaster prevention and preparedness that focus on reducing vulnerabilities remain vital activities in the Japanese context, turning resilience building into a growth-oriented activity will alter the theoretical and methodological perspective from which it is viewed. When we begin to consider recovery and resilience building as a growth-oriented activity, the focus shifts away from the deficits to assets,

migrating disaster preparedness activities more firmly into the field of community development (Paton & Johnson 2001, Shevaller et al. 2015, Bhattacharyya 2004, Perkins et al. 2002). Today long-term disaster recovery is approached more as a process of development, without a clearly defined ending date, where social, economic, cultural and demographic characteristics and projections for the recovering communities are weaved into the recovery and risk management practices.

Perhaps it is this overlap of multiple simultaneous processes, actors and timelines, and the lack of clearly defined endings, that induces the sensation of the post-disaster recovery process being "too big, too wide and too complicated" or 'fuzzy' to comprehend. Today, the post-disaster recovery process has to incorporate the necessity of immediate and rapid reconstruction and recovery that responds of the needs of the affected populations and provides physical and material restoration in an equitable manner, while simultaneously working towards long-term on-going processes of disaster preparedness, resilience building, vulnerability reduction, and community development in a localised manner. Not to mention at the same time providing learning for the international community battling with existential issues of human survival, poverty, overpopulation and growing social, economic and geographical disparity. In sum, recovery has to respond to hyper global and hyper local contexts and needs, where homogeneous learning from multiple disasters and post-disaster recovery contexts can give rise to a variety of recovery outcomes through heterogeneous applications of knowledge. It is from this context of rising global risk society, and the diversified impacts in which they result that has given rise to the community-based approaches to recovery (Maskrey 2011).

### 1.2. The best practice for building back better: The participatory turn and disaster research

Community-based and participatory approaches are today widely recognised as the 'best practice' in recovery by intra-governmental organisations, governments and NGOs alike (Mansuri & Rao 2004, Peterman 2000, Eliasoph 2011). In this section I will critically assess community-based and participatory approaches as the 'best practice' and introduce how they have been applied in the Japanese context. As I have outlined above, post-disaster recovery

has increasingly become seen as a process of development, rather than a process of restoration, and therefore the following section will draw from (international) development literature, exploring the evolution of the principles of community-based practices and an analysis of their application into the post-disaster context of Japan.

Community-based approaches can be broadly defined as bottom-up processes arguing to improve recovery outcomes by empowering local communities as the agents of their own recovery. They are based on the arguments that the closer to the affected communities the recovery takes place, the more empowered residents are in participating in recovery efforts. This approach is intended to improve the efficiency and suitability of recovery methods and outcomes in localised contexts (Narayan 1995, Rubin 2000). While positive reports of community-based processes can be found in abundance, the outcomes of community-based recovery processes nevertheless remain consistently inconsistent (Davidson et al. 2007, Curato 2018, Sou 2019a). This is not to say that movement toward community-based approaches have not improved recovery outcomes or corresponded to the general calls for localism and decentralisation of governance processes overall, but a critical conversation on their associated costs is sorely needed. Some of the key questions revolve around whether these approaches are about creating something new or merely adjustments to the old. Through community participation and community-based means, while aiming to empower affected populations, equally, we can argue that the responsibility for finding one's way is laid on the shoulders of the residents and affected populations themselves, bearing the responsibility over the failures (Curato 2018).

While many organisations had been working with individual communities and households in post-disaster contexts, it was Maskrey's conceptualisation of community-based disaster planning and responses in 1984 that shifted the focus further, highlighting the importance of not only localised context of disasters, but that the solutions and recovery process overall needs to involve a sense of local agency and active participation by the affected populations (Maskrey 1984). Since Maskrey's conceptualisation of the 'community-based approach' to post-disaster recovery, it has been adopted widely by the civil society sector, global organisations and governments as the best practice in the field of disaster recovery and preparedness (Maskrey 2011, Longstaff et al. 2010, Twigg 1999). The emphasis of community-

based recovery focuses on the need to "build back better" after disasters and is the main policy guideline for post-disaster recovery by national governments today (Edgington 2017). Similarly, embeddedness of disaster and recovery related processes into the communal setting stand at the heart of international cooperation and learning from disaster events, highlighted for instance in the Sendai Framework for Action of 2015 by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, a continuation to previous international cooperation achieved through the Hyogo Framework for Action initiated in 2005 for a ten year period (UNDRR 2005, Valenzuela et al. 2019). In accordance with the 'best practice' of international recommendations toward post-disaster recovery and resilience building, as outlined for instance in both the Hyogo and Sendai frameworks, the Japanese Government has adopted a participatory approach, styled in reconstruction documentation as 'community-focused recovery' (*chiiki, komyuniti shutai no fukkou*[1]), to rebuilding Tohoku after the triple disaster of 2011 (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a p. 2 and 2011b, p. 5).

Post-disaster recovery has become attached to the broader debates on governance centred on what has been termed the 'participatory turn' among academics and practitioners working on democracy, decision-making and citizen-government relationship since the beginning of the 1960s (Bherer et al. 2016). As outlined above, participatory methods entered the post-disaster recovery context in the 1980s as the intellectual debates on sociological disasters advanced, beginning to emphasise the active role of communities in developing their own resilience and reducing risks and vulnerabilities. Participatory approaches are today widely considered the global 'best practice' in the field of development, and when applied to post-disaster recovery contexts research finds that citizens involvement in recovery and planning for their own future has been indicated to improve recovery outcomes (Olshansky et al. 2006, Nakagawa & Shaw 2004, Berke et al. 2008). Most studies however only focus on citizen participation in decision-making process, not action and recovery planning itself (Shaw & Goda 2004, Aldrich 2013). Olshansky et al. (2006) studying recovery from Kobe earthquake note however that while communities were integrated into the decision-making processes

[1] 「地域・コミュニティ主体の復興」

through *machizukuri*-organisation [2], the resulting involvement was only extended to consultation, not the actual drawing of plans and action, which they see as a weakness in the process. Similar sentiments were reported by the encountered populations in Miyagi as well, distinctly expressing negative feelings towards the perceived externality of the planning process and the role of 'commenting' that was awarded to the communities themselves.

Participatory turn emerged from the context of counterhegemonic approaches to bring forward social transformation and as a critical response to the development of modern democratic proceedings (Leal 2007, Polletta 2016, Bherer et al. 2016). Despite participatory approaches having a long history, their incorporation into public administration and governance structures has increased dramatically, to a point that we can talk about a 'participatory revolution' (Ganuza et al. 2016) that is partly linked to the rapid adoption of technology since the 1990s that has diversified the opportunities and forms of participation (Poletta 2016), but also its rising "trade value" in winning development contracts in what had become an increasingly competitive market by the 1990s (Leal 2007). Equally, Stokke and Mohan (2001) recount this radical shift in development discourse in the 1980s as coinciding with the rise of decolonising narratives on the left and the private interest view of the right that shifted the perceptions of the state as the 'engine of development' to a position of being the central problem for development. The state needed to be minimised, with the focus leaning toward citizen-oriented and participatory perspectives, bringing civil society organisations into the spotlight, with both left and right leaning political actors recognising their high value in participatory development (Stokke & Mohan 2001).

More community-focused development practices and governance principles have brought many positive developments into the government-citizen relationship. There are many benefits outside the range of accountability that have emerged from the participatory turn. The development of participatory praxis in the form of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Appreciative Inquire (AI), and Community Organising, to name a few have all despite their many weaknesses (MacLeod & Emejulu 2014, Roy 2017), highlighted the importance of

[2] *Machizukuri* literally means 'town making' and refers to community development. Machizukuri organisation is therefore a community development organisation normally operating in a place-based community whose membership is composed of local residents.

community voices in understanding the breadth and depth of issues in a localised context, and provided tools for those voices to be heard as part of the official governance processes, and sometimes against them (Mathie & Cunningham 2003, Jones 1998, Reed et al. 2009, Freire 1970, Alinsky 1989). A good example from the Japanese context, extremely relevant to post-disaster recovery as well, is the development of *machizukuri* councils for city and town planning processes. The *machizukuri* boom can be traced to the 1980s and the general rise of the participatory ethos, where citizens' views and voices have been able to make tangible changes to overall town and city planning processes, in some cases being able to maintain historical character of neighbourhoods and stop undesirable development projects from taking place (Sørensen et al. 2008, Sørensen 2009). The value and benefits of community participation and proximity of development processes to the developing context itself cannot be negated, but the questions around the transformative power of these tools and practices have nevertheless remained, demanding urgent critical inquiry.

Throughout the last three decades participatory approaches have arguably lost some of the connections with their radical roots and have come to be seen as processes designed for the development of 'good governance' (Sou 2018, Bherer et al. 2016, White 1996). Equally however, these processes are subject to their potential cooptation and appropriation of institutional actors (Leal 2007, Rushings 2016). As some have argued, the separation of participatory processes from their political roots has removed the political element from citizen participation and development processes. For example, Stokke and Mohan (2001) note that the apparent consensus across the political spectrum on the desirability of participatory approaches has not only depoliticised the participatory narratives but also essentialised local civil society and communities (p. 19-20). Communities, like participation itself have become understood as, 'a good thing' whose goodness is taken for granted (Cleaver 2001, Cannon 2008). This tendency to essentialise the 'goodness' of communities is something found in high prevalence in the context of Japanese rural revitalisation (and by extension reconstruction) initiatives for instance, many of which rest on an essentialist and romanticised narrative of the *furusato* (Love 2013, Knight 1997, Creighton 1997). Discussing participation in the contemporary context of political decision-making cannot however be separated from notions of power, or in fact politics, especially as participation today largely takes place under the motivation of citizen empowerment (Ganuza et al. 2016).

Empowerment in itself is after all a form of politics, where participation is incorporated into the new non-confrontational institutional regimes (Williams 2004, Cooke & Kothari 2001). Despite the element of 'power' within the very word itself, empowerment does not necessarily mean sharing power, and there is a difference between citizens providing justification and legitimacy to decision-making processes and the act of actually shifting the decision-making processes into the hands of the citizens. Simultaneously, the insertion of participatory approaches to contemporary decision-making has brought to the surface new politicised questions on whether participation is disrupting the processes of decision-making and power hierarchies, or in fact reinforcing them and pushing responsibilities over successes and failures to the localised and decentralised setting (Rushings 2016, Sou 2018, Leal 2007, White 1996, Stokke & Mohan 2001, Mohan & Stokke 2000, Pyles 2009). With the enforcement of empowerment without power, the participation of today has moved away from classical notions of democracy in broader decisions-making processes, to the sphere of local 'ownership' and responsibilisation of citizenry.

The rise of participatory narratives in the name of localism has had important and tangible consequences for development practice, a sphere into which 'recovery' has also increasingly become slotted. White (1996) argues that development practice today is a technocratic process, reduced to techniques that aim to accommodate practice into the specific contexts, without the process of participation upsetting the dominant narratives. This development has been accompanied by the professionalisation of the development (Polletta 2016), and indeed post-disaster recovery sectors, where external technical expertise sets the parameters of action (Barrios 2017). In post-disaster Tohoku too the distance between the affected populations and the external experts and authorities[3] was lamented on many occasions, despite overwhelming dissatisfaction toward the plans and future townscapes themselves lacking, such as was the case with one long-term resident who stated that he no longer cared about what the town would look like, he is used to it already (REF 45). Despite meeting the needs and requirements of the communities, it was however the externality of the planning

[3] Interestingly in many cases also municipal workers were seen as external, given their lack of residence or visibility in the recovering communities

process carried out "by experts and architects in Tokyo and Sendai" (REF 15) that was met with dissatisfaction and seen as an imposition upon the community.

There is a gap between theory and practice in terms of the democratic ethos of participatory approaches, and their application in real life circumstances. Davidson et al. (2007), similar to Curato (2018), find in their comparison on different forms of community-based participatory approaches applied to development of housing projects that it is the aspects of the 'community' and 'participation' that are neglected, and loosely applied to the specific contexts. Their specific concern lies in the models of participatory development that are assumed to result in 'better' outcomes without the community participants being involved in defining what 'better' is for their specific context (Davidson et al. 2007, p. 112). Similarly, Sou (2018) working in the context of post-disaster Puerto Rico argues that opening participatory spaces was not enough as their remit and focus was often unsuitable to the community context, where participants defined notions of responsibility, risk and blame in very different ways than the definitions upon which the participatory space and process was based.

Much of the gap between theory and practice therefore appears to be semantic, where local populations and authorities assume they are speaking the same language and referring to the same terminology, which on closer inspection are found to have different internal logics and purposes. This fallacy of the benefits of community-based approaches to the communities themselves is widespread, with Mansuri and Rao (2004) stating that despite developments of effective community organisation and skills, "not a single study establishes a causal relationship between any outcome and participatory elements of a community-based development project" (p. 1); with Cleaver (2001) also stating that there is "little evidence of the long-term effects of participation [...] as a strategy for social change" (p. 36). Echoing the reference from Strömberg in the opening of this chapter, Mansuri and Rao (2004) finds that external agents and institutional environments are instrumental in influencing the direction and objectives of the community-based development projects, findings that can be corroborated through the work of others (e.g. Barrios 2017). When examining the context and administrative infrastructure developed in Japan, it becomes clear that Tohoku's community-focused recovery is a classic example of an externally driven process that merely replicates and enforces existing power positions.

### 1.3. The institutional environment for 'best practice' in Japan

The application of community-based approaches to recovering contexts is inherently flexible, as it is within their internal logic and philosophy that the principles be applied to the local context in ways most suitable to the local needs and desires. The application of the core principles of participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity relies on how these ideas become reflected as practical processes within the recovering context, and how they are conceptualised as ways in which we then speak about those processes that are taking place on the ground. As noted above, from the perspective of application of community-based recovery into the local context, it is often not the work that is carried on the ground with affected populations by community development practitioners that influence the success or failure of these measures. Rather, it is the established institutional environment that already directs the nature and content of those successes and failures before affected populations have had a chance to consider and reflect on what those successes and failures might look like.

Soon after the disaster the Japanese central government began developing a legislative and administrative infrastructure to facilitate the pressing need for both immediate and sustained long-term support. In Japan too, the post-2011 recovery has largely followed international 'best practice' by adopting a 'community-focused'[4] approach to Tohoku's recovery. The community-orientation of the post-disaster recovery process in Japan became firmly embedded into the core documents that the government produced in the early months of the post-disaster period, outlining the legislative, administrative and fiscal direction of the recovery:

1. *Towards Reconstruction - Hope Beyond Recovery*, the Reconstruction Design Council's Report to the Prime Minister, June 2011.
2. *Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Reconstruction Headquarters, July 2011.

[4] 地域・コミュニティ主体の復興を基本とする (Reconstruction Design Council 2011b, p. 5)

3. *Basic Law for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Reconstruction Headquarters, July 2011.

A close reading of these documents can be found in the appendices of this thesis (See Annex 3), but the main message carried through the documents is one that outlines a recovery process that closely reflects the key principles of community-based recovery outlined in the previous chapter: participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity of the recovery. In its application of the community-based principles, the reports emphasise localism and participatory governance by noting on the diversity of circumstances in which recovery has to be successfully achieved, with the municipalities placed in a position of leadership, expected to co-produce a recovery plan for their localities together with the community members; a common feature in Japanese community development processes (Dimmer 2014). In terms of the administrative division of labour, they indicate that the main decision-making power over the style and direction of the recovery therefore rests on the local municipalities, while stressing that they should aim to empower local populations to actively take part in these decision-making processes. However, vitally, in the documents the government also reserves the right to outline the legal, financial and administrative structures for decision-making in the recovery; thus effectively undercutting the leadership of municipalities as I will discuss in more detail in the subsequent chapters. Finally, the reports stress that the recovery should stand as a moment to learn from this tragedy and an opportunity to create communities that will be socially, economically and physically more resilient to future adversities.

While the emphasis lies on the aspect of decision-making taking place in proximity to and in collaboration with the affected populations, the sheer scale of the disaster not only paralysed but also physically isolated many of the disaster struck communities from aid in the early stages of the emergency. Equally, small municipalities whose public officials themselves became victims of the disaster, found themselves physically, fiscally, and emotionally overwhelmed by the scale of the emergency, and later the recovery project (Oguma 2013). Due to these reasons, the central government support and intervention was necessary and welcomed (Samuels 2013, Dimmer 2014) in order to offer efficient financing of the recovery and technical and administrative support to deal with the scale and intensity of the catastrophe. Despite the immediate impact of the disaster being contained to a specific

region and communities, the event nonetheless had a reverberating effect upon the entire nation, thus requiring a decisive national action.

The central government intervention was welcomed not only to provide a response in line with the scale of the devastation, but due to the strong expectations among the Japanese populations that in cases of large-scale emergencies the central government is the most efficient agent for assistance (Dionisio and Pawson 2016). The Government did take decisive action in the aftermath of the disaster to alleviate both the immediate and long-term logistical, bureaucratic and financial burden on the municipalities themselves, announcing the establishment of a Reconstruction Agency that would function as a centralised arm of the government in the disaster recovery; it began its work in early 2012 (Reconstruction Agency 2012). Despite the prominent role and expectation placed upon the central government, to maintain the principles of proximity to the affected context the importance of local self-governance and municipal leadership was nonetheless emphasised throughout the planning of the recovery process (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a). One of the main tasks of the local authorities was to develop local reconstruction plans that most municipalities did already within 2011. The main purpose of the Reconstruction Agency was then to coordinate the central resources and function as a one-stop-shop for local authorities to gain administrative and fiscal approval for their locally developed recovery plans as well as gain support for their local execution (Reconstruction Agency 2012).

The above-mentioned documents therefore outline a clear division of labour between the national and local governments, with the aim to establish a 'bottom-up' line of command, in keeping with the principles of community-based approaches. Even under 'regular' emergency circumstances local governments in Japan are expected to bear the financial and administrative responsibility for the immediate disaster responses (Library of Congress 2013) with the Japanese emergency legislation carrying a strong character of local leadership and management. Despite the unprecedented nature of Tohoku's disaster that in many cases exceeded the capacity of the existing recovery and reconstruction systems (Iuchi et. al. 2015) and the high expectations placed upon the central state for care and action in case of crises (Dionisio and Pawson 2016), combined with a growing appetite for citizen participation decentralisation efforts in the early 2000s (Jacobs 2011, Sørensen and Funck 2007) have

introduced rising expectations upon the local governments to assume a leading role in facilitating the opportunities for citizens to engage in decision-making and co-production of local development (Foljanty-Jost 2011). As a result, the role of the municipal governments has been central in the practical realisation of what the community-focused recovery looks like on the ground.

Community engagement in the disaster affected towns has primarily been evoked and led by the municipal actors, either directly engaging with residents through meetings and surveys organised by the municipality itself, or indirectly by relying on secondary organisations to carry out on-going engagement work (Murakami et. al. 2014, Dimmer 2014). Initially, direct engagement appears to have been more prominent. Many municipalities organised a number of consultation meetings and workshops to develop local recovery plans in 2011. In Onagawa and Minamisanriku for instance, hundreds of people joined the initial planning meetings over the months following the tsunami (Town of Onagawa 2011b, Town of Minamisanriku 2011b), where local residents could debate the plans for the reconstruction. These initial meetings across municipalities produced the outline for the principles and general directions for the recovery, where "contents of the plan reflect the ideas [of the local residents] as much as possible" (Town of Higashimatsushima 2011, p.3). In time, indirect community engagement has gained prominence in order to maintain momentum throughout the recovery, with neighbourhood organisations and *machizukuri* councils assuming a central role in the making the formal recovery process reside closer to the affected residents.

Neighbourhood Associations and *Machizukuri* councils are natural partners for municipalities, with a long history of cooperation. While the Non-Profit Organisations (that still have a relatively short history in Japan) have contributed greatly to the localised recovery efforts in Tohoku (Sørensen and Funck 2007), their typical remit in Japan has been to work on advocacy and support primarily outside of the state structures (Tsujinaka and Pekkanen 2007, Haddad 2007). Neighbourhood Associations and *Machizukuri* councils on the other hand have strong historical roots in collaborating with local authorities on public matters of interest, information sharing, and co-production of services (Pekkanen 2009), to a point where their independence from the state structures has been questioned (Tsujinaka and Pekkanen 2007). Many of these organisations have assumed vital and formalised roles in disasters for decades,

such as evacuation and emergency management on the ground (Ito 2007, Kawato et al. 2013). Preference toward these partners by the municipalities is explained by the historical association that has fostered established working patterns and trust between the authorities and the citizens, but also arguably their controllability. The primary role of these community organisations in the recovery has been to function as a platform between the citizens and the authorities, both feeding back views and concerns from the residents to the municipality, as well as deliver, explain and unpack information from the authorities and how decisions and municipal plans will affect the local context of the residents. The interrelationship is therefore founded primarily on information exchange, rather than politicised debates.

There are several benefits and drawbacks to this model of public engagement. The general public taking part in meetings and events organised by community organisations is popular in Japan and requires low levels of skills, but assuming leadership positions within the organisational structures often requires a great deal of expertise and understanding of municipal structures and way of communicating between the authorities and residents efficiently. While these roles have been found to inject valuable leadership skills and expertise directly into the communities (Foljanty-Jost 2011), the time and skills commitments have equally been found to exclude people from the process (Tsujinaka and Pekkanen 2007, Haddad 2007); This was also the case in Tohoku as well (Chapter 4). In this way, even locally, community-based recovery gains a top-down structure, where community organisations are recruited into a partnership to deliver the agenda fixed into a locally developed recovery plan.

Despite the local municipalities being nominated as the leaders of the recovery, the top-down driven national plan set considerable limits to the types of execution that could take place in the localities (Oguma 2013). The majority of this funding is directed straight to the local municipalities through 'core programmes' and 'additional projects' (Iuchi et. al. 2015). Core programmes represents the lion share of the entire reconstruction budget, with local municipalities primarily offered only two types of projects coordinated by the Reconstruction Agency: infrastructure upgrades that consisted of either land elevations or community relocations in order to improve physical resilience of communities along the coastline. The 'additional funding' was allocated for "softer" projects, such as community engagement and development; these grants were only made available after municipalities began to critique

the inflexibility of the core reconstruction grants (Iuchi et. al. 2015). There are restrictions in place however for the "softer" project allocations: the second type of funding dictates that municipalities need to fund a part of these activities independently, and the budget for these "softer" activities cannot exceed 35% of the overall cost of reconstruction; all activities through the additional programmes also need to be linked to the projects funded under the core funding (Cabinet office 2013). Since the majority of socio-economic and community development needs in Tohoku are not directly related to the disaster recovery, but rather stem from long-term deflation of industries, aging and outmigration, short-term development funding that can only be used to fund reconstruction related activities is unlikely to address the bigger concerns that are threatening the livability and resilience of these communities for the future.

As Tohoku's reconstruction budget is considerable, it has however become lucrative for local governments to take advantage of these additional funding streams, as their own fiscal capacity has long been undercut by aging, population exodus, and municipal mergers (Cho 2014, Oguma 2013, Jacobs 2011). While reconstruction funding has improved the financial capacity of the municipalities as financial allocations toward these rural municipalities have increased, the disaster induced outmigration and socio-economic damages have permanently weakened the local tax base that in some places has decreased by as much as 70% (Cho 2014). This short-fall has been filled by government issued reconstruction subsidies that not only make municipalities more accountable to the state than their communities but also tend to prioritise national goals set for the recovery, rather than municipal and communal aspirations, with little funding available to run basic services that are normally financed through local taxes and are now severely lacking resources (Cho 2014). This structural change in the character of the funding allocation therefore comes with consequences to local authority and governance, with proximity and local leadership in recovery ringing increasingly hollow. By placing municipalities in the lead in the public narrative, the state is effectively distanced from the recovery in the everyday setting, while maintaining the overall control of the direction and narrative for the recovery through control of resources.

By looking at the institutional framework of Tohoku's reconstruction in more detail, it becomes increasingly clear that, there is a strong national top-down authorship of the

recovery that manifests itself, not only in what is happening, but what is possible to *imagine* happening in these localities. Cornwall and Brock (2005) write on development policies and the use of "buzzwords", that they deem "[...] are never neutral. They come to be given meaning as they are put to use in policies. And these policies, in turn, influence how those who work in development come to think about what they are doing" (p. iii). Investing in community-based language and principles alone does not make the process of recovery, or development in general, manifest in local, participatory, empowered and resilient outcomes, if the precise meanings and the actions these principles induce do not resonate with the experiences in the local context (Pateman 1970, Poletta 2016, Barrios 2017). Through the organisation of financial, administrative and legal structure around the recovery the national vision for Tohoku's future has become fixed into place, establishing a discourse that reflects the abstracted notion of global 'best practice' rather than the intimate and localised (i.e. community-based) experiences of those whose recovery the community-based process is supposed to support and improve.

By the time community members are invited to the tangible community-based process of recovery, the problems of the locals have already been externally defined, rather than emerging from the tangible and affective daily life experiences in the recovering local context. I argue that that this lack of agency to define their own problems as part of the formal recovery has led to an affective state within the local population that the they are communicating through frustrated exclamations like *'kimochi ga wakaranai'*. However, this does not mean that the local populations are not defining their issues or imagining 'better' futures for themselves in the shadows of the government's 'community-focused' grand narrative, whose realisation was being cemented by the institutional framework outlined above. Despite numerous meetings, surveys, workshops and consultation events that had taken place in their municipalities, when I asked local residents what role they wanted local and national authorities to occupy in the recovery of their communities, the overwhelming majority simply responded: "to listen to us". I became curious about how to listen to the community; their endogenous stories, meanings, understandings and definitions of recovery, where they emerge from and how do they operate alongside and resist the advancement of the formal vision and operations of the top-down community-based recovery.

When the discourse and narrative for the community-based recovery is externally infused into the local context, the top-down fixed narrative becomes to advance a singular vision of victimisation and vulnerability of the local affected populations, where empowerment is emphasised as an integral element of the community-based discourse, while the environment in which the tangible actions leading to empowerment remains devoid of power itself. In an environment where mechanisms through which local experiences and views can alter that discourse remain few, the endogenous stories that are produced about the disaster and recovery are forced to exist and be practiced outside the formal remit of the recovery, leaving the people wanting to tell these stories voiceless. Japan's community-focused process appeared to be separating authorities and locals into two distinctly different domains of meanings, objectives and actors, thus creating two separate recoveries that were operating simultaneously. This duality, I argue, is a direct consequence of the way in which the community-based discourse becomes operationalised in community contexts, leading to clashing exogenous and endogenous narratives, where the former has come to stand in the way of communities defining their own problems, needs and visions for the future. How can practitioners (e.g. researchers, community development workers, experts) become better at navigating and advancing post-disaster development through the endogenous stories that emerge from the local recovery experience, rather than the implanted exogenous ones?

*Chapter 2*

# The dual spheres of recovery: When recovery stands in the way of recovery

The events in Tohoku defied comprehension, with words such as 'unprecedented' and 'unimaginable' quickly entering popular discourse. The disaster certainly defied comprehension. Its effects lingered in the air, even after the immediate grief had eased, mountains of debris had been cleared, and a semblance of normal life had resumed. Traveling to the disaster affected regions put me in direct contact with this emotional and physical atmosphere where momentous changes were taking place, personal lives were being reshaped, and communities were trying to weave the destructive effects of the disaster into a story that would tie together their past, present and future into a unified and cohesive trajectory. The intensity of change and continuation lingered in the air, in the environment, in the sensory landscape, and social relationships. The necessity for me to 'feel the affects of others' (Brennan 2004) gained its own urgency as I struggled to understand the problems people were facing. While I would never be able to experience the disaster and post-disaster recovery in the same way as the locals did, there was nonetheless a noticeable process of active transmission of intensities and feelings, or affects, with the locals inviting outsiders into this affective atmosphere through which they were interrogating their past, organising their present, and imagining the future. The rejection of these invitations into the affective atmosphere by the authorities is what I argue is encapsulated in my participants' utterance of "*kimochi ga wakaranai*".

The focus on the affective intensities in determining the way local residents were defining their own problems, needs and visions for the future, however raises the question on how affects are, or even whether they can be, transmitted? The scholarly work on this matter is somewhat divided. Affect has been most commonly defined as the pre-discursive intensity that emerges from elements within the sensed atmosphere (Massumi 2002, Thrift 2004). Due to this focus on the pre-discursive, affect theorists have actively moved away from and critiqued the overt focus on narratives and verbal communications within the social and human sciences (Sedgwick 2003, Massumi 2002, Thrift 2004, Clough 2009), arguing that language preferences the representational and interpretative clarity, over the entanglements with bodies and environments that are so inherent to affective phenomena (Blackmann & Venn 2010, Clough 2009). Engaging with affect has enabled scholarly work on the human experience to engage more deeply with materiality and how these embodied, not just discursive, experiences influence the practices of meaning-making (Wetherell 2013).

However, Wetherell (2013), among others (e.g. Hemmings 2005, Leys 2011, Blackmann 2012), has questioned whether we can in fact separate the embodied experience (affect) from the process of meaning-making (discourse). She notes the integral continuum of the two, where "any initial bodily hit [...] is always already occurring within an ongoing stream of meaning-making or semiosis" (p. 355). In other words, both the affective experiences and communicable representations and categorisations of those experiences exist in continuous connection with one another, influencing the way we experience affects and the way we attribute meaning to them.  Throughout my field work, the connection between affect and discourse became an unavoidable, and overt, element in the interactions between myself and the affected populations, where the "duty to tell others what happened here" (REF 6) intersected with the notions of an 'unprecedented' and 'unimaginable' disaster that defied not only words but comprehension. I started noticing a common pattern in the descriptions of the locals, who often relied on universal notions of destruction, pain and suffering to try and transmit the sensations that they felt during and after the events; 'hell', 'war', and 'nuclear catastrophes' for instance were among the schemas that locals used to describe the scenes they witnessed in their post-disaster communities to me, with these words and utterances in themselves containing ingrained affective intensities. What I began to notice as

an emergent quality of the affective landscape now occupied by the long-term residents, new arrivals and visitors, was the creation of a common and shared narrative through which on-going process of meaning-making underpinned defining the needs and visions for the future that were taking place.

Through my encounters with local residents in Tohoku, and the affective environment that we came to share, a different vision and practical realisation for the recovery began to emerge that stood in stark contrast with the vision outlined in nationally and locally produced official documents. The locals were building a common discourse for the disaster and recovery too; one that did not emerge from 'best practice' but from the *affective* intensities of the direct physical and social context of the recovering space, developed through active engagement with the practice of sharing narratives of memory, loss, desire, and imagination. Yet, there was little space for these practices and intensities within the official recovery process. While the community-focused recovery was supposed to bring communities and authorities closer together to articulate a common vision for the future, I argue that there was an inability to recognize these other modes of recovery and transmission in many of the community-focused recovery activities.

While my thesis does appreciate the quality of affect as a pre-cognitive and pre-discursive, as my interest in affect in the context of post-disaster recovery approaches it from the perspective of practitioners, I will be focusing on the strategies through which affects can become felt and understandable to others by those whose life worlds are under reconstruction. It is therefore imperative to understand, how affect is transmitted, and how practitioners can learn to better recognise affective intensities embedded in endogenous discourses of local residents and methods of storytelling. To understand affect and integrate it as an element in development practice, we therefore need to begin from the process of transmission itself.

While drawing on Wetherell's (and others') notion of the integral connection between affect and discourse outlined above, I argue that the context of transmission, the how and where, is likewise important. How people match affective intensities with existing processes of meaning-making and develop those into transmittable units of language is vital, but

transmission of affects does not only take place at the level of language and abstractions. How people articulate their stories and where these stories are shared are equally important, especially in post-disaster settings where the violent and turbulent shifts in landscape, everyday life, social relations and future trajectories have been thrown out of focus and being reassembled. The sense of loss, the impact of life in limbo, and future aspirations cannot be fully captured through the abstractions of language alone, with the meanings being embedded in and emerging from the surrounding context in which the sharing and transmission takes place. In disaster contexts, where there are few precise existing schemas for the primary and first-hand experience of the disaster and the enduring state of the post-disaster recovery, these experiences are impossible for outsiders to fully understand. As a result, discourse and the affective space become integrally linked, where the affective elements embedded into the discourse cannot be fully transmitted outside the affective spaces themselves, helping to uncover the fuller meaning of the frustrated exclamations such as "none of them [the authorities] ever even come here!", that were often uttered by the local residents.

How the context and situation impact the assemblage and transmission of affects therefore becomes a part of the discursive process. Goodwin (2006) has explored the notion of 'situated activities' in relation to discourse, stating that like the relationships between those who are interacting, the situation and context in which interaction takes place is also guided and governed by existing patterns of practice, values and morals, that are recognised by participants, leading them to behave and communicate in specific ways. While activities and behaviours in this view are partly constrained by the past practice and the application of familiar schemas to the navigation of the immediate situation, every situation, interaction and context nonetheless remain unique and open-ended, with a sense that alternatives are possible (Edwards 1997). This latter notion is relevant to post-disaster contexts as a heterotopian space (Foucault 1998), where the familiar order of the social and physical world has been disrupted, and the *process* of re-establishing rules, moral orders, trajectories, sense of history, and relationships need to be understood as an integral part of meaning-making itself.

Endogenous discourses that emerge from heterotopian spaces are not fixed, but are rather generative, embodied and performative, impinged in the process of sharing, and driven by the desire to transmit affective intensities of the disaster and recovery experience. Discursive practices, content of discourse and the action and encounters and the interactions within a specific context are an integral part of the transmission of affects, and thus of the meaning-making process (Wetherell 2013, Goodwin 2006). Yet, often in trying to map clear outcomes in recovery and development processes, those who are trying to help become fixated on clear content and labels of success, priorities, and goals set for the recovery. When practitioners consider community-based participation and community engagement in developing meaningful recovery, they should not only focus on the end results of these processes, but the meaningfulness of the process itself as re-assembling and ordering of collective and individual understandings of the past, present and the future.

This difference between process and fixed content bears particular relevance to the emphasis on participation within community-based development practices, that tends to centre on the articulation of content. As outlined in the previous chapter, community-based recovery is not merely a set of 'best practices', but an exogenous discourse through which knowledge has already become cemented, analysed and actioned, supported by institutional and policy frameworks implemented outside the communal context. I argue that the endogenous discourses that are emerging directly from the disaster contexts rather represent embodied discursive practice driven by the desire to transmit affects, in an effort to help outsiders understand "how we feel" (*kimochi ga waka**ru***). Local meaning-making as an affective performance, and how these meanings are developed into endogenous discourses about the past, the present and the future in their own right, are however often ignored by the 'best practice' of community-based approaches. Despite its emphasis on the 'community', community-based recovery may be physically community-based, but not determined by the community. It is important to understand that while we speak about community-based recovery as the 'best practice', it only provides practitioners with a set of techniques to engage local residents into participatory spaces and within those spaces (White 1996), but not a foundation for how the recovery is are conceptualised and communicated in and for the specific recovering context by those most intimately impacted.

In this chapter I will outline how endogenous and exogenous discourses exist and operate in post-disaster spaces, arguing that their existence side by side in a tense and hierarchical relationship leads to a duality of the post-disaster recovery. Each sphere of recovery is dominated by different meanings, actions and actors. I argue, practitioners (be them development workers, researchers or civil servants) working in direct contact with affected populations, can and should become better at recognising the endogenous narratives, and build 'better' practices from these narratives. By learning to not only focus on the end results of engagement processes, but the meanings embedded in the process of engagement itself, practitioners can help affected populations to become the authors of their own development.

## 2.1. From post-disaster heterotopia to 'two recoveries'

The disaster left behind an endless wasteland of debris and destruction where communities once stood (Massumi 2011). In a disaster familiar life suddenly loses its rational order, what Weick calls a 'cosmology event' (1993), breaking the chronology of time in the disaster affected space, as well as the sense-making both the time and space had facilitated. As an unprecedented event, the disaster reroutes communities, individuals, and authorities onto a different trajectory of a future from the one they had imagined prior to the event. The disaster therefore turns the affected region into what Foucalt (1998) calls 'heterotopian' spaces that have neutralised the normal relations, representations and designations of the space, and where traditional time has broken down (p. 178). While Foucault used the example of a cemetery as a heterotopian space, Boano (2011) has applied the concept to post-conflict sites, such as refugee camps, showing that a heterotopia can exist in a permanent or temporary state. Heterotopia is however always a deviation from the surrounding familiar and accepted 'normalcy', containing the intensity of emotions that emit from it and a possibility for a diversity of spaces to emerge from it (Boano 2011), and for the past to be renegotiated and re-understood through the space (Collins and Opie 2010). As 'spaces apart' they are more a reflection of the space that surround them (the familiar space) than of themselves; and through their existence they are contesting the order and form of the external accepted and familiar normalcy (Boano 2011). The apparent return to 'normalcy' becomes contested, enabling the imagination of a different future and alternative political visions. The sites of

recovery, the physical geography and space of the disaster struck towns, facilitate new imaginaries of the past, present, and future, reverberating from the traces of the disaster in a given space. It is these imaginaries that become developed into new meanings, stories and discourses.

In Tohoku, once the debris was removed, it revealed what some local residents and authorities described as a 'blank canvas' upon which the future would be rebuilt. Despite some physical development such as main access roads, commercial and industrial buildings having been completed, alongside waterfronts, the majority of recovering towns that had suffered major damages still resembled such blank canvases with the construction vehicles working on brown fields (Image 1). Imagining what that future would look like has taken place simultaneously on numerous fronts, ranging from inter-governmental organisations, academics, and authorities to grassroots organisations, citizen's groups and non-profits, where individuals, communities, governments, and the nation have begun to build new possibilities for the space. As outlined in Chapter 1, the advancement of a 'better' future upon the blank canvas of Tohoku's devastated communities has become encoded into permanent legislative and policy measures that affect the way in which principles that are driving the community-based logic are put into action in a specific context. These measures dictate where communities can build now, and in the future, with the effects spanning across multiple generations into the future. It has been estimated that the disaster that took place in Japan is a once-in-a-thousand-year event (Dengler 2011, Smith and Dengler 2011). It is against this unprecedented eventuality that multiple actors are now trying to realign humanity's safety amidst the prevalence of surrounding forces of nature, while simultaneously solving the socio-economic troubles of a specific region.

Image 1: Town of Minamisanriku in November 2015, viewed from the Junior High School. Image on the forefront of from 2007, showing the townscape before the tsunami, with the 'blank canvas' behind it (Anna Vainio 2015)

Equally, the local residents have been giving consideration to the mega-events of the future, driven by their own survival from the 2011 disaster, stating that "we have a duty to protect the future generations and make sure a disaster like doesn't happen again elsewhere" (REF 6). Those living in the locations directly affected by this once-in-a-thousand-year event, are now faced with the reality of a post-disaster recovery where they are put in a position of intense reflection of what a better future will look like, not only for themselves but for generations to come. On numerous occasions I stood at the waterfront in Onagawa, overlooking the traces of destruction that still existed side by side with the on-going reconstruction, and reflected on the residents' intense yearning and immediate needs and new homes on the steep mountain sides, while they were simultaneously asked to worry about the long-term sustainability of these towns a thousand years from now.

Through local encounters and simple presence in these locations, it became clear that the narrative for Tohoku's recovery, supported by the speedily established institutional and financial framework (Chapter 1) did not quite reflect the intensities and emotions of those

dwelling in the affected communities. New homes, infrastructure and socio-economic sustainability of these declining regions commonly discussed, with local residents presenting concrete analyses and discussing ideas at times in very technical terms. What was perhaps less immediately observable were the subtle ways in which the locals were collectively creating meanings for the disaster and their on-going suffering that diverged from the meanings offered by the official reconstruction discourse. In psychological terms, Evans et al. (2020) describe narrative constructions of catastrophic events as collective meaning-making processes that are built upon 'unveiling', 'restoration', and 'rebirth' that emerge from different temporal framings. The locals approached the disaster, and the on-going recovery as its extension, not as a break or an anomaly in history, but rather as a moment of revelation where the disaster was not a mere result of a chain of events, but the outcome of persistent unsustainable and 'unnatural' conditions where humanity had broken too far away from its natural surroundings; reflecting fatalism that remains a strong current in Japanese disaster representations (Yamori 2013). The disaster was able to "reveal things as they really are" (Evans et al. 2020, p. 4). The events in their communities were therefore seen as an integral part of their local historiography that had now come to re-determine not only their future but reconstructed and given new meanings to their pasts as well. For the locals, imagining a future took the shape of realignment of the events, emotions and experiences across the temporal arc from the past into the future, rather than the official narrative that framed the recovery as a process of overcoming and "making whole again" while also leading to the "birth of the new" (Evans et al. 2020, p. 4), or 'better' as the community-based development parlance would put it.

This discord between the official story and local experiences was equally reflected through tangible behaviours, actions and the environment in which my encounters with the locals took place. I was often escorted from one place to another, with locals eagerly showing me the new developments and recounting what their lives were like in this somewhat strange setting. The positivity and eager anticipation were palpable, only narrowly masking the anxieties, frustrations and worries over the future that burned under the surface. It was hard not to notice the slowness of the recovery, with broken roads, lack of permanent housing and in places even debris still dominating the landscape. The amount of hustle and bustle in the communities was palpable, but there was a clear disconnect between "the" recovery and

these localised actions. Much of the action took place at the initiative of local residents themselves rather than as part of the official recovery action initiated and led by the municipalities. They were distinctly separate and something that kept people going, but not necessarily any closer to having their immediate needs of a stable home, community, social networks and peace of mind being satisfied.

It was clear that the post-disaster heterotopian atmosphere was giving rise to alternative visions about the future and generating bustling actions and reflections among the local populations, with the intimate affective intensities and first hand experiences with the recovering context driving the shape and content of what was transmitted between the locals and outsiders. However, these endogenous transmissions, while developed in direct relationship with the contextualised affective intensity of the lived experience in these locations, were never quite able to puncture to the surface and were being subordinated by the official discourse that was fixed in place long before local residents could even come to terms with their new reality. Ghassan Hage (2015) argues that this fixation of a particular vision of the future as the index of reality and everyday actions in the present can inhibit our capacity to engage with alternative political visions. He argues that today governments are increasingly concerned with 'the real world', composed of the past and the present, a tangible and known reality, where we act on and in that reality.

Drawing from Agamben, Hage continues to argue that this gazing backwards is the result of modern governance reversing cause and effect. The practice of managing causes is complex and uncertain, whereas governing effects is seen as supposedly cost-effective and linear with identifiable outcomes. On the other hand, the process of thinking and reflecting on the alternatives of future is deemed as unrealistic, a frivolous past-time that only engages people to 'think about doing', rather than the 'doing' itself that happens in the real world of the present (Hage 2015). The consequences of focusing on 'doing' is that it draws people intensely into the present, the 'real world', where 'doing' becomes marked by its urgency forcing people to constantly keep moving (Hage 2015). The friction and slippage between a hopeful 'doing' and an imaginative 'thinking about doing' ensures the post-disaster recovery process can appear like a maze to the subjects of recovery, for whom the future is promised. Like Kelly (2012) indicates, this intense focus on 'doing' that emerges from the reversal of cause and

effect is about predicting outcomes rather than imagining possibilities (p. 1). Path into the future becomes narrowed and frozen into a limited index of qualities that emerge from our knowledge of the trajectories that have already taken place from the past to the present, not the imaginations and possibilities that emerge from present conditions into the future.

Arguably, by embedding practice in 'doing' rather than 'thinking about doing' community-based approaches to recovery suffer from the governance logics Hage describes above, despite their emphasis on grassroots action within the development context. I argue that in community-based approaches to recovery, the process of organic construction of local visions of the governed that emerge directly from the affective space and affected subjects that stand 'apart' from the familiar normalcy have been bypassed. This leaves affected communities merely able to respond to a governmental visions and goals for recovery, community, and practice that emerges from technocratic knowledge of experts (White 1996), who are external to the context and space that is in motion. Recovery therefore comes to bypass the heterogenic ways in which the future could be reached (the alternatives) and sets development onto a fixed plan. By doing this the conditions for development are made available before the affected populations have had the time to explore the locally emerging alternatives and imagine what that development should look like and lead to in their specific context.

Throughout my field work it became increasingly clear that the grand narrative, or the external imaginary, for Tohoku's future and the locally emerging imaginaries were establishing two distinct domains of thought, language, action and actors; the two recoveries. Where the external imaginary drew on the lessons of the past and projecting into the distant future, the local residents were actively and increasingly building visions and narratives that looked into the immediate context and intensities of their present and 'soon to be' conditions, what Guyer (2007) calls the "near future". The hopefulness toward the future, often expressed by focus on the 'doing' that was taking place in these communities (the activities, projects and overt hopefulness over the future that the local projected), was nonetheless standing in constant contrast with the frustrations and anxieties over their own voicelessness to be able to express their own ideas and communicate with the authorities in a way that would reflect their true feelings. With these 'two recoveries' operating simultaneously,

affected populations were lodged between the polarised states of waiting and chasing, hopefulness and uncertainty, and adaptation and trauma. The contextualised observations in the recovering space reflected the intensity of this polarisation where it seemed that people were constantly running without going anywhere.

These polarised themes cut across impressions of local residents about the recovery. Despite the deafening noise and constant action of the recovery that surrounded these communities, return to their homes still remained years away. Juxtaposed with this anxiety and living in a state of waiting existed an anticipation toward the unknown future that kept people active and moving, although without a clear trajectory. While the post-disaster space can be a site that facilitates the blossoming of multiple imaginaries and meanings for the events that took place and the emergent future, it also functions as an instrument of governmentality (Barrios 2017, Foucault 1998 in Boano 2011) where the "benign relationships of power" that govern our lives become unmasked, but often also reinforced (Curato and Ong 2015, p. 3). While the post-disaster heterotopia enables the blossoming of these imaginaries, it also helps to *reveal* the pre-existing hierarchies, priorities and discourses of development that in themselves are dictating the development of conditions, structures and policies through which certain imaginaries become more realisable than others (Chapter 1).

### 2.2. Hierarchy of discourses

In Tohoku after the 2011 disaster, the government saw recovery as a solution to the long-term woes of rural Tohoku; soon after producing the foundations for a master-vision for recovery and building a legal, fiscal, and policy framework to support the realisation of that vision. These narratives and visions of a "new" Tohoku are not new at all, as rural revitalisation has been debated for as long as rural decline has been a statistical reality in Japan. The impact of the recovery was to be long-lasting, propelling Tohoku onto a trajectory of long-term growth and prosperity it had not experienced in decades, a continuation of the long-term revitalisation and self-determination drive for Japan's rural regions (Jacobs 2011, Rausch 2006, Rausch 2012). The government's vision for the recovery, while 'community-focused', was

nonetheless driven by nationalised goals of development and rural revitalisation. Communities had been centralised while deprived of power due to the lack of recognition of the nationally embedded vulnerabilities and regional hierarchies upon which the country's past successes have rested, and upon which they are envisioned to be built once again.

When the 'Hope beyond the Disaster' -report was presented to the then Prime Minister Kan, he said: "I am looking forward to seeing a proposal with a vision to recreate Japan, so that the later generations will see the Great East Japan Earthquake as a kind of major turning point for revitalizing Japan and building a better society for the people of Japan" (Cabinet Office 2011). What is important to note in the Prime Minister's message, is the recovery's objective as both a local and a *national* project. This message is also echoed on the pages of the report itself, as well as outlined into The Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake (Reconstruction Headquarters 2011), that stems from the Hope beyond Recovery report:

*"The reconstruction of the disaster afflicted areas plays a leading role in the revitalization of vibrant Japan, and the disaster areas cannot be truly rebuilt unless Japan's whole economy is revitalized. Especially, in order to revive Tohoku region, a new shape of Tohoku will be created by maximizing the diversity and the potentiality of the region in an integrated manner"* (p. 2)

This dual focus is not surprising from a practical perspective, as national leadership was sorely desired in localised post-disaster contexts, where the disaster had paralysed normal functions of society, disturbing familiar social and emotional life of communities. Equally, as the most expensive recovery project in modern Japanese history, Tohoku's reconstruction and recovery affects not only disaster struck regions of Tohoku, but the country as a whole. From this perspective it is unsurprising that the recovery is framed both in national and local terms. However, noting that revitalisation of disaster affected areas is not possible without the revitalisation of the nation, does in itself echo hierarchy and sequencing of the recovery's priorities; and the priorities that have been perpetuated by the on-going historical conversations about revitalisation in general (Kelly 2012, Oguma 2013, Hopson 2013, Jacobs 2011, Rausch 2006, Rausch 2012).

It is reasonable to question whether this statement subordinates Tohoku's recovery to the goals of national revitalisation, thus going against the key principles of bottom-up determination for the directions and goals that elevate community-based approaches as the 'best practice'. First of all, revitalisation in itself would need to be reconceptualised for the context of Japan's absolute population decline and economic stagnation (Chiavacci & Hommerich 2017), where revitalisation along the familiar growth parameters is unlikely to be achieved. But more importantly, when assessing whether the recovery process is justified to serve both local and national needs, this can lead to tensions between the local and the national spheres.

Professor Oguma Eiji at the Faculty of Policy Management at Keio University wrote a seminal piece on the tensions between national recovery policies and local needs in late 2013, pointing to the inappropriate implementation of reconstruction and recovery in the affected region, that he argues has led to irrational recovery projects and the subsequent enforcement of the historically subordinated position of Tohoku within the Japanese nation. In the piece Oguma outlines the numerous restrictions placed upon the way in which municipalities, that are named as the main administrative actors of the recovery (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a), can utilise the generous reconstruction budget made available by the Government. This structural issue effectively restricts the community-focused and localised ethos of the recovery and goes against the wishes and needs articulated by local communities and municipal authorities themselves.

Equally, while the recovery's purpose being a national one may be necessary, these statements and principles need to be placed into the larger historical context of Tohoku within Japan to understand their full impact on the recovery in this particular region. To return to Professor Numazaki's call for a broader investigation of the significance of the disaster and the variety of responses to it, the nationally articulated objectives of the recovery need to be investigated in the historical context of Tohoku's subordination in the larger national context, that others too argue is being ignored in the recovery (Hopson 2012, Kelly 2012). Not only because of the overall decline and depopulation that is affecting rural regions in Japan in general, but the position the region of Tohoku in particular has occupied in modern Japanese history, as an internal colony to which the externalities of modernisation and progress have

been located (Hopson 2012). The official recovery promoted community-focused recovery, painting a picture of the emergence of a 'new Tohoku', and highlighting the need to bolster the voices of the people (Reconstruction Design Council 2011a and 2011b). Yet, the tsunami walls erected along the vast expanses of the Sanriku coast, despite the vast popular opposition to them (Oguma 2013), is an indication of the limitations of the current community-focused rhetoric, and the persistence and strength of the Japanese construction state[5].

The simultaneous and elevated focus on national revitalisation is an indicator of the problems with community-based recovery as it is currently framed and returns us to question why people feel like they are not being understood (*kimochi ga wakaranai*), despite the widespread use of community-based approaches that encourage active local participation in decision-making spaces and processes. In large-scale crises or disasters, development needs are greater and often more complicated, spanning across not only the restoration of lives and livelihoods, but the entire socio-economic context of the community. What exactly is not being translated between the authorities and the localities where the two domains of knowledge and experiences lead to contrasting practical approaches and desires? It seems that in these contexts external intervention and institutional design has come to occupy a dominant role over the subjective, localised, and affective needs of recovering communities. We can argue that this is due to the very real lack of physical and mental resources in recovering communities, and external agents are certainly vital to facilitating the recovery process and providing sociological, mental and physical care and respite for victim communities in many ways. But the question is what type of support do the communities feel that they need and welcome?

Stratification and hierarchy of meanings has created tensions in who are the subjects and actors of recovery and a disconnect between the processes and goals of recovery, perhaps

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[5] The 'Construction State' (*Doken Kokka*) refers to the persistent government, industry and bureaucratic collaboration where more public investment is placed into the construction of public works than can be realistically justified by public need (Broadbent 2002). In the Japanese case this often refers to literal construction works, with the tsunami walls erected along the Sanriku coast since the tsunami being a good example.

helping to shed light on why do we to repeatedly ask central epistemic questions such as: What is recovery? Where does it end? Who benefits and why? (Chapter 1). While people broadly used the term 'recovery' (*fukkō*) as a catch-all term containing the various elements necessary for re-establishment of 'normalcy' of everyday life and moving into the post-disaster future, there appeared to be hierarchy and sequencing along which the fruits of the recovery could be harvested, as one of my research participants succinctly noted when he said: "*Once this recovery is over, we can finally start to rebuild our communities*" (REF 6). His utterance exposed not only the priorities of the local residents, but also the supremacy of the formal recovery process over those priorities toward revitalisation that the communities themselves did not necessarily even share, as I will discuss in more detail in the empirical chapters of this thesis. While it was not always apparent in the overt language that was used correspondingly by local residents, civil servants and official documents alike, that the deeper meanings constructed and attached to these concepts were nonetheless different, reflecting the different processes through which words, language, and discourses gain their meanings.

As noted in the opening of this chapter, there is an integral connection between affect, discourse, and context, one that I argue is imperative for our understanding of both meaning-making and the transmission of those meanings. What appears to separate the two domains of recovery is affect; and the lack thereof. Affect is a vital element of the process of building endogenous discourses, emerging from time spent engaging with localised experiences, needs and desires, in an open and embodied fashion. In contrast the affective dimension of the recovery has been stripped away from exogenous discourses that are, as in the case of Japan, produced without contact with the affective space and experiences where the development is envisioned to take place. Through fiscal measures, policies and legal structures, these external plans become fixed, perpetuating the tensions between the locals and the authorities, and embodied in the inattention to affect as expressed in phrases such as *'kimochi ga wakaranai'*.

Despite the emergence of community-based recovery as the 'best practice' of post-disaster recovery, it has not been able to resolve these tensions. And there is growing evidence of dissatisfaction and a sense of voicelessness in post-disaster recovery processes (Davidson et al. 2007, Curato 2018). I argue that a 'community-based' development is meaningless, unless

the discourse, vision, plan, narrative and imaginary for its shape, objectives and processes emerge from that context in ways that show a commitment to affective intensities, and 'being there' as much as outcome-oriented discourses. While clear imaginaries of the future do not yet exist, thinking about those futures and how we get there happens in the contemporary present (Abram 2017). Therefore, before a participatory practice is developed, adopted and applied to specific contexts of development, we first need to understand how affected populations are ordering, structuring and making sense of the situation into which disasters throw them, and make a deliberate effort to understand the personal and communal futures they are imagining out of that destruction. A community-based approach and its associated practices cannot exist before communities can imagine what community, recovery, and practice should look like, and tell us about it. I argue that becoming better at being-with, listening to and hearing the affective therefore needs to be better integrated into development practice, as a problem cannot be solved before the nature of the problem is understood.

### 2.3. Hearing Affect

People like to see their lives as stories, with a clear trajectory, and when they recognise the arc of the story they can see themselves as the authors of those stories (Berlant 2011). The tensions between the hard and soft recovery, the hopeful and precarious images of the future, and the daily lives filled with doing and waiting indicate that there are competing narratives about the recovery existing side by side. While the community-based approach in this context, offers a compelling format for placing the affected populations in the position of authorship, due to the stratification and sequencing of imaginaries they are not actually the ones authoring the story of recovery. This does not mean that stories are not being told. In fact, stories are constantly produced and reproduced on the communal level. My intention in conducting this study was to understand how people were telling their stories 'in place' about the recovery and explore to what degree people felt like the authors of the recovery. By focusing on these stories, I argue we can begin to open up the problems with community-based approaches, and perhaps begin to find solutions to fixing them.

Following Kelly's (2012) call for the reorientation of research on Tohoku to focus on studying imagination (*souzōgaku*) over hope (*kibōgaku*) and on the 'deliberate effort' to understand how we can build a path to the future, narratives and stories can offer a fruitful avenue to explore the sequencing and stratification of imaginaries. Following the narrative turn in social sciences, stronger links between everyday experiences and storytelling have been established, arguing that people construct their understanding of everyday life around stories (Berger and Quinney 2004). Narrative constructions are used to make sense of the reality and connect everyday experiences to the known past and the imagined future. Storytelling has been widely studied in traumatic contexts and plays an important role in the construction of collective and personal history and memory, sense-making, adaptation, and coping (Gillies & Neimeyer 2006, Currier & Neimeyer 2006, Hidalgo & Barber 2009, Baumeister & Newman 1994). Stories are essentially tools that can mitigate the negative consequences of traumatic events (Smyth & Greenberg 2000, Weine 2006), therefore relevant to post-disaster recovery contexts.

Since the disaster, Tohoku has been the subject of intense attention, and interactions with outsiders have magnified. The aftermath of disasters is more often than not followed by huge popular, media, and institutional attention that is only matched by equally rapid evaporation of that attention (Massumi 2011, Gomez & Hart 2013). While the national and international interest in Tohoku has waned, and today mostly rises to the headlines during anniversary events, daily interactions between Tohoku's residents and visitors have persisted five years after the disaster, even if in a smaller scale, and have become an integral part of the recovery experience for the locals and the visitors alike. I will exemplify the importance and intensity of these interactions throughout the ethnographic sections.

During the 13 months that I spent in Tohoku, I gained not only a better understanding of the lived experience of people in the region, but also began to pay attention to the way in which people were conveying their experiences through our interactions. Each interaction was of course unique, but I soon began to notice specific patterning through which these interactions were being conveyed in and on the recovering space. What I found was a clear narrative arc in our interactions. As I began to recognise the narrative arc in the interviews, discussions and conversations, I became equally interested in how the story was told as I did of the story itself.

I argue that these narrative patterns and structures are the main way in which affected populations are constructing their imaginaries of the future. As a result, they offer an opportunity to re-examine the larger processes of post-disaster recovery planning and execution that are taking place in disaster struck regions, from the perspective of the affected populations. By reorienting our attention to the stories that affected populations tell in and on the recovery, it becomes possible to bring 'community' back into the community-based approaches, with communal authorship rising to the centre of attention.

Stories and storytelling enable us to piece together not only the direct influences of the disaster and the individual experience as an anecdote, but also the socially and collectively experienced conditions of vulnerability, resilience, and power that today lie at the forefront of what is meant by a 'disaster' as a social, not a natural, event (Chapter 1). In writing about trauma, Erikson (1994) states that trauma does not result only from a specific traumatic event but is equally influenced by a 'constellation of life experiences' that produce a persistent condition and identity for individuals from which they create meaning and participate in society (p. 229). Whether a catastrophic event like the tsunami of 3/11 results in trauma or not, the same principle applies. On the surface, I often heard that the disaster was a defining moment for the communities, a watershed, or a moment of irreversible change, illustrating the magnitude of the event. The disaster fundamentally changed people's outlook on life, it altered the course of their futures, shaped their memories, and inconvenienced their everyday lives. However, by focusing only on the content of the interactions, the magnitude of disaster as an agent of dislodgement and change runs the risk of becoming highlighted, simultaneously subordinating the experiences where change is not desired and has not happened. While the disaster has forced change upon these communities, it has also strengthened their reliance on established social connections, fundamental desires to uphold traditions and protect ancient ways of life. Through stories the new imaginaries that people are developing in the post-disaster heterotopian space, the values, symbols, directions and networks that are being negotiated, become part of the larger experiences of life and life histories.

By focusing on the narrative structures and stories that people tell in post-disaster settings we can begin to make sense of the connections between the event and the broader individual

and collective life experiences of the affected populations that have formed into forms of endogenous discourses about the recovery. In line with previous narrative research on post-disaster recovery (Barber et al. 2007), my thesis therefore argues for increased focus on methodologies for disaster research that centre on stories. Through narrative structures we can see the connections between the acute event and the persistent condition (Erickson 1994, Barber et al. 2007), enabling us to subordinate the disaster event to the 'constellation of life experiences' that I argue in post-disaster settings define people's imaginaries more than the disaster event itself.

When observed through the narrative window, the utterance "*once this recovery is over, we can start to rebuild our communities*" reveals the two different narrative domains, one that was referred to as 'recovery' and one that was referred to as 'community building', through which the themes of hopefulness and anxiety, and the urgency of action and necessity of waiting become organised into the two polarised experiences of the disaster. This polarised duality of the recovery can be explored through Berlant's (2011) concept of 'cruel optimism', where the desired goal becomes an obstacle to the achievement of that goal, reflected by the sequential nature of the recovery process in which 'recovery' precedes 'community building'. In doing so, the sequencing has inadvertently produced a hierarchy for the entire recovery process, where one recovery stands in the way of the achievement of the other. Qualitatively the material recovery (roads, services, and housing), or the *hard side* of recovery as it was often referred to in the communities, becomes prioritised over the re-establishment of the meta-physical social connections, community building and attachments, or the *soft side*, whose progress becomes subjected to the progress of the material recovery.

When the local populations are at the centre of recovery whose imaginaries on the recovery revolve around community building, it becomes reasonable to inquire, why is it that despite community-based approaches, the material side of recovery has come to stand in the way of the meta-physical, rather than facilitating its blossoming? Following the Tohoku disaster, Japanese philosopher Uchiyama (2011) stated that "what is important is to recreate places where people can die in comfort" (in Murakami et al. 2014, p. 238), where the aims of the recovery are not centred on the material recovery focused on housing and economic revival that are mere tools for achieving what is really important, that is realm of the immaterial and

the re-establishment of the relationship people have with their memories, landscapes, ancestors, sense of belonging and local cultures and identities. Endings were equally important as beginnings in post-disaster Tohoku, "*Will the next house be the one I get to die in*", was the main puzzle expressed by a local man in Onagawa when I inquired after his plans for the new house and new community that he was still waiting for (REF 45). Resonating with Uchiyama's thoughts, what matters is the stability of the story in which the man gets to live and die in comfort; a story that becomes imaginable only through the affective setting that is the house, the community, and the town.

It is the purpose of this thesis to privilege the story that searches for the affective, for a 'place to die in comfort', over the material recovery plans and modernist ideas of growth and quantitative development that reign in people's field of vision when entering the recovering regions, and when consuming media portrayals and expert evaluations. Two oscillating domains of analysis began to emerge from these stories, with a focus on the tensions that exist between them. Firstly, the domain of local visions, governed by affects, daily life experiences and narrative structures in how people were adapting to the post-disaster reality and placing the disaster into the broader context of their personal and collective histories. Secondly, the domain of the formal recovery, governed by external expertise, 'best practice' and learning, where the disaster stands apart as an abnormal phase aiming to re-establish the affected zone upon the path of growth. Through the following ethnography I will explore how for the affected populations, or the governed, 'recovery' as an intimate and pervasive experience of life itself, where the disaster and the recovery had become part of the arc of their personal and communal histories. For the governor on the other hand, 'recovery' is a technical process driven by expertise, budgetary constraints, and modernist benchmarks of development, seen as an abnormal phase in the "normalcy" of growth. I will show how the recoveries of the governed and the governor, while drawing their energies from corresponding ideals (proximity, participation, empowerment and resilience), are operationalising these ideals in different domains of meaning, temporal trajectories, and actors; thus making the formal process of (community-based) recovery stand in the way of the affected populations' desires to re-establish their lives centred on the rebuilding of their communities.

*Chapter 3*

# Methodology

Four and a half years after the tsunami, I spent 13-months in Tohoku along the Sanriku coastline, conducting field work for this research. During my time in Tohoku, I was based in Sendai City, the largest population centre in the region, but my field research took place in four coastal locations in the Miyagi Prefecture: Onagawa, Minamisanriku, the Ogatsu district of Ishinomaki City, and the Nobiru district of Higashimatsushima City [see map]. I limited my research to the coastal area of Miyagi prefecture as this was the area most severely impacted by the disaster (NPA 2011). I wanted to work only within the context of a single prefecture to focus on the depth of local experiences. I excluded Fukushima prefecture from the study where post-disaster community return and development has been further complicated by issues of radiation and the nuclear disaster. I felt this was an added layer of complexity that I could not do justice within the scope of a doctoral dissertation in addition to the focus on recovery from the tsunami. I visited the Sanriku Coast countless times, but 32 of these visits were designated for research purposes, ranging from day trips to sojourns lasting several weeks (Annex 1).

By this time, most of the visible signs of the destruction were long gone; there were no piles of rubble, roads were cleared and mostly freshly paved, and construction vehicles were

driving in an out of towns in continuous motion. Most on the foundational infrastructure was in place, with life on the temporary shopping districts and untouched residential areas going along as usual. However, the majority of towns most affected by the disaster still remained as visible construction sites, with brown fields and construction dominating the landscape, and residential areas still primarily unfinished. These daily reminders of the events of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami were inescapable, despite the pockets of "finished" reconstruction such as shopping districts of industrial areas, with residents having to maneuver between changing roads and construction machinery, whilst lamenting at the lack of sidewalks that prevented their children from riding their bikes or walking to school. Despite the lushness of the mountains that surrounded these towns that were nestled in valleys close to the sea, there was a surprising lack of nature once the access roads descended into the main areas of destruction; the air was only filled with the deafening sounds of construction.

With sporadic, or in worst cases non-existent public transport, travelling to and within the towns was challenging, each time requiring extra mental effort and planning. Such differences between the towns at times struck with dramatic force, as indications of the different character, pace and speed of reconstruction, resulting from a number of reasons ranging from political influence to economic conditions and priorities. Where Onagawa was enjoying a flush of weekend visitors to their newly opened central promenade, with various attractions ranging from local shops and events, to a bath house conveniently situated at the station, just across the bay in eastern Ishinomaki lay the district of Ogatsu, whose existence any visitor would surely miss when driving past if they did not know the town was there. This was my first impression when I descended into Ogatsu Bay and had to check my map that I had actually arrived at my destination. The pre-2011 seawalls still lay broken, and in many places, it was still possible find remnants of the pre-2011 lives along the sea, with household objects strewn on the side of the road, alongside the bent railings and abandoned houses as obvious signs of the destruction that had taken place. These differences between municipalities were widely discussed across the region, at times to a bitter degree.

Whether it was the extensive construction work along the coast, a sign at the side of a building showing the height of the tsunami, or conversations with local residents, it was clear that the disaster had developed into a permanent undercurrent defining how people remembered the

past, experienced the present and imagined the future in Tohoku. Aside from the physical signs and reminders of the brunt of the violence and destruction that had taken place in the area, visitors like myself were also continuously reminded of the event of March 11 through the encounters with local residents, with conversations pierced with references, anecdotes and off-hand remarks to the disaster and the surrounding recovery. Early on in my field work I puzzled over the possibility of re-traumatising the very people with whom I would become in contact and initially tried to refrain myself from asking people about their direct experiences with the disaster on the 11th March 2011. I was after all researching the post-disaster recovery process, and I thought the relevance that I would gauge from the stories about the day of the disaster would be negligible, information and knowledge that I could glean from the dozens of early ethnographies that were produced by those who entered the field soon after the disaster took place. I rationalised that these early impressions were fresher and more accurate as they were conducted soon after the disaster took place. I was viewing the disaster experience in the framework of knowledge and information, discounting the affects and reverberating impact that these experiences were having in the region and among the affected populations, shaping the sense-making, adaptation and imaginaries of the future.

However, when I arrived at my field site and made my first contacts, practically every interaction with the locals soon turned to the day of the disaster. A verbal recognition of the obvious condition that surrounded us seemed to be a vital precursor for any other stories, views, or ideas they wanted to share, and a bridge they had to walk me across. I believe these overt affirmations of what had happened in these communities represent the aforementioned connections between affect and discourse (Wetherell 2013) and constituted an invitation to break the silence on the obvious loss, destruction and absence that surrounded us. Sharing experiences of trauma can be beneficial coping, adaptation and overcoming traumatic impacts (Greenberg 2008), with Tohoku's affected populations wanting to share their stories on how they escaped the biggest tsunami to hit the region in living memory, the scenery they met on the following morning, the losses they endured in seeing their homes and neighbourhoods being swept under; some even sharing the painful memories of seeing relatives being lost to the waves. There was a sense of urgency in telling the stories, and it was this urgency that resided in the moments when the stories were

conveyed to me that I felt I had to concentrate on as much as the stories and their contents. On the subject of sharing their experiences, some noted that it is important to tell people what happened in these communities so that a disaster like this does not happen again elsewhere (REF 6), but the emphasis seemed to be as much as on the 'what' of the stories, the knowledge that was passed on, as in the act of sharing the story itself.

In the introduction to this thesis I shared a short anecdote about the brief interaction I witnessed between Mr. Takeda and his granddaughter one evening in the summer of 2016 as we were looking at each other's driving licenses. What I recounted of that interaction was the sudden realisation of the pervasiveness of the disaster experience, its intimacy and presence in people's daily existence, their daily routines, the fabric of their relationships, and in the landscape that they saw destroyed in front of their eyes and now being rebuilt over the years. I believe it was in that moment that the affective nature of the disaster was transmitted to me with greater understanding that I could glean from research papers or isolated interviews with individuals. The affective intensity of that moment could not be captured in words alone, but transmitted through expressions, tones, pace, bodies and the air that we were sharing.

Stories, as narratives or life histories were complex and emotional, and in their moments of sharing integrated the contents with the spaces, temporalities and individuals who were most affected by the changes incurred by the disaster and the recovery. I was taken to the places of destruction, told about the material and human costs of the disaster, and explained what people saw and feared during those hours of the tsunami. I had of course already read numerous accounts of the events, knew the scale and statistics of the disaster and had seen scary pictures and video footage of the tsunami online. While the data and analyses I had read before my field work had certainly provided me with knowledge of the context in Tohoku, what I realised is that during these moments that I spent with local people listening to their stories, sharing conversations, and visiting the places of destruction, that I was not simply invited to listen to a story, but to understand the affects that were contained in the story and transmitted through the interaction that we had with each other in that moment and in that space.

As outlined in the previous chapters, my research has developed into an exploration of the endogenous discourses about the disaster and recovery, and the relationship of these narratives to the formal recovery process. However, this understanding and focus has only emerged through a careful analysis of the experiences and data I gathered during my fieldwork. I entered the field with strongly inductive research plan of trying to understand the local constructions of Tohoku's post-disaster recovery and build a picture of the long-term effects and experiences of the disaster. In particular, I was interested in how communities were rebuilding themselves after such a large-scale disaster.

To explore the topic, I engaged in multiple forms of ethnographic data collection and interactions in the localities. I began by making repeated visits to several towns along the coast, focusing finally on the four mentioned above, taking in the atmosphere and trying to understand he process through which the disaster was both remembered and masked in the towns, collecting observational data. As I slowly began making contact with local residents, either through organisational contacts, chance meetings or introductions, the physical context became humanised as the setting of the lived experiences of those who still inhabit the landscape. Aside from my main data that consists of qualitative interviews with local residents, I also observed community meetings and carried out participatory research by volunteering for local organisations, taking part on disaster tours and even living in one of the towns for a short period of time.

By the end of my field work, my data ranged from survival stories and personal dreams and aspirations to deep analyses of the complexities of the recovery process and the future of Japan, shared with me through encounters along the way and by acquaintances turned friends. I had visited construction sites, abandoned residential areas, tsunami walls, temporary housing units, and newly built town centres with shiny cafes and restaurants, sampling their local specialties, trying to take in and understand the nuances of the atmosphere that existed in these towns. The spaces and conversations were nevertheless riddled with apparent contradictions and signs of uncertainty. New towns and residential areas were being constructed in the midst of accelerating depopulation and decline. In the space of a single conversation with residents, I often heard utterances that expressed enthusiasm and anticipation about the future, sharing their visions of a better things to come,

only moments later to be witnessing extreme anger and frustration about the recovery, hopelessness of the state of affairs and fear of the future that looked ever more precarious. It was this tension that drew my attention and warding further investigation. What I found was that these contradictory emotional reactions and responses to the development in these communities that were reflecting the duality the post-disaster recovery.

## 3.1. Research locations

The selection of research locations for the study happened incrementally, where I narrowed my focus on specific towns and neighbourhoods only towards the end of my field work, and finally the analysis. The locations that became the centre of focus in the study were chosen for their diverse municipal organisation and history, demographic characteristics, social fabric, geographical location and transportation links. These are some of the key characteristics that are linked to prospects of recovery from social, cultural, and economic perspectives (Barrios 2017, Aldrich 2012), therefore potentially affecting the way residents and municipal authorities alike envision their recovery and prospects for the future from social, cultural, and economic perspectives. The selection includes two cities (Higashimatsushima and Ishinomaki), where the research focused on one district in each city (*chiku*) (Nobiru and Ogatsu respectively), and two coastal towns (Minamisanriku and Onagawa) representing different demographic and geographical reach, thus providing a level of diversity between the locations.

Map of research locations along the Sanriku Coast

From the perspective of formal administrative and fiscal organisation of the recovery, Ishinomaki, Higashimatsushima and Minamisanriku had all undergone municipal mergers during the great Heisei municipal amalgamation (*heisei daigappei*), while Onagawa had remained independent (Miyagi Prefectural Government 2012). While these descriptive characteristics of the municipalities directed their selection as key locations for my research, the importance of the municipal mergers in understanding people's perceptions of the formal recovery, particularly in relation to municipal decision-making, became apparent only during the field work itself; something that will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Onagawa, as the only location that was able to resist the Heisei mergers, has at times been elevated as the ideal benchmark for the recovery (Cosson 2020), where the municipal leadership was viewed as exercising their independent authority and working closely with local residents to get them to return home. These views were particularly held by people outside of Onagawa, in comparison to their own local situations. Minamisanriku had undergone a difficult municipal merger earlier in the 2000s. Nobiru and Ogatsu today were

districts within larger cities having merged with them during the same period; Nobiru existed within Higashimatsushima, a new city born out of a merger of two smaller cities and Ogatsu had been absorbed by Ishinomaki city (Miyagi Prefectural Government 2012). Whereas Nobiru occupied a central well-connected location in the Higashimatsushima city, Ogatsu was located far away from the new municipal centre, on the eastern fringe of Ishinomaki City that the locals argued had an impact on the levels of attention and speed of recovery.

Similarly, geographic location and access to the locations seemed meaningful for the same reasons and I took the proximity and transport links to Sendai, the primary metropolitan hub in the Tohoku region, into consideration when selecting the research locations. Out of the four locations, Onagawa and Nobiru had a train, highway bus and local bus connection to Sendai and Ishinomaki, while Minamisanriku was connected to Sendai via highway bus and to Ishinomaki with a bus and train connection. Ogatsu was the outlier of the four representing a much more peripheral community in the study; they had limited transportation links within the community or outside it, and the majority of the population relied on their own vehicles. Ogatsu was also the only location out of the four that was still undergoing repairs to key infrastructure (Image 2), such as roads and seawalls, starkly highlighting its peripheral position within the city of Ishinomaki, causing a great deal of dissatisfaction among the local residents.

Image 2: Ogatsu Bay, Broken seawall, Anna Vainio 2016

Throughout my fieldwork I also began to note on the attitudes of local residents toward the municipal authorities that seemed to strongly impact their views on the recovery process overall. In Onagawa, it was common for local residents to note on their down-to-earth and dynamic Mayor, who due to his young age was thought to be in a great position to breathe new life into the recovery. His personality was attributed as one of the key factors in the successes of the recovery by local residents. Contrastingly, during one of my first visits to Minamisanriku, I was told about 'the feud' between the Mayor and the vice-Mayor of the town, whose different approaches and views, according to the locals, had divided the town into two separate factions, broadly along the pre-merger municipal lines. Some residents found this distressing and damaging to the recovery. Ogatsu's position as a peripheral part of Ishinomaki led to locals feeling forgotten (*wasurechatta*), who specifically noted that as none of the municipal workers who were in charge of the decisions over their district actually lived there, they could not understand people's experiences, thus highlighting the connection between the context and discourse in affective transmission. Out of the four locations Higashimatsushima seemed to have the most balanced and satisfied residents with regard to what the city authorities were doing.

Despite the changes in the geographical positions, histories and administrative organisation of the municipalities that brought diversity into the research, the scale of destruction and overarching framework of the government's reconstruction approach nonetheless neutralised many of these differences, and placed localities along the same start line. All of the locations selected for the study suffered large scale destruction as a result of the tsunami (NPA 2011), specifically to their housing and infrastructure, and a considerable drop in population levels, with a number of missing and deceased. The damages combined with population loss forced the towns to engage in broad reorganisation of infrastructure and relocation of residential districts. Furthermore, reduction in land for redevelopment and new national planning and zoning legislation is forcing all of the locations to rebuild their physical infrastructure as compact towns (Hirano 2013). While some of these infrastructure changes have been unavoidable, wide scale critiques over the scale of the projects have also emerged, primarily relating to the prolonged displacement of communities and the long-term sustainability of growth-oriented or stable development (Nagamatsu 2018). While all

interviewees felt that the recovery was taking too long, the response toward the scale of the projects was again mixed depending on the municipality. In Onagawa where the recovery was advancing at a quicker pace and the town was managing to establish steady forms of income from tourists and visitors, the delays seemed easier to bear, whereas in other locations such responses were rarer.

Geographically all of the locations were along the coast, making them primarily reliant on fishing and farming with fringe levels of pre-disaster tourism and other leisure activities. Primary industries that dominated the economic landscape in the region were particularly badly affected. In Miyagi alone, the tsunami swept away practically all fishing equipment and facilities, 12.000 fishing boats, 142 harbours, and 10 markets, delivering a huge blow to the industry (JFA 2012). Salination of farmland meant that only 35% of land could be used for production in the year following the disaster (Roy et al. 2014). The high costs and lack of successors to take over the business upon retirement caused many fishermen and farmers I encountered in Tohoku to worry over or decide against restarting their businesses. Additional blow to the industries was delivered by the import blockade put in place by the foreign governments on marine products from the Sanriku Coast. Along with some agricultural products, the South Korean government imposed a ban due to fear of contamination by the Fukushima Nuclear Plant, affecting around 15% of marine product sales nationally (FT 6.9.2013). Further bans have been put up by Russia, the EU and the US (FT 6.9.2013). The increased instability brought on by the contamination issue has further exacerbated problems of maintaining needed levels of production.

While the impact on key economic infrastructure extended across the towns, Onagawa stood at a better financial position than most of its neighbours due to a three-reactor nuclear power facility being located within its borders. During the earthquake and tsunami, the nuclear facility had a successful shut down and no radioactive material was released into the environment (Obonai et al. 2014). The facility, like others in Japan, was subjected to the post-quake stress testing (Epstein 2015) and had not been restarted by 2016. Since then the operator, Tohoku Electric Power Company, has decided to decommission the oldest reactor on site (Mainichi Shimbun 26.10.2018). However, the facility continues to offer employment to thousands of town residents and financially contributes to the town's budget both through

taxes and direct contributions. It was widely agreed by both residents of Onagawa and the neighbouring municipalities alike, that it was due to the nuclear power plant that Onagawa had managed to resist the municipal mergers a decade earlier and be able to provide high level of public services such as hospitals and schools.

Through the selection of research locations, I aimed to achieve a balance and representative diversity as well as balance across the region. Formally, Onagawa appears as an outlier, but as I will show through my empirical material, many of these formal advances only managed to attune some of the sharpest anxieties and dissatisfactions, but not erase them altogether. I began the data collection in stages, focusing on a single own at a time in the beginning, which gave me adequate time and space to understand the overall context of the recovery prior to making contact with local residents and beginning the interview process that I had deemed as my main form of data collection. Initial visits to the locations proved helpful in providing more context into the interviews, having a visual understanding of the geography, economies, social relations and cultural activities of the towns that in turn gave depth to the conversations with local residents.

## 3.2. Data collection

The majority of the data used in the analysis consists of interviews, a process that is outlined in detail below. I began interviewing at relatively later stages of my fieldwork, with the majority of them carried out in the summer and autumn of 2016. As I wanted to understand the connections between affect, context and discourse, spending a great deal of time in these locations was necessary in order to understand the context as well as build trusting relationships between myself and the individuals who would become my key informants, and learn the patterns through which affective and articulated content was transmitted. The data collection therefore was also exploratory at first, and I found myself engaging in multiple activities that could help me understand the context of people's daily lives, process of decision-making and participation, interactions with outsiders.

I met with many of my key research participants multiple times over the year and our conversations normally revolved around the recovery and their thoughts about the future during these meetings. As a result, I ended up conducting a number of what Bernard (2011) would describe as informal interviews that are designed to familiarise yourself with your participants, build trust, understand the field sites, and landscapes. This data is composed primarily notes and field work diary entries. I always took notes during the meetings or noted down the key points of the conversations afterwards in my research diary, or a separate document describing the encounter and the discussion. These conversations and information are also utilised to a limited degree in the analysis, but not coded as they cannot be reproduced in verbatim, and reliance on them will be clearly indicated in the text when I am doing so.

I also rely on other material directly collected from the field as supporting evidence, such as field notes, participatory observations, photographs, leaflets, and other relevant material. In all locations my first visit took place at the guidance of a contact, who introduced me to the key places and facilities, such as memorials, institutions, commercial districts, sights, and other facilities such as community centres or organisations. As these visits were planned and guided by the participants, they gave me a good chance to understand what places they considered worthy of seeing and of interest to me. However, selection bias was taken into consideration and in addition to these visits I also visited the locations independently to ensure I was able to experience and observe the location without this bias. Repeated trips to the locations enabled me to observe the development of the construction in the areas; longer stays on the other hand in some location enabled me to gain limited first-hand experience of the pace of the recovery and everyday life in a recovering town.

*Interview data*

I collected altogether 49 oral narratives from these four locations, either through individual or group interviews (altogether 39 interview instances were included in the study) (Annex 2). I met most of the participants several times throughout my field work. In the end, the interviews formed only a part of my overall interactions, observations, and experiences I had

in the field. I adopted elements from the data collection process outlined in grounded theory (Urquhart 2013). The aim was to produce an inductive data set for my research that is centred around a question rather than a framework through which to approach a phenomenon. Emerging from my desire to understand the perspectives of the affected populations in relation to the phenomenon of the post-disaster process in their communities, I wanted to remain flexible for the exploration of unanticipated storylines and directions, which is a key component of grounded approaches (Urquhart 2013, p. 8). All the interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format, with a great deal of space provided for participant-led narration of their own experiences and stories.

Prior to entering the field research stage, I had constructed five broad themes for the interviews: thoughts about their hometown, disaster event, experiences of the recovery, visions for the future, and roles in recovery. However, through the field work and individual narratives, theoretical connections began to emerge that linked with broader phenomena. The difference between grounded theory and my research is that the aim is not to produce a new theory, but to use elements of grounded theory method that has enabled me to make the theoretical connections that are explored in this chapter. Using the methods of data collection embedded in grounded theory however, enabled me to maintain the inductive quality through field work to analysis, and build a theoretical framework for my research from the ground up. The writing of this chapter will reflect the process where the theoretical aspects have not been heavily present in guiding the field work itself, but rather the analysis and organisation of the data.

The interviews were carried out as a two-way conversation following a semi-structured interview format based on the thematic structure mentioned above. Throughout my field work I had decided to position myself deliberately as an outsider, a novice if you will, and an active participant in the sense-making, imagining, and interpretation of the disaster and recovery with those whose life world I had entered. My reasoning resonates with the argument on positionality put forward by Ingold (2018) who states that the role of anthropology is to ”learn from our education with other people to speculate on what the conditions and possibilities of life might be” (p. 141), through which anthropology becomes a two-way process between the anthropologists and their subjects of study. I saw the act of

asking questions as this very process of learning, trying to see the reality of the disaster and the recovery from the perspective of those whose experiences and interpretations of that reality rarely become counted within the realms of 'knowledge' produced by 'experts' (Ingold 2018, Appadurai 2000). By asking questions and trying to negotiate the meanings and understanding of that reality together with the affected populations, I saw my research not as a representation of their voices but an interpretation that emerges from their stories.

In participant recruitment I relied on chain-referral sampling (snowball methods) through introductions from local residents to their neighbours and friends. While there are disadvantages to chain sampling (e.g. Biernacki and Waldorf 1981), Noy (2008) argues the technique itself carries an empirical quality that develops knowledge about the relationships within the target population, and remains relevant in light of social capital discourse within the disaster risk management and recovery field (Meyer 2018, Aldrich 2012). Given its proponents (Aldrich and Meyer 2014, Nakagawa and Shaw 2004, Masud-Al-Kamal & Hassan 2018) and more critical views (Tierney 2015), including elements of social connections in post-disaster setting seemed important to include. In Tohoku where the disaster and recovery has led to a widespread dispersal of communities (Hikichi et al. 2017), chain sampling offered not only access, but also provided an opportunity to understand how social networks and community ties were upheld in this context, and helped me understand how and who was able to maintain and operationalise these networks for a variety of purposes.

To adjust any imbalances in representation related to age, gender, location, and relationships (Annex 3), I used some purposive sampling methods (Guest et al. 2013, Robinson 2014) to recruit participants outside of the snowball chain of relationships. The context of recovery increased the presence of outsiders in the region, and the closeness and less formal nature of the rural communities, eased the establishment of ad hoc encounters, and interviews tended to result from initial informal discussions, tours or introductions to facilities, but also conversations struck up in cafes and restaurants. I maintained the criteria for inclusion in the study purposely loose, with the only requirement being that the interviewees had an established connection with the recovering location. The openness of recruitment rose as a key criterion after one of my first visit to the recovering region in November 2015 I asked my contact, a young man actively involved in the local recovery and reconstruction, if he knew

other people who were involved in the recovery that I could meet. He seemed puzzled and responded: "well, there's no one who isn't" (REF 1), arguing that everyone who lives in the region are by default involved in the recovery merely by trying to lead and re-establish their lives in the region. The various capacities, dreams, resources, and actions of each individual were all contributing to the recovery, both personally and collectively. This point helped me readjust my initial assumptions about the meaning of recovery-related participation, agency, and actions; thus enabling the research to uncover and explore diverse views of community participation and involvement in the recovery from a multitude of angles, as it was framed by the participants themselves.

In practice this led to the inclusion of two broad categories of individuals: long-term residents living in or returning to live in the disaster struck municipalities and new arrivals who had permanently relocated to the towns after the disaster. Inclusion of long-term residents is relatively self-explanatory, but the post-disaster population exodus that all of these towns had experienced (NIPSSR 2013) made the documentation of impressions and framing of the disaster in the new context through these long-term residents' voices all the more important. As the analysis will indicate, their connections to the location have strengthened, and motivations to contribute toward the recovery have been influenced by adaptation to the new post-disaster community context.

The post-disaster setting saw an influx of volunteers and new migrants, as well as the proliferation of non-profit organisations and start-ups across the region in the aftermath of the disaster (e.g. Tohoku Planning Forum 2011, Dimmer 2014). I wanted to include these voices into the diversity of community actors, as they assumed a variety of roles in the recovery and long-term development of the communities and contribute financially to the locations' development through projects, employment, and civic activities (Shaw 2003, Aldrich 2012, Dimmer 2014). Inclusion of these new actors into the research reflected the depopulation problems that have plagued the region for decades with migration playing a key role in revitalisation and recovery discussions (Matanle & Rausch 2011, Knight 1997). Local reconstruction and recovery plans from the municipalities highlight the population aspects of post-disaster recovery that includes the need to attract migrants and visitors to the region (e.g. Town of Minamisanriku 2011, City of Higashimatsushima 2011, Town of Onagawa 2011).

Similarly, as I began my field work, demographic development arose as one of the major reoccurring themes in the discussions with long-term residents, indicating that this was an important aspect to investigate. Demographic decline and population exodus were mentioned as one of the key concerns, and in-migration was gravely needed in these locations. The post-disaster areas saw a huge influx of volunteers in the months and years following the disaster, many of whom have since turned these communities into their new permanent homes (Klien 2017). In light of the underlying question of demographic development, it was pertinent to understand how these new arrivals understood the disaster context and were building their lives in these communities and taking part in recovery activities.

*Observations and participatory data*

During the field work I also wanted to get to know my research participants and the field sites in a more profound and engaging ways. Throughout the 13-months I spent in Tohoku I kept in continuous contact with the majority of the participants and visited the field sites numerous times to observe the advancement of the recovery or take part in activities. I took part in community meetings and traditional festivals, joined disaster tours aimed at students and foreign tourists, designed to help them understand the events of the 11th March 2011, volunteered for community organisations and NPOs, and toward the end of my field work I stayed in Onagawa for two weeks to gain a better understanding of what daily life is like in the recovering region. To record my impressions and initial reflections of the trips to the field sites, encounters with local residents and other activities, I maintained a weekly research diary that in parts will be referenced in the empirical chapters where necessary.

Aside from the individual impressions toward the recovery, it was important to understand the role civil society organisations were playing in the recovery, especially given the prominent role *machizukuri* organisations and neighbourhood associations were assigned in the formal recovery. I took part in altogether four meetings of such organisations, one in Onagawa and three in Higashimatsushima, where I had contacts that could facilitate access to the meetings. I also had the opportunity to interview two civil servants in the same towns to gain a more localised perspective into the formal recovery process. While I found the

attending meetings and interviewing civil servants enlightening and interesting, the narratives that were adopted in these spaces felt descriptive, where issues were discussed firmly within the framework of the formal recovery.

The majority of the content of *machizukuri* meetings for instance related to detailed planning-oriented activities, such as size and location of housing units, allocation of building sites, and the designs for new public places such as parks. As my primary interests related to the task of exploring the "other stories", I decided in the end not to concentrate too much on the civil society activities as the main research avenue. There was value in participating the meetings however, as these activities helped to verify my impressions of the role these organisations were playing in the recovery (Chapter 1), while also diversifying my understanding of roles that local residents were playing through their participation in these spaces. While taking part in committees and joining meetings was less about resisting the narrative and offering alternatives, by collaborating and co-producing solutions through a consultative format, they were nonetheless holding officials to account. Participation in the meetings was therefore important in providing the research more in-depth understanding of the different qualities of participation.

As the aim of the research was to understand the affective atmospheres that impact people's construction of understanding and desires for the recovery, as well as visions for the future, spending as much time in the disaster region as possible was imperative. Longer stays in the region were particularly helpful for this purpose as they provided a deeper understanding of the pervasiveness of the atmospheres, as well as complexities of daily life management of people residing in these locations. One of the most striking things was perhaps experiencing the logistical challenges of navigating townscapes that remained active building sites and where public transport within towns was limited. During these says I relied primarily on the kindness of my research participants to help me move around, or alternatively had to hire a car in order to be able to travel from one place to another. My two-week stay in Onagawa at the end of my field work was perhaps the most eye-opening. I stayed in a part of town that was away from the main area of destruction and reconstruction, with my bicycle being the main mode of transport to carry out shopping and visits to meet interviewees and contacts. This period enlightened me to the challenges produced by the lack of key services (e.g.

supermarkets), dangers and imposition posed by the construction to residents, and the sense of space and distance that were ever evolving. On the whole, the observational and participatory data helped me better understand the contexts from which the local experiences and constructed meanings for the recovery emerged. It supplemented the interviews by providing texture to the interview data and deepened the connection between myself and the research participants. The brief moments of being able to share the affective space with the locals whose daily life it constituted, was vital for the analysis of the data that I was collecting.

### 3.3. Data analysis

The objectives of my primary data analysis are exploratory, to discover how people were making sense of the disaster and imagining the future of their communities. For data processing I opted for a thematic analysis suitable for both deductive and inductive research that allows for interpretation and analysis to take place in relation to theory and conceptual framework, and enables coding to take place both on manifest or latent levels of the data (Boyatzis 1998, Attride-Stirling 2001). The aim is to uncover the important themes at various levels of the data and produce a connection between what is said and its meaning in order to produce an analysis of the situation that is being studied (Attride-Stirling 2001). As such, it provided a flexible process of encoding information. Some themes were anticipated as there is an intrinsic link between the theoretical principles and the secondary and primary data, and as a result some of the core themes that emerged out of the literature review were integrated into the data collection process as points of investigation; this is a core feature of semi-structured interviews (Ayres 2012). While some themes are anticipated, the aim of the thematic analysis is not only to understand the meaning of unique utterances, but primarily what the utterance represents in a particular context and in relation to other participants' views on the same topic.

The data collection utilised methodological elements from grounded theory, and therefore aligned itself with the epistemological and ontological positions where multiple perspectives and interpretation of the social reality are meaningful, and qualitatively equal (Mason 2002,

Bernard 2011). Utilising Attride-Stirling's (2001) analytical networks as a guide, I carried out a thematic analysis of the interview data that functioned as a means and initial exploratory process for organising the data and locating meanings and interpretations within (Guest et al. 2012). While Attride-Stirling only lists three levels of abstraction for the coding work (Basic, organising, and global themes), I added further two levels to both ends of the coding levels that I called 'utterances' and 'interview themes'. The coding work began with an inductive coding from 'utterances', where I collected meaningful sections from each interview to be organised into basic themes, that were further abstracted to organising and global themes using Attride-Stirling's method. Research can ever be purely deductive or inductive (Bernard 2011, Mason 2001, Miles et al. 1994, Boyatzis 1998), and this was reflected in the coding practices for my research data too. To link the data that emerged from the interviews to existing literature and theoretical underpinnings that had driven the research design process before entering the field, the initial inductive analysis of the data was followed by a deductive element of the coding work, where the coded material was reorganised "backwards", with entire sections of the initial inductive coding were reorganised under the 'interview themes' that corresponded with the areas of questioning that were covered in the actual interviews in Tohoku: disaster experience, perceptions of the town, perceptions of the recovery process, imaginations of the future and roles in recovery.

Throughout the following empirical data chapters, the analysis explores the tensions that emerge from the intersection of the divergent discourses, the 'two recoveries', as exogenous and endogenous stories for the recovery and Tohoku's long-term future and how they reflect the principles and values of a community-based recovery process, both as ideals and practices. As outlined in Chapter 1, the Japanese post-disaster recovery also closely followed international best practice by integrating principles of participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity into the recovery discourse (Annex 3). These principles will form the guiding framework for the discussions and analyses in the following empirical chapters.

The narrative across the empirical chapters is told by foregrounding episodes and encounters with local residents that took place during the field work, thus grounding the material into the local context, told from the perspective of the local residents who inhabit these affective spaces and whose processes of adaptation, coping, and envisioning emerge from the

interactions of the divergent discourses. It is through these encounters that I will help the reader construct a layered and vibrant picture of the affective landscape and intensities that dominated the experiences and discourses of local residents, through which the ways of re-ordering lifeworlds, social relations, adaptation to the new situation, and imagining and visioning a future by the locals can become understood. Through these encounters I will highlight the tensions that exist in Japan's recovery planning and execution when approached simultaneously from two directions.

One of the reoccurring narrators in the following chapters will be Mr. Takeda, with whom I established a long-term and tight collaboration, as well as friendship that lasts to this day, during the 13 months I spent in Tohoku. His inclusion as a steady voice running through the chapters is two-fold: Firstly, he was one of the first people I met upon arrival, and his warm welcome, eager and thoughtful conversations and passion for the recovery and the future of his community, in many ways embody the key analytical points I will be making. While I made many meaningful contacts throughout my field work, Mr. Takeda was the most intimately involved in my research, and I would not have been able to carry out my work without his endless and tireless assistance. The second reason for featuring Mr. Takeda as a central figure in this research is both a narrative and analytical one, as he was one of the key participants during my fieldwork, helping to guide the reader through my description, analysis and interpretations of Tohoku's affected populations' disaster and recovery experience. Due to the qualitative nature of my field work and the data I captured through observations, conversations and participatory methods, the diversity of the material, perceptions, viewpoints and opinions can get overwhelming. Mr. Takeda, through his continued and stable presence, exemplifies the mutuality and shared communal discourse that overlay people's differing personal views, and the diversity and complexity of feelings and thoughts about the recovery that often reside within a single person.

What I hope will emerge to the reader through the following empirical chapters, is that while the local residents did not necessarily use the language of the authorities to describe their experiences of recovery in their communities, and at times were also openly resistant to the external discourse of their communities' future, it does not mean that the values of empowerment, resilience, participation and proximity were not part of their endogenous

stories. Each of the following chapters elevates the endogenous discourse on the post-disaster recovery by exploring and analysing local residents' relationship with the formal recovery process as well as their own alternative stories that carry the transmissions they feel have not been understood (*kimochi ga wakaranai*). The chapters are constructed in reference to principles of community-based best practice, and how the locals view the realisation of these principles in the recovery's execution. The aim of the empirical chapters is to show that the endogenous local narratives, behaviours and daily life management under conditions of recovery in themselves contain participatory, empowered and resilient acts and envisioning that are rooted into and emit from the local context and understanding, arguing that the meanings we attach to these principles in the local recovery contexts can and should be constructed together with the local residents, rather than imported as part of external visions and narratives.

*Chapter 4*

# Everyone's voice in recovery: Participation in and out of the legitimate spaces

'Voice' has been prominently present in Tohoku's formal recovery domain, with the government's reconstruction approach expected to have a positive impact beyond the reconstruction and recovery period. It is stated in the very introduction of the Reconstruction Design Council's report to the Prime Minister that "When considering the revitalization of regions that have lost everything, it is first and foremost essential to listen to the voices of the people who have actually been affected and provide them with “linkage” that will empower them to realize their aspirations" (p.11). The government documents follow this emphasis on listening and local engagement, making detailed references to activities through which the local populations can be engaged into the recovery process. These documents make detailed references to community engagement, participation and 'voice gathering' activities (Annex 3), with words like 'consultation', 'views', and 'opinion' utilised to refer to the content of affected populations' participation in the process. In relation to participation itself, the documents make references to 'forums', 'consultative organizations', 'meetings' and 'conferences' to illustrate spaces of participation where the voices of the affected populations could be easily heard. Motivated by the desire to "listen to the voices of the

people", there is a clear commitment to the principle of community participation within Japan's 'community-focused' recovery.

The tangible and practical execution of the task of listening itself has been left to the discretion of the communities and municipalities themselves as the 'leaders in recovery'. To this end, a number of different listening exercises and community participation/engagement events have been carried out in the disaster affected municipalities, many of which have been carefully documented on their websites. For instance, both Minamisanriku and Onagawa began engaging with residents early in the recovery period by organising a series of public hearings for residents, with activities within the events ranging from public addresses to small group activities, brainstorming and reporting. In Onagawa these took place across ten different sessions, between May and July of 2011 with the meetings recording attendance of approximately 100 people on average (Town of Onagawa 2011b). Likewise, Minamisanriku organised five sessions between July and August of 2011, with the results of the meetings published in a pamphlet called 'Our ideas for reconstruction'[6] (Town of Minamisanriku 2011b). Similar efforts took place across the towns and cities in the disaster affected region, followed by more focused meetings on location and design of parks and public spaces (Dimmer 2014) and setting up of special committees and *machizukuri* councils for both residential and commercial districts. Residents in the research locations also reported having responded to surveys about housing and wellbeing at different points of the recovery.

Most of the participatory processes in the Japanese post-disaster context have been collectively carried out under the *machizukuri* process broadly meaning "town making". As outlined in Chapter 1, it is a community development process native to Japan that emerged in the wake of rapid post-war urbanisation, with an emphasis on traditional community organisations to combat new social woes, as a participatory process *and* social organisation between the citizens and the administration (Ito 2007). It is an epitome of the 'good governance' approach, where public engagement and participation through organised civil society are integrated into formal governance processes (Chapter 1). Machizukuri councils are

[6] 「復興への私たちの想い」 *fukkō e no watashitachi no omoi*

therefore usually established to capture citizens' voices with regards to specific development projects, thus having clear aims and objectives and end goals. Head of one of the local *machizukuri* organisations in Higashimatsushima for instance noted that his job now coming to a close, as the physical recovery is already on its way and the views of the residents have been integrated into the formal architectural and development plans (REF 24). This framing of duties indicated a close connection between the councils and the municipal administration in public imagination, as well as tangible activities that are in line with the formal progress of the recovery.

It was clear that populations in Tohoku have been offered numerous opportunities and outlets for expressing themselves in relation to disaster restoration. However, given the overall prevalence of *kimochi ga wakaranai* (they don't understand how we feel) in Tohoku, it was clear that despite the plethora of opportunities, participation in recovery through workshops, meetings, committees and surveys had not necessarily resulted in people feeling like they had a 'voice' in the recovery, with something about voice being left uncommunicated. Having a voice seemed to rely on the access to a space where voice became a legitimate part of the recovery process. This access, as I came to discover, was however restricted in a number of ways in the domain of people's everyday affective experiences of the recovery, either through physical barriers to participation or through self-imposed ideas of having less rights or needs to use a voice or the participatory spaces simply not offering outlets for the kinds of transmissions that would reflect the experiences of local populations. Therefore, despite numerous participatory activities that have run through the years in the municipalities, a mounting sense of voicelessness and frustrations was ever present in my conversations with the majority of the affected population.

In this chapter I will explore the principle of 'participation' through the local residents' experiences and views on the way in which community's engagement into the recovery process has been carried out in their towns. I will argue that the main problem seems to be the authorities' assumption of a causal relationship between participation and voice that could effectively take place only in a designated space offered for this designated purpose, where providing the opportunity to participate in recovery and have a say in itself was viewed as sufficient to give voice to the affected populations. This relationship views both

participation and voice in a narrow view that was spatially and temporally restricted, while also reducing voice to its articulable qualities. For many local residents, the feelings, views and sensibilities about the recovery are developed in conjunction with landscape, lived experience and social relations of the affected populations, with the transmission of these views equally requiring active engagement with the affective context of the lived experience in the recovering region on the part of the listener, rather than just the articulated content in a designated space for participation. However, the majority of the engagement opportunities offered to the local residents eliminate the affective elements that determine local understanding and desires for recovery.

In this chapter I will show that both participation and voice are complicated categories, where the local nuances and understanding define their execution and success. The chapter concludes that the formal framing and execution of participation within Japan's community-focused recovery is insufficient, merely offering the opportunity to have a say but not necessarily leading to people feeling like they are being heard. Through the following empirical material, I explore the plurality of the ways in which the affected populations interpret voice, the conveyance of voice, and how they want to be not only listened to, but also understood and heard. 'Voice' stands at the centre of the affected populations' desire to be heard, and the duty to listen projected by the authorities, thus functioning as a way of exploring the notion of participation within Japan's community-focused recovery. I will begin the chapter with an exploration into the notions of 'everyone's voice'. I will outline the sense of voicelessness local affected populations were experiencing in the recovery, despite the abundance and variety of formal participatory processes and opportunities that have been made available in the recovery across different municipalities. The chapter will then explore people's experiences of participation in the recovery, and how the reduction and even the complete elimination of the affective qualities of voice in the established format of participation is leading people to feel voiceless and unheard.

## 4.1. "We've never actually been asked about the recovery"

Out of the four research locations, it was in Higashimatsushima where I had the opportunity to engage with the local organisations functioning as intermediaries between the municipality and the residents the most. While I noted in the previous chapter that the *machizukuri* process quickly reduced in focus in my research from the perspective of content and organisation, attending the meetings nonetheless provided me with an improved critical perspective from which to approach people's views about participatory activities in their towns. My main contact in Higashimatsushima was Mr. Maeda (REF 10), who worked for a national organisation, but was based in the city supporting the local recovery through a community centre in the Nobiru district of the city. He invited me to come and observe several *machizukuri* meetings in the neighbourhood, while introducing me to the members, other development workers at the community centre, and local residents at the same time. I first visited the area in the spring of 2016, which was an exciting time for residents who had been displaced by the disaster, as the majority of the major foundational infrastructure work was coming to a close in the next 6 months in the area, with residents soon being able to start rebuilding their homes. Many of the meetings I attended during this period reflected the stage of development, with topics such as housing selection, park design and commercial opportunities reigning much of the discussions. While the majority of the content of these meetings followed the formal narrative for the recovery, conducting interviews with individuals who were actively engaging with these participatory spaces between the authorities and the citizens did provide a great deal of insights into the notion of participation itself.

By the time we sat down for an interview with two local residents who worked as community development workers in Nobiru, a badly damaged neighbourhood of the Higashimatsushima city, I had already visited the community centre and the neighbourhood several times. Higashimatsushima was in a comparatively advanced stage of recovery, with a recently restored railway line opened for passenger traffic and neighbourhoods relocated to higher ground now beginning to be built (Image 3). Both of these developments were immediately visible when I arrived in the Nobiru district of the city where I was to meet Mr. Maeda, with the modern railway station bordering the soon-to-be residential area now standing on the hillside overlooking the sea. Mr. Maeda escorted me to the community centre that I had come to see and where he was working. The centre was currently housed in a temporary unit, with

meeting rooms for community activities and an adjacent office for the employees. I was told that once the building work was finished the centre would move to the new *takadai* (higher ground) area on the mountain side, next to the newly re-opened railway station and much of the new residential areas. For the time being however, the centre would remain in the temporary unit, and the work carried out would revolve around the advancement of the post-disaster rebuilding and recovery. It was quiet at the centre that day, with a few cars parked on the carpark and the occasional resident coming to talk to the staff, or small groups of elderly residents coming to use the rooms for activities.

Image 3: Outside Nobiru railway station in 2016, Anna Vainio

At the centre I was introduced to a number of staff members, and also saw Mr. Inoue and Mr. Hayashi, who I had met on one of my previous visits. I had come to do a formal interview with them. I had wanted to interview the two gentlemen for a while now as they were both local residents and heavily involved in the recovery due to their roles at the community centre. The interview started as usual, but as we began to discuss the recovery process in the city, all of a sudden Mr. Inoue (REF 29) looked frustrated and said "*Anna-san, why are you here asking these questions?*". For a moment my mind went blank as I was taking in the question...what exactly did he mean? He quickly continued, with me realising that the question was more of a rhetorical move rather than as a genuine question interrogating my motivations: "*why are*

*the city official here not asking these kinds of questions!?*". What Mr. Inoue seemed to imply with this exclamation was something that became increasingly chrystalised in the coming months, with a tangible reflection coming from Ms. Ishida (REF 43) in Onagawa who during her reflection on the communication between the residents and the municipality said "*to be honest I don't think we've ever been asked what we actually think about the recovery itself. They often send stuff like health surveys, but never anything about just the recovery*". It seemed increasingly clear that residents as the affected populations and subjects of recovery were having difficulties conveying their thoughts, ideas, and worries about the recovery to the authorities.

The idea of listening to community voices was something the authorities had put forward strongly both in reconstruction plans as well as in conversations. While it was not my main objective to interview civil servants, I did have an opportunity to do so on a few occasions. Understanding the needs of the communities, fostering community cohesion, and hearing the opinions of the residents were typical responses from the officials (REF 27, REF 31) when asked what the role of the municipal offices is in the recovery, echoing the narrative put forward in reconstruction documents of the government, and closely echoed at the local level. For instance, the reconstruction plan for Minamisanriku places local residents squarely at the centre of recovery, stating that "every citizen is the leader of this recovery" (Town of Minamisanriku 2011, p. 9), corresponding to the overall 'community-focused' recovery advocated in the national guidance for reconstruction and recovery (Reconstruction Design Council 2011). Equally, prior to the publication of local reconstruction plans, most localities held meetings, workshops and public hearings, where 'citizens' ideas and opinions were listened to carefully, with the contents of the plan reflecting those ideas as much as possible[7]" (City of Higashimatsushima 2011, p. 3). Residents' participation in the recovery activities functions as the practical culmination of the public engagement aspect of community-based approaches and is, in theory at least, integrally linked to local empowerment.

[7] Author's translation of: 「市民の皆さんの意向、 意見をていねいに伺い、その内容をできるだけ計画に反映するよう努めました。」

While inclusion of local populations in multiple aspects of recovery and reconstruction activities has been noted as vital (Miyake and Ohtaki 2018), Tohoku's disaster affected populations stressed the necessity of both top-down and bottom-up approaches (Chino and Abe 2013). In relation to community participation as representing the bottom-up direction, each municipality in my research engaged with local residents by using a variety of methods, ranging from surveys to public meetings and individual interviews (e.g. Town of Onagawa 2018). Many local residents recognised that the job of a civil servant in the context of the recovery was a difficult one; something that Mr. Takeda (REF 6), a former civil servant himself empathised strongly, expressing gratitude toward the difficult task that these individuals in the administration were facing. Mr. Takeda was also unwavering in his trust that the public authorities had the best interest of the communities at heart. While of course Mr. Takeda's understanding toward the civil servants was influenced by his own history, the idea of the logistics and management of the recovery was simple for the majority of the locals: the authorities listen to what the residents want, and then they go away and deliver on their wishes the best they can. The locals highlighted the desired, and in many cases belief, in the moral correctness and integrity of the civil servants to maintain the will of the people and direct the recovery to the direction the residents desired it to go. The aspect of *servitude* of the civil servants was strongly highlighted by the residents, and also corroborated by the civil servants' views of themselves and their responsibilities.

Considering the community-focused ethos and the effort put into community consultation in the communities themselves, it was therefore curious that despite these efforts, many felt voiceless in the process with their circumstances and needs not being understood. Continuing my conversation with Mr. Inoue and Mr. Hayashi at the community centre, they enlightened me on some of the challenges: "*We've had one visit from them* [city officials] *in eight months. When they come, we host a big meeting, a lot of people come, the car park is full of cars",* recounting the eager participation of the residents in the recovery-oriented meetings. I myself attended one such meeting on 16 June 2016, with the big hall of the community centre being packed with people, mostly from the members of the local *machizukuri* organisations and staff from the city hall. However, packed halls with many people using their voice also had a downside as Mr. Inoue explained: *"No matter what we say, they won't get a realistic image of the situation in this town*" (REF 29). What he referred to was that full community halls and

car parks were not in fact reality that Mr. Inoue and Mr. Hayashi experienced everyday; a reality that I too attested to during most of my visits, with a small number of visitors to the community centre being the normal state of affairs. This did not mean people were not interested in the recovery on most days, but rather that the recovery and community voice could not be contained and captured solely within the walls of the community centre, on the days when the civil servants made their rare descends into the communities.

The authenticity of experiences in the community were highlighted elsewhere as well, not only in terms of the context that would enable a genuine observation of the state of affairs, but also the way in which discussions and conversations between the locals and the officials were carried out. A chance encounter with a gentleman in Ogatsu in the outskirts of Ishinomaki in the summer of 2016 reflected this frustration. I met him outside a temporary housing compound set up in the local park, where him and a number of neighbours were enjoying the weather and having tea together. I was invited to the gathering and after explaining to them what I was doing in Ogatsu the conversation organically developed from there. He recounted his numerous trips to the city hall to ask for assistance in relation to the recovery in his village. He explained how he is met with rules and regulations saying that what he is asking cannot be done, even if it would mean improvement in the living conditions and well-being of the residents at what he deemed to be little or no cost to the municipality. He was particularly alluding to the fact that the majority of the temporary housing units now stood empty, as people slowly began to vacate the units. Families still living in the compound were living in cramped quarters but were not allowed to accommodate the empty units on account of fairness and equality. He concluded by saying that if the city officials ever came to the village and talked to the locals like this, over tea, they would understand what local residents were feeling, and the residents would feel better about it (Research Diary 14.8.2016). He and his neighbours also expressed frustration over the fact that the city official always arrive with cameras, clipboards and recording devices, wanting to capture specific information (e.g. on health). However, what the locals really wanted was to have a 'normal' conversation about the recovery, and how they felt about it.

For the local residents, expressing their voice within the formal recovery process was complicated by two issues: Firstly, voice was an embodied experience that could only be

transmitted in the context to which their voices were linked; hearing everyone's voices was as much a matter of feeling their lives as it was a matter of hearing their articulations of needs, visions and opinions. When the recovery that was carried out somewhere "outside", in designated spaces, during designated times, and by designated representatives, it was not deemed to convey a genuine representation of the needs and desires of the affected populations regarding the future of their communities. In the above example, it was the affective experience of having tea with community members while sitting under the trees at the temporary housing compound that was deemed an essential part of the transmission of needs, opinions, and ideas; i.e. voice.

Second complication related to the notion of "everyone's voices". While equity between victims was considered one of the key principles, such homogenisation of disaster victims did not reflect the reality of people's experiences of using their voice. While some had assumed roles as community development workers and leaders of *machizukuri* councils, others shied away from these organisations and responsibilities. Some eagerly took part in organised recovery activities, while at the same time others felt marginalised by their personal circumstances or communal hierarchies and social standing. Yet, everyone did have a voice, and the importance was less on capturing those voices into official recovery and development plans, but rather the chance of voicing them and the feeling (*kimochi*) of being heard. Mr. Sasaki, a local resident of Higashimatsushima explained the importance of this to me, "*Sometimes people say unrealistic and irrational things* [related to the recovery], *but it's ok. It's important that they get to say them anyway. It's beneficial for their mental health. For instance, when the Emperor visited us, he sat like this, on his knees, talking and conversing with every elderly person in the room. That* [talking] *was the only objective.*" (REF 26). For the affected populations, recovery represented the new normal and the state of life that was intimate and pervasive experience of the everyday, something that remained unpackageable into an agenda of a meeting or pages of a survey that focused primarily on collecting information and gaining consensus.

Instead, for the locals, the objective of expressing views and using one's voice was therefore less about the transmission of knowledge and ideas, but more about transmitting affects that helped outsiders (in this case the officials) to fully comprehend the meaning of the knowledge

and ideas, or voices, that were expressed. For the locals, being listened to was therefore a much more diffused and affective process, intertwined with daily life, the physical environment, and the shifting range of available choices that were directed by the recovery context that instructed the construction of ideas about the future and the physical actions and behaviours in the communities. Transmitting these experiences was difficult, if not impossible, in the designated spaces that did not render themselves conducive to the transmission of the affective. To understand the proliferation of acute 'voicelessness' and the limitations to the genuine transmission of the affective intensities that directed people's views and understanding of the recovery and desires for the future, it is important to understand how locals constructed their relationship with these designated spaces.

#### *4.1.2. Elimination of the affective from designated spaces*

One of the common features of community-based participatory practices is the involvement of local organisations and organisational structures into the decision-making process as the facilitators between the authorities and citizens. These organisations are often central to the development of the designated spaces for participation and dialogue, a process that can of course have many benefits, but often equally many drawbacks. In Tohoku too, as I have outlined in the opening of this chapter, involvement of residents in the recovery took place within familiar structures, through organisations that have an established history across Japan, and membership based on physical proximity to the local community (Haddad 2007), that presents both benefits and drawback from the perspective of voice and inclusion (Pekkanen 2009, Hashimoto 2007). This familiarity can make it easier for people to recognise the place of participatory processes within administrative structures and understand the nature of participation.

Equally, stability of such organisations and their place in regular town planning and community development processes, can foster positive continuation of information sharing, consensus building and community participation that can be beneficial for increasing resilience against future disasters (Kariya and Ubaura 2013). Participation in voluntary organisations is prompted by a multitude of factors, such as availability (e.g. retirement), civic

duty, meaningfulness, and general interests and well-being (Nakano 2004, Matsushima and Matsunaga 2015, LeBlanc 1999, Hashimoto 2007, Hommerich 2015), through which individuals can determine their interests, motivations, and opportunities for participation. Equally, traditional format, structures and membership can place certain expectations and on who is and is not able to participate based on their skills, knowledge, motivations, and social standing (Hashimoto 2007, Funck 2007, Haddad 2010). These expectations can destabilise the statement that "everyone deserves to have a voice in this recovery", as the organisational structure itself and local customs can bias the inclusion and exclusion of individuals into participatory spaces and processes, thus also impacting the types of voices that are included and excluded.

The composition of membership in the established organisations in Japan tends to be overwhelmingly older and male, as the head of the household has been traditionally expected to represent families in the meetings (particularly the case with the neighbourhood associations) (Haddad 2010, Hashimoto 2007, Hommerich 2015). While part of the blame for the homogeneous nature of the membership can be placed on the archaic image, disinterest, and structural characteristics that tend to favour membership from a specific demographic (Hommerich 2015), issue of physical access in the participatory processes also featured heavily in the discussions with residents. Most common forms of participation in post-disaster Tohoku rely on physical presence of local residents (meetings, workshops, etc.) where problems relating to access and inclusivity at times led to negative perceptions of the participatory procedures and warded people off from joining the process. Timings and locations of meetings were limiting the opportunities to participate among some groups more than others, as explained by Ms. Ishida (REF 44): "*the meetings are often in the evenings. I need to feed the children and put them to bed, so it is really difficult for me to participate. Also, I heard that in* [the neighbouring town] *they have also asked people not to bring their children to the meetings, and this has barred many young women from participating*" (REF 43). While the last point she made remained anecdotal, the negative perception of the participation process nevertheless influenced her actual behaviour that led to a sense of marginalisation by the style of participation itself.

Based on my observations in Tohoku, older generations tended to associate participation with *machizukuri* and neighbourhood associations and their connections with the official governance structures, whereas the younger individuals and new arrivals in particular, were more heavily involved in NPOs, social enterprises and other new ventures (e.g. REF 1, REF 22, REF 39). The participants in the *machizukuri* process, through which the majority of the 'official' participation in the recovery took place, were themselves critically aware of the problems related to the participatory process, as was made apparent by an amusing incident at a *machizukuri* council meeting in one of the towns I visited. The members were worried about the advanced age of the majority of the people in the council and the difficulty of attracting younger members. They noted how this might skew the recovery in many ways, and that the council could really do with some younger energy among its ranks. To this, another member of the council, nudged toward another member sitting close by and gave a tongue-in-cheek response: "*well, we do have OO-san here. He's only in his 50's. That's young compared to the rest of us!*" (Research diary 17.6.2016). All the members of the council were male and no younger than 50-years-of-age, corresponding with previously documented patterns of civic participation in Japan (Hommerich 2015, Hashimoto 2007). The council members were critically aware of the short comings of their membership in terms of age, vitality, and diversity and worried how they could not possibly represent the voices of "everyone".

However, exclusion was also actively carried out by victims themselves where unspoken rules and hierarchies guided the types of voices that were brought to public discussion. Like disasters themselves, recovery too is highly contextualised both as a collective and individual experience. While comparable trends and processes to recovery can be found across Tohoku, no two towns experienced the disaster in the same way, and equally no two households did either; the disaster was a deeply personal experience inside collective suffering. Different levels of loss for oneself and others created an internalised hierarchy of suffering that at times led to self-imposed marginalisation from the recovery process by those who perceived themselves to have suffered less than others. Mr. Ono in Ogatsu explained this to me in the following way: "*We didn't lose our house in the tsunami and continue to lead a relatively normal life. I think this disaster is a great chance for us to turn things round* [to revitalise]*, but there are people who don't have houses yet, so I don't feel I should press on this issue too*

*much*" (REF 9). Despite agreeing with utterances such as "everyone deserves to have a voice in this recovery", the degree of loss and suffering seemed to make some people's voices more urgent and valid in the recovery process. It was this sense of suffering that deeply impacted people's feelings of inclusion or exclusion from the recovery that I found particularly curious in Tohoku.

Where in the case of representation voice was collectivised, in the case of suffering voice became an individual quality and a right, directing the types of things that were appropriate for discussion at a given point of the recovery, as indicated by Mr. Ono above. Discussion about housing took precedent over discussion about parks and business opportunities for instance, thus putting on hold the voices of those whose needs and ideas related to these topics. As our conversation with Mr. Ono continued, I asked him what opportunities he saw for his community. At this point he got excited and began to recount ideas he had for a new fish market and products that could be made locally, opportunities for tourism, forest management, and better transport, just to name a few. His self-imposed silence was motivated by solidarity toward those he felt had lost more than he had and emerged from the internalised hierarchy of needs.

In practice, the hierarchy of needs was also external to the individual in relation to the benefits of recovery and led to social divisions and real sense of marginalisation. The legislation on public financing in Japan does not allow for restoration of individual lifestyles but has to be used for public benefit in areas affected by the disaster (Oguma 2013). The separation of voices and needs is relevant in this context. People who did not suffer as much as those who lost everything were also deemed to have less needs for the recovery and became to benefit less from the public good of the recovery as well. Upon my visit to the community centre at Higashimatsushima, I also had a conversation with another worker there, Ms. Tanaka (REF 10) who explained the social divisions that were emerging as a result of the hierarchy of needs, determining who benefits from the recovery and in what way. Ms. Tanaka explained that the community is now experiencing divisions between the people moving to the new are on the mountain side, *takadai,* and those remaining in the lower lying regions, *motochi*: new houses, services, roads, and other facilities are being built in the *takadai* area, and in many cases services were moved to *takadai* from their original locations in the *motochi*.

While those in the *motochi* who suffered damages to their properties but were able to restore them more quickly, were now being left behind the development and losing facilities that were moved to less riskier places but becoming more difficult for the residents of *motochi* to access.

Changes in public financing that accompanied the Heisei municipal mergers have left many rural municipalities with aging population and dwindling numbers of taxpayers lacking the funds to maintain existing road networks, public facilities, and services (Oguma 2013). Some of my research participants did long for the charm, pace, and social relations of the pre-disaster town and found solace in the fact that some of the old town still remained untouched. One such person was Mr. Kondo (REF 40) who had decided with his wife to move to an area of his hometown that was untouched by the disaster. His reasoning was that the newly developed part of the town was just not their kind of place and they did not want to get wrapped up in the 'money-driven' lifestyle as he described it. But the contrast between post-disaster development and the areas left untouched by the disaster were often drastic (Image 4, 5), and not everyone was going to benefit from new houses and public infrastructure.

Mr. Ono (REF 9) remained positive about his town's development and was grateful for the fact that his own ancestral house had been spared the brunt of the tsunami, but also explained that there are needs in his town that are beyond the recovery from the tsunami. He was referring to two landslides that had taken place within the last 12 months on the narrow mountain road that snaked across the steep hills and valleys and was the only lifeline for people on the mountains. Despite all the attention Mr. Ono recognised people needed in the badly hit areas, the landslides on the mountain road leading to their inlets also needed to be fixed. He explained to me that they have now been in that state for months and they were not getting the urgent attention from the city that he felt they needed. The lack of attention paid to the landslides in one part of the community, while intense building the development work was being carried out mere kilometres away in the disaster affected zone, highlighted the division between the concrete immediate needs and the broader more abstract issues of general decline that had been plaguing these communities for decades, but now brought to new levels of intensity due to the disaster.

Image 4: Post-disaster infrastructure in Onagawa, Anna Vainio, September 2016

Image 5: Landslide in Ogatsu, Anna Vainio, May 2016

I frequently inquired from the residents I met whether they have attended any local workshops or other formally organised participatory recovery activities. While some were positive and felt that their "*ideas now live on in this new landscape*" (REF 6) or were happy with the outcomes of reconstruction without having participated in the workshops themselves (REF 39), the majority of the responses ranged from disinterest to negative

responses toward the way in which participation was facilitated: Some felt there are too many meetings and that not everything needs to be consulted, what was needed was more rapid action and progress (REF 44), while others felt that going to the meetings was pointless because everything was already decided (REF 14, REF 45). This last point was highlighted by Mr. Iwasaki, a community activist in Minamisanriku, saying that "*you can't actually propose anything* [in these meetings], *you can only comment on the ready-made plans that the outsiders like architects and engineers have already made*" (REF 15). While the issue appears to be that of implementation, it is not merely the case of the solution (participatory process) not meeting its objectives (inclusion and empowerment). Sometimes, despite having participated in a workshop or meeting, people like Mr. Iwasaki departed from the situation feeling voiceless.

Participation in spaces where the community voices became legitimised were also geared towards fostering technical expertise. Having a voice therefore became narrowly defined as the ability to take part in the administration of recovery, rather than a process of expressing unmitigated views and opinions that emerge from the intimate context of recovery as a lived experience and reflections on the realisation of such visions. To be able to work in collaboration with the authorities, participatory processes based on the *machizukuri* logic contain a distinct character of skills development, dissemination of information, and community leadership that members can develop through participation (Funck 2007), but equally many become (or are invited to become) members because they already possess the skills and networks that will be desirable for the organisation (e.g. former civil servants), as I observed in Tohoku.

These predetermined characteristics make some individuals better positioned to engage in developmental activities through these organisations, giving them a representational character relying on fixed membership. For the affected populations however, representation was less reliant on a democratic procedure of selecting a representative rather than on the closeness of *experiences* between the representative and the represented that led to a mutual sense of understanding and trust. The 2012 replacement of the railway line operated by JR East between Yanaizu and Kesennuma with a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service, left Minamisanriku (among other locations) without a railway service (JR East 2012). The decision

caused outrage and concern among local populations leading to the establishment of a campaign to restore rail service in the community (REF 15). Ms. Wada (REF 43) who was a local resident on the southern part of Minamisanriku, now severely impacted by the loss of the railwayline, gave a passionate account of the JR issue: "*I feel we have absolutely no say in anything. No one who actually lives here was invited to the meeting* [about replacing the JR line with a BRT]. *Only the 'yes-men' of the Mayor attended. We found out about the decision in the newspaper and asked ourselves 'what meeting?'*". Ms. Wada felt the decision did not represent the sentiments among those who will be directly affected by the decision and showed no trust in the process of decision-making or those who were involved. For her, voice was connected to the physical context of the recovery and the proximity of experiences and understanding between the representative and the represented. Genuine encounters with lives in the recovery context were seen as an essential part of creating understanding and trust.

Through the lens of *kimochi ga wakaranai* (they don't understand how we feel), we can see 'recovery' as disjointed from the holistic experience of life it represented for the local populations, and equally there was a lack of connection between each meeting, consultation, workshop, and survey that demanded the participation of the affected populations. Lack of connection to the larger context of the overall recovery and the impact each individual and collective participatory effort had as a cumulative progression toward the recovery. The connection between acts of participation were not linked up in people's reasoning, leading Mr. Ishida (REF 44) to exclaim: "*There are too many meetings. Just get on with it!*" that was less an indication less of lack of interest in participating in the recovery, than of the futility of the impact these acts were seen as having on the speed and direction of the recovery as a whole. Returning to Ms. Ishida's (REF 44) reflection on never having been asked about her thoughts on the recovery, the shattering of the recovery experience into consultive spheres of health, finance, housing, and well-being, seems to have led to a fractured image of the recovery as a whole. Connections between health and housing for instance may be recognised by the authorities but were not adequately reflected in the participatory processes on offer to the populations. Thus, the participatory processes were failing to recognise recovery as the holistic process that is intimately intertwined into the multiple facets of people's everyday actions and routines.

For the local residents, voice was more than the physical act of uttering an opinion or expression of views. It existed and emerged from the multitude of ways in which people were sensing, responding to, and expressing their experiences that could not always be captured into words. Participation as it was carried out in legitimised spaces, where 'everyone's voice' was treated as an aggregation of people's opinions, views, and ideas, thus running the risk of reducing voice to explicit, abstract and verbal knowledge. What the above exploration has however shown is the *affective* nature of voice, connected to the persons and networks within which voice was used, and where the contexts and spaces can determine the meanings and precise messages that it carried. The focus on 'voice' in the context of community-based recovery setting is a vital one, as the mutuality and equality of authorities and communities in the recovering space rests on the ability to express and understand one another. But voice is more than an articulation that follows a number of social logics (Howarth 2005), and it is the reduction of voice into this narrow category from which I argue the sense of voicelessness emerges. It is therefore the very notion of 'voice' itself that divides the temporal, material and metaphysical aspects of the recovery experience into different domains of action, where despite the affected populations and the authorities speaking the same language, using the same terminology, and utilising the same concepts, they appear to not understand each other.

This raises the question of what is 'voice' supposed to achieve in recovery? And for whom? As discussed in Chapter 1, governments and authorities have embraced participatory approaches to include community voices in order to legitimise their actions and decision-making. Much of this work is carried out with the ethos of 'community empowerment' attached to it. In community development literature we often see empowerment as an internal process through which participants gain the power and confidence to act, while also linked to taking ownership and authority over the development and issues in their neighbourhoods and communities, thus leading to higher rates of satisfaction and mutuality between the authorities and their subjects (Watt et al. 2000, Zippay 1995, Simpson et al. 2003). In light of the overarching sense of *kimochi ga wakaranai* in Tohoku, perhaps we need to think whether this is all that empowerment is however? For the local residents in Tohoku being listened to seemed to be less about empowering the individuals to utter what they wanted to say (and based on my observations and interviews that I carried out, everyone was

capable of articulating their ideas and feelings toward the recovery), but more about empowering the spaces and situations where uttering voices could become a legitimate part of the recovery that went beyond the official consultation remit. In the current state, locals felt their voices became authorised only through specific channels of communication, or when uttered in pre-determined and legitimised spaces and contexts. Access to these spaces was limited by several factors that many felt went against the notion that "everyone deserves to have a voice in this recovery". The established hierarchies and authorisation of voices led to a sense of irresolvable internal contradiction regarding participation and voice in the recovery context that was distinctly disempowering to many local residents, reflected through the notion of *kimochi ga wakaranai*.

If capturing "everyone's voice" as an extrapolation of opinions into a consensus does not reflect the recovery as a lived and affective experience, then what does? How can we capture, and more importantly understand (*wakaru*) the feelings, experiences, and affects that are involved in recovery where "every person is the leader"? How can 'voice' that encapsulates more than articulated opinions to be heard? Disasters like the one that happened in Tohoku in 2011 cannot be counted as mere anomalies in life's normalcy, where individuals can after a period of disruption where towns are rebuilt, and damages are fixed return onto the same trajectory as the one they had before the event took place. The events of 2011 shifted the life worlds of individuals, communities, the region and the nation, with the events having an effect in the way in which we not only view the future from the point of destruction, but how we reflect on and place and construct meaning upon the past as well.

# Empowerment in recovery through resignation

In the previous chapter I have explored the statement of 'everyone's voice' in the recovery process, breaking the homogeneity in community's voice construction and usage of voice, while arguing for the affective nature of voice that consists of more than just articulations. The community-based approaches to development, post-disaster recovery included, argue that participation in development processes enables community members to get their voices heard, which in turn will have a positive and *empowering* effect on the affected communities. Batliwala (2007) notes that while 'empowerment' "represent[s] a clearly political concept, it has been 'mainstreamed' in a manner that has virtually robbed it of its original meaning and strategic value" (p. 557), here referring to the notion of power within a political setting, where 'empowerment' was "coined to represent a clearly political concept" (p. 557). The term is fluid and porous and used in a number of different contexts, often without awarding sufficient discussion to pinpoint a clear definition (Batliwala 2007, Hirsch 1994). This does not however negate its usefulness in describing the sensations, feelings, and analyses of the situation in Tohoku. In my usage of the term, empowerment is integrally linked with power. Being empowered resulted from the feeling of having the power to "change things", and disempowerment emerged from the opposite state.

As discussed in Chapter 1, empowerment is one of the core principles of the community-based logic, but as I will show in this chapter, local empowerment has been complicated by the tension between exogenous and endogenous discourses that are emerging from the authorities and the localities alike. In the government's documents (Annex 3), the view of empowerment primarily emphasises the connection between tangible and direct engagement and participation in communications and projects around recovery that is viewed, through consensus and capacity building, to lead to empowered communities. However, this view of empowerment is increasingly devoid of the above mentioned political power and the ability to change things, that through my empirical material emerged as the main way through which local residents were assessing their own dis/empowerment. Despite the prominent use of language of empowerment, the state's exogenous narrative was simultaneously developing an environment of powerlessness, where local residents did not feel they had the power to change things within the setting that is reserved for political decision making. This depolitisation is integrally connected to the homogenisation and harmonisation of communities, characteristic of community-based and participatory approaches today (Cannon 2008, Cleaver 2001), with participatory approaches increasingly being modelled to reflect this apolitical notion of the community within the exogenous narrative for the disaster recovery.

For the locals, the ability or lack thereof to change things in specific settings led to affective states of empowerment or disempowerment that in the case of the Tohoku residents were verbalised through emotional states ranging "from love and solidarity to resentment and rage", to borrow from Shaw's (2017) reports on the descriptions of responses to the national post-disaster climate among the activist communities. The connection to the national debate here is deliberate, as I will show how these different emotional responses embedded into and driving the endogenous discourse of the recovery, were connected to the very notion of what it means to be part of the community and the nation whose rejuvenation the recovery is advancing, and what the path to prosperity looks like within the scope of the two recoveries.

The geological position of the Japanese isles makes disasters an integral part of the historiography of the times in which they take place, reflected in the public and popular responses to them. The temporal characterisation “post-disaster” needs to be understood as

much a cyclical development as a linear one, where disasters have a unique capacity to shake conformity and suddenly bring forth and visible the mounting hidden tensions. Where the 1923 Tokyo earthquake reflected the political atmosphere of the pre-war militarism and nationalism, bringing forth ethnic tensions, the rapid expansion and integration of civil society actors into formal politics of the post-bubble Japan was a feature after the Hansin-Awaji earthquake of 1995. The reflections after 2011 on the other hand have brought to the surface the growing social and geographical divides as distinctive features of post-growth Japan, where (economic) growth is no longer a given, and perhaps not even anticipated anymore. It is against this framework that Sociologist Eiji Oguma (in Brown 2018) suggests that the "awakening" experienced in the post-Tohoku reality is more a reaction to the increasing insecurity and growing divides in Japanese society, rather than a reaction to the disaster per se.

This "awakening" was a key characteristic in the individual and communal stories in Tohoku, or what locals referred to as *mezamerareru*, "our eyes are open now", reflecting Curato and Ong's (2015) notion that disasters can "lift veils", revealing that which has remained hidden, giving rise to competing narratives and recognition of the underlying conditions and structures that influenced the nature and direction of the destruction; but equally, the direction that the future must now take. Disasters, particularly large-scale events like the one in Japan in 2011, often reach their impact broader than the immediately affected communities. In the Japanese context, resonating with Oguma's notion of "awakening", Shaw (2017) has equally explored the emergent feeling of *mezamerareru*, in the wake of the earthquake, tsunami and the nuclear disaster. Shaw argues that as people "disentangle their nation from the shadow of the state, affective structures of obligation and social belonging underwrite the ways that activists negotiate dialogical emotion - from love and solidarity to resentment and rage" (p. 61), she finds that the narrative of the nation and belonging is moving away from the monolithic harmony based on racial and cultural similarity to one of inclusion that sees beyond these markers as the basis of social belonging. In the context of the post-disaster communities, historically embedded structural injustices (Hopson 2013, Kelly 2012, Shaw 2017) are becoming increasingly apparent and pressing for local populations.

The 2011 triple disaster in Tohoku had a profound effect on people across Japan, not just in Tohoku. On a national scale the sense of *mezamerareru* can be witnessed through the fundamental re-thinking of everyday life, consumption and family relations, as well as modernity itself (Morris-Suzuki 2017, Shaw 2017, Samuels 2013, Geilhorn and Iwata-Weickgenannt 2017), providing a context of rapid and sudden change requiring equally rapid modes of adaptation to be developed. This has led to a widespread desire and national contemplation over fundamental transformation of the social, economic and political conditions that have led the society into a perceived crumbling point and a rediscovery and regeneration of the lost self and true nature of existence in the future (Morris-Suzuki 2017, p. 8). These post-disaster imaginaries paint a picture of a 'new society', what Morris-Suzuki (2017) calls a 'Disaster Utopia', where the disaster "forces people to create their own patterns of order and ethics in the wastelands left where formal structures have been stripped away" (p. 7). I argue that the sense of *mezamerareru*, imagining of new visions for the future, criticality of growth as equalling prosperity, and the emergence of various practices around alternative lifestyles have been the driving forces of local affective experiences of possibilities for change, and thus of empowerment.

However, despite the emergence of new debates and alternative visions for the future of Tohoku, and Japan as a whole, the idea of propelling Japan onto a path of growth was enshrined into the principles of recovery after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, where the future of Japan was integrally linked with the recovery of Tohoku's affected regions. For example, principle five in the aforementioned 'Hope beyond the disaster' -document states that: "Japan’s economy cannot be restored unless the disaster areas are rebuilt. The disaster areas cannot be truly rebuilt unless Japan’s economy is restored. Recognising these facts, we shall simultaneously pursue reconstruction of the afflicted areas and revitalization of the nation" (Reconstruction Design Council 2011, p. 2). Despite aiming to emphasise the necessity of mutual cooperation and the interconnectedness of national and local needs, the statement however shows Tohoku's central position in national prosperity, while also continuing to subordinate its regional needs to the national ones, thus illustrating the continuation of broader historical patterning of local disempowerment within the national discourse.

Despite the language of empowerment equally and prominently embedded into the government's narrative on the recovery, the state has continuously been fostering an environment of powerlessness build on the emphases on solidarity and harmony. Already in the early days and weeks after the disaster, notion of *ganbaru* (do one's best) and individual stoicism and perseverence (*gaman*) rose as key words to lift public mood and increase solidarity among citizens, widely proliferated through billboards and banners in public spaces (Image 6) (Azuma 2014, Forgash 2011), with *ganbaru* recorded as the single most widely used word in earthquake slogans after the disaster (Azuma 2014). Promoting ideas of harmony and national unity, the state has not only glossed over the structurally ingrained regional inequalities that have directed Japan's development for decades, but also depoliticised the recovery project as a whole. Slater et al. (2012) argue (in reference to Agamben 2005) that by enabling the state to function in a 'state of exception', where normal functions of society become suspended due to an 'exception' from normalcy (e.g. emergency), the state can validated the location of power more firmly within the state in order to overcome the 'exception' (Agamben 2005). Agamben further notes that this incremental suspension of normalcy and basic right can lead to a gradual disappearance of meaningful political action; and thus disempowerment. To understand whether 'meaningful political action' has disappeared or not in Tohoku, we need to explore what exactly is understood as political in the specific context.

Image 6: 'Ganbarō Nippon' display at Ueno station. Anna Vainio, September 2011

The increasing disempowerment and voicelessness people were experiencing in the formal depolitisised participatory spaces, I argue, led to communities 'resigning' and actively rejecting the formal participatory processes, with the lowering numbers of participants and comments like Mr. Ishida's (REF 44) "there are too many meetings!" reflecting this overarching sentiment in the region. However, what was equally noteworthy among the participants, was that there were spaces and contexts within which making changes was deemed possible, where the affective experiences of empowerment for the local residents had primarily become located. These spheres emerged directly from the daily life context in the recovering regions, where the experiences of survival, "opening one's eyes" to regional vulnerabilities and inequalities, and the discovery of one's own abilities in spite of the sense of powerlessness within the formal recovery context. Through activation of communal support networks, engagement with non-profit initiatives and starting of businesses,

community members were throwing themselves into the sphere of informal politics and communal action in ever greater numbers.

In relation to the affective notions of empowerment and disempowerment that were therefore equally apparent in the region, the conversations I had with residents in the disaster struck region presented a divergence from the normative narratives on social activism, movements and political participation. Not necessarily in terms of agenda or direction, but in the framing of politics and the actors that are included into these narratives. The critical discussions on the diversity of voices, the processes for reaching consent, and the direction of social action to date have tended to focus on the formal administrative actors, such as municipalities and civil society actors of the recovery (e.g. Aldrich 2012, Avenell 2012, Dusinberre & Aldrich 2011). What has been missing from this discussion are the questions of what constitutes political activism and the ways in which politics is practiced in non-administrative spaces however.

While exploitation of community solidarity and celebrations of individual perseverance (*gaman*) have certainly contributed to the depolitisation of the recovery process where the power in community empowerment has become attuned and aligned with the objectives of the state, disenfranchisement from the formal recovery has not however meant disempowerment of the populations from the recovery overall. And in fact, as I will show through the ethnography in the latter part of this chapter, affected populations have been broadly empowered by their experiences of the disaster and prolonged habitation in temporary conditions. This scene of 'informal politics' has been explored in the East Asian setting before (e.g. Morris-Suzuki & Soh 2017, LeBlanc 1999) (as well as beyond), but remains mostly invisible and unrecognised as belonging in the sphere of politics. But does people's resignation from the formal political processes (e.g. voting), from mass movements and protests (that however admittedly did take place, but with varying degrees of long-term success), and more concretely from the organisation of post-disaster recovery (by not attending workshops and responding to surveys) represent disinterest and political apathy among the populations, or a political reaction to their voicelessness that reigns within these processes and structures of what is typically considered as 'political'? Or does it simply mean resignation from the empowerment without power?

To return to Shaw's (2017) emotional scale mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the first part of the chapter will outline the puzzle by looking at what she has termed "resentment and anger" with 'formal' politics and decision-making being seen as exclusionary and decided from the outside. This part will explore people's relationship with the formal recovery and how through a variety of actions they are trying to get their voices heard, and how despite these actions they nevertheless end up voiceless. I argue that the affective state of disempowerment that reigns in these settings has led people to resignation from the participatory spaces of the recovery. The second part of the chapter then explores the side of "love and solidarity" of the 'informal politics', not as an expression of harmony but as a collective voice for their communties through actions, and connecting the events in their communities and the internal processes of sense-making to the broader debates of the nation and belonging as individuals with voice and something to say. The second part of the chapter will explore the alternatives that have emerged from resignation from 'formal politics', and how the active rejection of normative forms of influencing and traditional value bases has had a distinctly empowering effect on the local populations.

## 5.1. "I don't expect anything from this Government anymore"

I met Ms. Wada (REF 43) on my last visit to northern Miyagi; we were introduced to one another by a mutual friend who accompanied me the meeting. We travelled to an area of town that was further away from the hussle and bussle of construction that was taking place in the town centre. We arrived at an empty lot where Ms. Wada and her family were running a small restaurant close to the seaside. The quietness or the place was noticeable, with the sounds of nature being suddenly amplified after leaving the noise of construction in the town centre. No other buildings were around, and the road winded between what looked like mounds of dumped gravel now sprouting a variety of weeds, evidently having stood there undisturbed for a while. Ms. Wada told me that this is where her house, and in fact her whole neighbourhood had once stood, and the land where the restaurant now stood still belonged to her. On March 11th she had heard the evacuation order and together with her mother they

had packed the car, with emergency provisions, warm clothes for the children, and the family dog. Together they had driven to a higher ground to watch the disaster unfold. The height of the tsunami nevertheless exceeded their expectations, reaching their place of safety. They were forced to haphazardly run up the hill to escape the oncoming waves, leaving the car with all their belongings behind. In the end, despite their well-prepared escape, nothing else was left except a single mobile phone that she had held in her hand when running for safety.

The restaurant that she now operated on her own land was in a charming log cabin like building, containing a kitchen, a small dining area for the customers, and a mezzanine upstairs. She had originally opened the restaurant with her mother next to the main highway where she was making good business especially with the construction workers coming for lunch, but eventually the site became subject for redevelopment and they were asked to move. Throughout our conversation there was a hint of tiredness and even bitterness in her voice toward what was happening in the town that culminated in her final words about the relocation: "*When we were asked to move, we looked for other places but couldn't find anything suitable. So, we decided to come back here. This is my land, I never sold it to the town* [after the disaster]. *At last they can't tell us to shift from here*" (REF 43).

By the time I was interviewing the residents, five years had passed since the tsunami came and took the familiar landscapes and connections away. While many had established a sense of new normalcy and forging on in the constantly changing landscape and community, there was a sense of unfairness present in people's speech. "*It's been five years since the disaster*", Ms. Wada tells me, continuing to talk about the Government, "*Disaster? Life is normal in Tokyo, why should they remember us? They make a budget for three years, and then for five years, but could they also finish the recovery in that time? The recovery is not over yet, come, see, and judge for yourself, then you'll see what we actually need here. There's still no shops, no houses, even the land is still not finished* [i.e. yet fit for building]", finally explaining in a tired and impassionate manner: "*I expect nothing from this Government anymore*". Looking at the landscape, her own land, and the vast emptiness that continues to surround it, it was easy to understand her anger.

The sense of injustice and unfairness that Ms. Wada, along with many others I met, felt toward the system and the process that governs her town's resurrection was painfully apparent. After the tsunami, the political process of the post-disaster recovery commenced quickly. Within months the Government and municipalities had produced guidelines for recovery, legislation and budgets that govern (and as Oguma 2013 for instance explores, also constrain) the process, new institutions were activated to dispense justice, and thousands of volunteers and organisations had descended into the communities to "do recovery". The aim was to 'build back better' (Chapters 1 and 2), revitalise these rural regions, and spur them and the entire nation back on the path of growth. The official plans for the recovery of Tohoku were presenting grand scale plans for the future where the mistakes of the past would not be repeated.

Planners, architects, and authorities too refer to post-disaster situations as a 'blank slate' and a 'window of opportunity' for development (Chapter 1), where planning starts from zero and more creative and flexible designs become possible (Barrios 2017). The positives of the 'blank slate' state of town development cannot be underestimated and were recognised in Tohoku too. Mr. Miyazaki (REF 14) for instance was a big proponent of a completely new town design for his hometown of Onagawa, saying that among other things, the decision to do away with the old and build a completely new town has enabled them to recover much quicker than neighbouring towns. The new opportunities were recognised wider in Onagawa too, including the decision to build the central shopping district to last approximately 30 years, as explained by one of the members of the central *machizukuri* council, so that the next generation can demolish them in the future much easier and build a town that they want (Research Diary 12.6.2016). While it can be tempting to think of post-disaster settings as a 'blank slate' enabling versatility and creativity for the recovery processes (Olshansky 2009), discussions and consequences of exploitative neoliberal processes are an equally likely outcome. Disaster capitalism too presents a form of grand scale planning, where the social relations, individual livelihoods, and forms of culture and sociality are reduced to a relationship of capital transactions (Klein 2007, Barrios 2017, Cuff 2009) and need to likewise be critically considered in these contexts.

According to the rationale of the community-based recovery process, local residents were engaged into the post-disaster recovery process. They were asked to critically engage with architectural designs, engineering solutions and town planning by expressing their views on the process at hand and becoming active participants in the recovery. However, after the disaster, Tohoku's residents needed to come to terms with the new reality. Multiple simultaneous processes were on-going: local residents were battling with issues of coming to terms with their communities being gone, trauma of loss, making sense of the impeding future of their communities. Ms. Ishikawa (REF 34), a long-term resident turned business-woman in Ogatsu connected these on-going complex and overlapping processes of grieving, fear, and sense-making to the "bad decisions" that were made all over coastal Japan at this time: "*In the beginning we were asked if we want a tsunami wall here, and we said 'yes'. But we were in shock, people had just died from a tsunami! Now* [after five years] *realising the full impact of the wall, we just don't want it anymore. It was a bad decision*" (REF 34). By the time I was talking with people in Tohoku, the decision was said to be irreversible and people were now stuck with that bad decision.

While the tsunami walls are not the only safety driven anti-tsunami engineering solution that has raised worries over biodiversity loss and ecological damages (Nishiro et al. 2014), they presented a particularly heated issue in Tohoku, and numerous problems have been associated with them. Concerns have been raised around ecological disruption of water flows and the impact this will have on marine cultures and economies (Dionisio and Pawson 2016), social concerns over the lifestyle development and fishermen's engagement with the sea (Littlejohn 2018, Dionisio and Pawson 2016), and critiques on the safety of the barriers that is a strong current in the governmental narrative for their construction (Matanle et al. 2019). While no one argued against the necessity for physical safety and resilience of the infrastructure, many felt that the tsunami walls were not the way forward. The construction of the tsunami walls despite popular opposition and concerns were seen as distinctly disempowering processes, where residents felt that their endogenous communal concerns were not discussed or ignored as part of the agenda.

Mr. Ono (REF 9), a fisherman in Ogatsu for instance excitedly noted on the potential that the tsunami has brought in its wake for the reinvigoration of the fishing industry. Not only did the

sea get healthier after the tsunami, Mr. Ono explains, but the long-term deflation in the numbers of fishermen now means that fishing areas for individual fishermen have expanded, thus creating for more thriving livelihoods. The media focus on fishermen in Tohoku have also brought on a fresher image for the entire profession (being a fishermen was often noted as being oshare, 'cool', by young outsiders), that had attracted people like Mr. Shimizu (REF 7) to change his familiar salaryman life upside down and become a full-time fisherman after the disaster. Against the positive excitement and small-scale hopeful steps toward the revitalisation of the fishing industry, the threats posed by the new development loomed heavily over the heads of locals involved in the industry. Another fisherman in Minamisanriku, Mr. Goto (REF 37) who was showing me around the sandy beach near his fishing hut explained that it is not just a lovely place for swimming, but how the shoreline is full of fossils as well, something that cannot be found anywhere else in the region. The same sandy beach was the siting for the new tsunami wall. The potential of the natural beauty of the shoreline as a cultural and tourism resource would according to Mr. Goto be destroyed, not to mention the threat he saw in the wall cutting the natural flow of the fresh water supply to the sea that was imperative for the healthy growth of oysters and scallops, the main marine products in the region. While Mr. Goto and other locals noted on the opportunities that these resources would reap for the future of their communities (e.g. REF 15, REF 4, REF 22), they also recognised their own powerlessness against the development of the walls themselves. For the locals like Mr. Ono and Mr. Goto, the concerns were interrelated, integrating multiple aspects of the necessity for safety and resilience into the trauma and loss of heritage, culture, history, as well as the affective notions of feeling connected with nature and community.

Despite what Ms. Ishikawa had mentioned about the tsunami walls and people saying 'yes' to them, the decisions were not made without protest or opposition from the local residents. Mr. Iwasaki (REF 15) noted that once a decision has been made and it has been entered into the official plan for the town, it cannot be reversed. He explained how he witnessed the 'empowering' community participation working in his community through the designated spaces: "*The initial planning process involved academics from the outside. They created the backbone of the plan, after which representatives of the town people were selected to comment on the plans. There were about 20 invited people, I was one of them. This then became the 'voice of the community'*". Mr. Iwasaki's explanation alone already shows the

limited scale of engagement in spaces where voice became legitimised, but he also continued to explain how the process did not only exclude most town folks from having a say, but also disempowered those who *did* join: "*There were more local leaders than ordinary residents in the public meetings. And those who didn't go against the plans became the committee members* [...]. *Eventually the participation rates have really gone down, hardly anyone goes to the meetings anymore*". I asked Mr. Iwasaki why people did not join the meetings where much of the recovery process was being decided and where the authorities were collecting "everyone's voices", he explained: "*people no longer see the meaning of going to the meetings. Even if you say your opinion, they will just stick to the original plan. There is no room for alternative opinions, or anything new* [...] *people feel unheard and they have given up* (akirameta)".

It is easy to recognise that participation does not necessarily lead to empowerment, and as explained by Mr. Ishikawa, in Tohoku it has had a distinctly disempowering effect on the local populations. The problematic relationship between empowerment and the external agents related to the decision-making, discussed in Chapter 4, becomes further clarified in this context. The local voices had the 'power to change things' as long as they conformed to the goals and legal and fiscal structures set out in the exogenous narrative for the recovery, and as a result, only certain kinds of voices were welcomed into the sphere of 'empowerment', namely those that agreed with the external plans.

This language of empowerment in an environment of powerlessness led to what could be dubbed as political apathy, but in reality, resembled more what Mr. Iwasaki termed as 'resignation' (*akiramerι*). Mr. Ishida (REF 44) too echoed this theme during our conversation, noting that there are too many meetings and how the authorities should just "get on with it", recognising the perceived futility of attending meetings in the legitimised spaces, as he was not sure if attending would actually change anything: "*We said our opinions, but whether they were reflected upon or not* [by the authorities], *I do not know*". He felt that the meetings were only a hindrance to achieving a quicker pace for the recovery, and if the authorities were not going to listen to the residents anyway, then they might as well just get on with their plans and be done with it: "*they say they hear our opinions for building a new town, but maybe it's just an excuse for them*". What the above descriptions and experiences of local residents

illustrate is that participation itself does not empower anyone, because as Picton (2018) notes, disempowerment stems from the exclusion from the political process. Due to the lack of access to the political in the legitimised participatory spaces, the local attempts to participate that the authorities are dubbing as "giving everyone a voice" instead appeared to be distinctly disempowering. By actively opting to 'resign' from these spaces, local residents were therefore also resigning from the affective state of disempowerment that these spaces have induced. The "empowered" processes and 'best practices' of the community-based recovery in Tohoku, therefore, stood in stark contrast with people's intimate experiences of the disaster, and the sense of "awakening" that ensued, that have been instrumental in constructing local needs, visions and desires as a politically connected and motivated discourse.

#### *5.1.1. 'Resignation' from disempowerment*

The inability of the formal recovery to empower local residents in the designated participatory spaces, I argue, stems not only from the deliberate harmonisation and depolitisation of these spaces and processes, but also from the framework through which political action is typically defined. As alluded to in the opening of this chapter, the sphere of informal politics has expanded rapidly across the world, not only in East Asian (Morris-Suzuki and Soh 2017), illustrating the growing distance between political participation and political returns. In Tohoku, grassroots responses to the 2011 disaster and its aftermath have been as numerous as they have been diverse, penetrating every level and sphere of society. The months following the disaster witnessed national movements, culminating in some of the largest and loudest mass protests in Japan since the anti-US security treaty demonstrations of the 1960s (Brown 2018). Loss of trust in the government due to its handling of the Fukushima nuclear accident led to the increase in citizen science, such as radiation measuring campaigns in localities in the Fukushima prefecture and beyond (Hultquist & Cervone 2018, Brown et al. 2016), linking with the wider critical reflections on the relationship between the public and science itself (Achenback 2015, Bonney et al. 2016). In addition to this, the Tohoku region has been the site of new businesses and non-profit initiatives, working in the fields of ageing populations and social care, rural decline and economic revitalisation, and cultural diversity

since 2011. Non-profit initiatives as well as new migrants have brought much needed new resources into the areas (Watanabe & Mano 2015) that have been increasingly integrated into the delivery of public services in areas where economic activity is diminishing rather than growing, which can been seen both as the potential maturation of the Japanese civil society sector (Sakai & Inaba 2014, Cho 2014, Leng 2015), as well as the neoliberalisation of public service delivery (Cho 2014).

Equally notable have been localised efforts to gain justice and accountability for painful losses endured through deadly institutional mistakes made on the day of the disaster. Some of these tragedies have risen into the public consciousness across Japan and abroad, as is the case of the Okawa elementary school in Ishinomaki, where dozens of students perished as a result of delayed evacuation, and where the parents have now brought forward a legal case against the municipality for negligence (Lloyd-Parry 2017, Mainichi Shimbun 9.5.2018). Some remain less well know, such as the law suit against the Miyagi-based 77 Bank in Onagawa that has raised questions about authority and accountability of private employers (Japan Times 25.3.2014). It is not only cases brought to public and media attention however, difficult reflections are on-going in the everyday context all across multiple sites of action in the disaster region: for instance, navigating identity and sites of protest in the narrow line between harm to self and community and responsibility to speak out (Slater et al. 2014), or negotiating between adaptation and authenticity for the sustainability and survival of local traditions and lifestyles (Lahournat 2016).

The sphere of political action among the local communities therefore extended far beyond the oppositional tactics, protests, and dissatisfied comments toward the formal recovery process. Politics was intertwined with the social, cultural, economic and ecological life within the communies, where sources of empowerment and disempowerment overlapped. The meaning of 'political' therefore wards further challenging and dismantling. Ghassan Hage (2015) offers an analysis of the political that can shed light on the nature of the political actions within Tohoku's disaster affected communities and the way they action the politisation of their everyday lives through the recovery. By making a distinction between anti-political directed at changing or overthrowing the political establishement and the search for alternative modes of politics in the sphere of alter-politics, Hage (2015) argues that most

political passion has been directed at the anti-political and it is in this sphere that we understand political passion itself. Hage further explains that the sphere of anti-politics has historically become to dominate our understanding of what we mean by 'political' itself. To view the actions through the lens of anti-political as political effectively depoliticises the affected communities themselves, especially in the light of statements such as the ones made by Mr. Ishida (REF 44) when he said that "there are too many meetings", hoping that the authorities would simply "get on with it".

This also speaks to the narrative of supposed political apathy among the Japanese citizens. Political participation in Japan remains well studied, normally focusing on the changes in the normative characteristics of political participation. Voting rates have continued to dwindle and the aftermath of the disaster has witnessed a reinvigoration of conservatism, ranging from the resurrection of conservative family ideals (Koikari 2017), and surging support for the politics of Prime Minister Abe and his Liberal Democratic Party (Morris-Suzuki 2017) that perhaps pay more lip service to progressive liberalism than put forward radical policies that tackle long-term issues. But this is not enough to confirm that Japanese population is riddled with political apathy and conformity however, or that the relatively rapid decline of mass political activism after 2011 is a sign of disinterest or incapability of the Japanese civil society to uphold pressure. I argue that this image of apathy is a matter of epistemology, the result of lack of recognition of the type of action that counts as ‘political’ in the normative sense, rather than lack of politicity itself among the populations.

When the 'political' is only seen in the framework where individual actions either conform or oppose the established structures of the institutions within which normative decision-making takes place, then any actions falling outside of that framework become non-politicised. The difference between anti- and alter-political is particularly pertinent to recognise in the sphere of recovery, where community-based approaches often tend to frame the community as a geographical and harmonious unit, lacking in political identity (Cannon 2008). Based on the community-based logic, the community is often 'the level' in which the majority of the decision-making is envisioned to take place (Cannon 2008). We tend to see the community as somehow more than just the administrative process, more connected and more attached to their surroundings, thus being able to provide a more detailed and better picture of the needs

and directions of the recovery. As Cannon (2008) states however, it is this "*benign* and supposedly beneficial aspect of community that outsiders want to tap into" (p. 11, emphasis added), rather than the 'political', whether in the anti- or alter sphere, through which different visions are produced and offered for consideration. When communities are treated as harmonious however, it is hard to argue for community-based recovery processes as 'empowering', when the very association between community and power is negated, and attuned by elevating its solidarity, harmony and lack of political passion.

Similar to LeBlanc's (1999) work on political activism of housewives whose very identity, she argues is thoroughly depoliticised, I wish to discuss growth of the political by locating it in the subject (community and individual) rather than the system. The community whose identity, like that of the housewife, remains depoliticised in discussions about community-based post-disaster recovery. I posit that rather than interpreting the steady decline of mass protests and quick return to normalcy in national politics as political apathy, by focusing on the actions and narratives of people on the micro-level we can see that this is more a question of resignation from the structures or governance and forms of participation that do not serve the goals and values that people have developed in these regions. Resignation from normative politics however is a political act, with public participation no longer able to capture the diversification of forms of democratic citizenship (Dalton 2008). It is political activism of the everyday resembling more decentralised spheres of individual anarchy rather than apathy.

I argue that moving the analytical gaze away from the political system into the political subject can help to unearth the political in the everyday actions of the local populations in Tohoku, and their involvement in the recovery. Re-framing the 'political' in this way helps to understand why it was possible for the local residents to feel and express that "*everyone is involved in the recovery*" (REF 1) irrespective of only a minority of them being active in the formal recovery process itself, such as participating in meetings or serving in committees. In reality, communities in Tohoku *were* engaging in multiple forms of politics, actively attaching their personal and collective actions to the betterment of society. Drawing on my own experiences and data from Tohoku, I argue that it is in the sphere of everyday politics and civic action where the majority of political activation has taken place, and has in fact been growing due to the 'awakening' associated with the disaster and recovery experiences. What

I witnessed in Tohoku was a thriving scene of what Hage (2015) would term as alter-politics. What my data reveals is a wide range of actions and forms of participation in the everyday, that are largely packaged as non-political civic action, but that people in Tohoku were framing in highly political terms.

The small local and individual actions ranged from passive functions such as paying taxes in the recovering municipality while maintaining residence elsewhere for the duration of the reconstruction (REF 25), to more active ones of such as having kids and starting a family (e.g. REF 4, RF 33, RF 42), getting involved with traditional festivals in order to ensure their survival, starting businesses, connecting with neighbours (REF 12) and simply "*helping out however I am able to*" (REF 11) to make sure that life could continue to exist in the future. 'Political' was defined in a larger framework of actions in the everyday that aimed for the betterment of the self and the community, focusing on the political passion toward things that people felt they could change. The post-disaster setting had come to show them the multiple possibilities of their own efforts and the value and potential of communal actions, thus politicising the everyday.

The majority of these actions were reportedly motivated by the sense of *mezamerareru*, or 'awakening' mentioned above. The relational quality of 'awakening' was present in many of the conversations I had with local residents in Tohoku, most crucially relating to resources, development, and demographics, and Tohoku's role within the nation brought isolation and exclusion into focus. Though the majority of the conversations with local residents revolved on the hyperlocal level and making a consistent difference in the day-to-day life, the disaster experience had been able to link these experiences into the broader national context. This passion in the alter-political was driven by this 'resignation' from the status quo, the growth-oriented development, and revitalisation along the national principles that dominate the grand vision within the formal recovery domain. The focus in Tohoku has shifted inward where the micro level actions in the informal sphere of the everyday that had become framed as political actions of survival and resistance to the demise of local habitats, lifestyles, and cultures.

Resignation from the normative political sphere of conformity and opposition were intensily political actions, and an integral part of the construction of collective voice and vision for the future within Tohoku's communities. Hage (2015) further notes on the productive nature of political passion, where the personal is political. Both alter- and anti-political passions, while different, contain the possibilities for change, making them relevant for the post-disaster settings as 'windows of opportunity'. What I further discuss in the following section is the need for us to become better at recognising the alter-political passion and the actions that stem from it, in order to fullfill the promise of the 'opportunity' awarded by the disaster. In the following chapter I will show that for the affected populations, 'empowerment' has followed from the 'awakening' but only become properly fullfilled through the alter-political actions that were seen as the path toward the desired imaginaries of the future.

### 5.2. "Somehow I found my *ikigai* again"

Mr. Kondo (REF 40) had fascinated me ever since I met him for the first time in June 2016 as I stumbled into his small shop in the temporary shopping village. I returned a few months later when I was staying in Onagawa and decided to go for a visit that turned into an impromptu interview. During my first visit Mr. Kondo had shown me large laminated photos that pictured the scene of the tsunami on 11 March 2011, taken from Onagawa's municipal hospital. The images depicted a dark scene of tsunami waves that had engulfed the neighbourhood immediately below the municipal hospital, with several houses either under water or lifted off their foundations and crashing in the waves. Amongst the floating houses and dark violent waves, a figure sat straddled across the roof. He pointed at the figure and said: "*that's me*". Mr. Kondo told me the rest of his miraculous survival from the tsunami, being carried off into the sea, jumping from one empty boat to another and surviving at the mercy of the elements for three days before finally being discovered by a group of boaters and being taken back to land. To my surprise, a few weeks later Mr. Kondo's story was further elaborated on by Ms. Ishida (REF 44), who I found out had been one of Mr. Kondo's neighbours before the disaster. She herself had survived the tsunami equally miraculously, in a canoe. Ms. Ishida explained that while being caught in the tsunami herself, she saw Mr. Kondo on the roof of his house. While trying to shout to him, she saw his house lifted from its

foundations and being drawn into the sea. As she was sitting in her canoe and holding onto the eaves of her house, all she could think was "*that's the last I'll see of Mr. Kondo*", unsure whether she was thinking of her own or his impending death. The two would however end up meeting again, about six days later as Ms. Ishida recalled. She was entering the emergency shelter when she saw Mr. Kondo standing in the entry hall. At this point of the story she started laughing and said "*I shouted his name and ran towards him. I was so surprised that I had to shake his hand to make sure he was real!*".

The story of these two individuals is not only a compelling one, but also illustrative of the strength of the affective impact that 'awakening' was having across the region, arising from the intensity of feelings associated with the survival that emerged from the equally intense surety of one's own demise. Both Ms. Ishida and Mr. Kondo referred to a strange atmosphere in the town after the tsunami, of being alive amongst destruction. It was Mr. Kondo who called this the period of "high tension" in the community, that he reflects led to his own confusion and numbness towards life itself: "*When you discover a body it's normal to cry, right? Here people laughed when they found the bodies of loved ones* [...] *It was such a strange atmosphere*" (REF 40). Ms. Murakami (REF 39) too, who had been working at the Onagawa nuclear power plant at the time of the disaster explained that when she saw the town three days after for the first time she burst out laughing in disbelief at what was in front of her eyes; equally not really understanding her own reaction at the time. Mr. Kondo explained that while such 'inappropriate' reactions were common place in this period of 'high tension', he felt that it primarily resulted in two different types of actions among the community members: some people were resolved to start working, create something new, and work hard; others on the other hand thought it was inappropriate to do anything so soon after so many people had died in the town. Mr. Kondo explained however, that he himself got caught somewhere in between: "*I knew that there was still life to be lived, but I couldn't think anything of it.*" In the first few months he was initially spending his days drinking, feeling like all his usual desires and senses were numbed.

The sense of awakening that emerged from this 'strange atmosphere' was often referred to as *ikigai* in the context of personal and individual changes people recounted to me. It was obvious from the setting of his tea shop that this had not been the end of Mr. Kondo, who

too explained his personal survival and the will to carry on as "finding his *ikigai*", referring to his will to carry on and finding purpose for his life. *Ikigai*, literally meaning the 'purpose/meaning of life', has been widely studied in the Japanese context, though it is not limited to Japan (Mathews 1996). While studied particularly in relation to aging and well-being (e.g. Sone et al. 2008, Yamamoto-Mitani & Wallhagen 2002, Kavedžija 2015), *ikigai* has been found to be relevant for understanding adaptation and coping in adversial life contexts such as post-disaster adaptation and physical and mental illness (Ishida 2011, Ozawa De Silva 2008, Mori et al. 2017). In the context post-disaster Tohoku, Ishida (2011) finds that *ikigai* has had a positive impact on not only dealing with stress and aid coping, but also to the development of positive life-orientation and thus related to the notion of 'awakening' or *mezamerareru* widely noted as having taken place in the region (Shaw 2017, Oguma 2013). They found that *ikigai* was specifically developed through positive life experiences, such as sympathetic listening of victims that enabled space and opportunities for making sense of the changes, and through actions related to receiving and giving assistance that has the power to inspire others.

Surviving the disaster and experiencing rapid changes and upheavals in the affected communities had led to unprecedented changes in social cohesion and the very mindsets of individuals, thus intimately associated with the broader trends of 'awakening' observed also nationally. For some like Mr. Kondo it meant re-orientation of life values and reflecting on priorities, "*before we were only chasing money, but somehow my ancestors, the gods, and Buddha saved me* [in this disaster], *so I must now enjoy my life more*"; while for others like Ms. Nakano (REF 17) it was a matter of reconnecting with the wider community and improving human relations "I *have begun to talk to more people, learn new things, expand my field of vision* [...] *I've started to feel less bored in this town*". In fact, finding a larger meaning for life, communality in grieving, and solidarity are commonplace after adversities (Bloch & Parry 1982) to a point where they have been sometimes been argued to represent a "celebration of death" (Metcalf & Huntington 1991). In Tohoku, the primary message that I gauged from people's personal life journeys since the disaster was the continued sense of gratitude (*kansha*) for having been able to create a more meaningful existence for one's life after so much death, resonating with Hertz's (1960) notion that "death is not mere destruction, but a transition" (p. 48). However, while resonating with gratitude, that can be seen as a more

passive state, these existential questions relating to the moral of their own survival, "why was I allowed to live when so many others died?", stimulated the desire to change one's life and that of their communities too, leading to more proactive actions of change. Finding the moral, and further *ikigai*, remained the foundation upon which the motivations, excitement, and actions rested, reverberating through people, families, and communities still in 2015 and 2016, long after the actual disaster event.

Alongside gratitude and proactiveness toward communities and making life changes, explorations of *ikigai* also reflected rejection, which was particularly visible among the new migrants who had moved into Tohoku's disaster struck communities since 2011. These inbound populations were reflecting on their changing life circumstances and trajectories through *ikigai*. Ms. Mori (REF 4) who had moved to Minamisanriku some years earlier explained that one of the reasons she quit her job in a big and well respected corporation in favour of becoming a farmer in Tohoku was the coincidence of her own disaster volunteering with the loss of her close friend to suicide. She explained that she felt like a "bad person" because she could not help her friend, even though she was helping disaster victims, and through making the dramatic change in her life prospects and finding new meaning for her life she felt that all her dreams have come true now.

During my time in Tohoku I interviewed a number of new arrivals for this research, but equally, met and encountered countless visitors and tourists to the area as well, whose reflections complemented the picture of the 'rural migrant' to these locations. The stereotype of Tohoku as distant, cold, and isolated (Hopson 2013) was persistently broken in the minds of outsiders who ventured into these towns. As they were recounting what they had learned of the goodness of the people, the value of learning local traditions, and the necessity of protecting the diversity of cultures, they were reflecting on and challenging the accepted normative notions of progress, growth, and sense of 'good life'. through their actions these migrants who primarily arrived from the large metropolitan areas of Japan, had come to 'reject' these notions as goals to strive for, and were trading off the modernist comforts and conveniences of Japanese urban life. The new arrivals who had changed their lives often recounted the contrasts between their lives in the city and their lives now in the country, and the meaning and richness of life they now experienced that they did not have in the city. Alongside the

personal benefits, when asked what they felt was their role in the recovery, many rural migrants felt that by setting up businesses, getting married and raising children, and settling down in Tohoku, and through other personalised efforts they could not only contribute to thwarting decline and depopulation; but be part of building a 'new society'.

Rejecting the 'norm' was therefore an empowering act both for the local residents and the new arrivals, replaced by acts that had social value and challenged the status quo. The disaster and the awakening that followed were actively breaking the long-term insularity of the region (Hopson 2013, Kelly 2012) and giving rise to fresh perspectives on the nature of growth, revitalisation, and progress; a thriving ground of the alter-political. Against the backdrop of slow and incremental anxieties over the decline of rural communities and the more or less fruitless revitalisation initiatives of the last decades, these critical narratives of Japan's modernity and the sudden influx of primarily young metropolitan people into the communities has enabled the growth and yearning for radical changes and for a 'new society', connecting personal and communal observations and reflections to the broader critical narratives of growth and prosperity. Kavedžija (2016) notes that *ikigai* is about finding purpose and meaning in life, but also "historically linked to the idea of social value and social role" (p. 13). This notion of "social value" was present in Tohoku's post-disaster dreaming, alter-political actions and everyday politics; finding a place for oneself that was useful not only *in* society, but *for* (a new) society.

#### *5.2.1. Rejecting the norm and embracing the alternative*

The vibrancy of social action was easy to detect in Tohoku. It was common for the local residents I met to give me a tour of their neighbourhoods and towns, recounting the story of the disaster and showing off the new landmarks and social spaces, ranging from non-profit initiatives, social cafes, restaurants selling "rediscovered" local foods and temporary shopping villages that were teeming with visitors in the weekends. In larger towns the vibrancy was easy to detect, yet, the newly forged atmosphere and activity had penetrated even the remotest corners of the disaster region and a sense of excitement and anticipation of a better future was in the air everywhere I went. The longer I spent in Tohoku, the more I realised the

truth of what my first ever interviewee told me when I asked if he knew anyone else who might be involved in the recovery: "*there is no one who isn't*" (REF 1).

The disaster opened people's eyes to what is meaningful, but equally to that which is wasteful, both of which are arguably aspects of *ikigai*. Eiko Maruko Siniawer (2019) writes how 'waste' has a "remarkable capacity to reveal what is valuable and meaningful" (p. 3), providing connecting points between loss and new beginnings, and integrally connecting to the sensation of *mezamerareru*, or 'awakening', in the post-disaster context. By the time I met Mr. Maeda (REF 10), my contact in Higashimatsushima introduced in the previous chapter, he was working as a community development worker in a coastal community in Miyagi, where his past life contrasted sharply with the passion with which he now recounted his life and dreams for his home prefecture. When I inquired from Mr. Maeda if he feels differently about his life and his community now, he responded: "*I am from Miyagi, but before the disaster I didn't pay attention to things like community development. I went to work, came home, slept. That was my life cycle. I didn't take part in neighbourhood activities*". For Mr. Maeda it was the disaster had spurred him into action, revealing the 'wastefulness' of his inactions to the broader framework of culture and community. In contrast to his previous life cycle he now recounted his reflections of the society around him "*I've always liked this area, but after the disaster we lost so many things, it was such a shame. I've began to notice things more and started to feel the effects of aging and decline in this region. I've become much more aware and conscious of these issues since the disaster*"; revealing the meanings life has for himself and the larger collective in his immediate surroundings.

Presenting contrasts in this way featured heavily in how people were constructing the local story of the recovery and the future, where their own experiences of what many called a 'mindshift' that had led to rediscovery of values, wastes, tangible actions, as part of their *ikigai*, reflected or contrasted with the changes they saw taking places around them. For long-term residents this mindshift was often presented through a recalibration of their relationship with the surrounding nature and their lived environment. Ms. Noguchi (REF 14 and 19), for instance, used to hate her town before the disaster, but was now, along with many other locals, taking pride in the distinctiveness and value of their lifestyles in the rural region that was not available in the cities. For new migrants on the other hand it was the stark contrast

between the urban and rural life that gave justification for their choices and deepened their motivation to remain and make a life for themselves in the rural setting. Utterances such as "*whenever I go to Tokyo these days I get exhausted and angry*" (REF 1), "*in the city you just make money in order to spend money*" (REF 32), or "*in Tokyo I never knew my neighbours*" (REF 4) were commonplace in the speech of new arrivals, juxtaposed with positive notions of community cohesion, slowness and peacefulness of life, and the contentment (*manzokukan*) they reported having found in the rural towns and villages.

The experiences of the new arrivals were by no means unique or simply attached to the disaster event, but rather a reflection of the role an individual can play in the larger process of social change that have been recorded elsewhere in Japan (e.g. Hustinx et a. 2010, Ichikawa 2015, Furuichi 2010 in Klien 2017). Nakano (2004) has researched the enactment of social change through individual acts in the everyday setting, noting that many of such activities in the realm of the everyday are not often considered acts of volunteering or community action, but rather as people filling their individual duties and roles in society (p. 3), which echoes the rise of *ikigai* narrative in post-disaster societies in Tohoku, emphasising the need to find ones place and fullfill one's social role and responsibilities, such as helping neighbours, starting families and paying taxes that residents framed as everyday individual acts of supporting Tohoku's long-term and immediate recovery. Similarly Klien (2017) on her work among post-disaster migrants in Tohoku explored the motivations of migrants, finding that most wanted to render their lives more meaningful than those of their parents (p. 3). Taking in findings from Nakano who in their work traces volunteering and social action in Japan since the 1970s, and more recent findings, suggests that asserting change through personal actions is a persistent character of Japanese society, where people have opted to invest in social change through exit from the mainstream normative lifestyles (Schoppa 2006, Klien 2017), perhaps more so than through mass activism.

Similar to Mr. Takeda who felt it his duty to tell the world what happened in his community, Ms. Mori (REF 4) who I met in Minamisanriku early on in my field work too felt that she had a responsibility in this regard: "*The countryside has the power to heal people's hearts. If a person who is tired of the urban life and they know my story, they might be inspired to do the same as me*". She said it can be scary to talk about such personal things, but there are so many

people who are interested in people like herself, who have made such radical changes in their lives, continuing that she has been thinking about getting more involved in activities where she can connect with outsiders to share her own experience. Importance of communication was stressed as a way of providing people (mainly in the cities) with positive stories and examples that could encourage the emergence of the 'new society' through individual actions. This was the view presented by Mr. Hashimoto (REF 32), who I met in Ogatsu in 2016 where he had now been living for a few years now. He had been a somewhat transient character throughout his youth, having lived and worked in the traditional hospitality sector that had taken him to work in a lot of rural locations, but said he was now there to stay in Ogatsu. He explained that people like himself are a rarity in Japan, saying that making such changes and stepping outside the conventional norms is considered risky, and "*especially in Japan, people don't take risks*". He went further to explain that despite the uncertainty and instability of current society, there are still plenty of opportunities for people to have conventional paths through life, and still plenty of people who desire this. But, he also argued that the stability that was awarded to people for decades also made people avert taking risks, and that without risks or challenges he argues, nothing new can be created.

Considering the long-term decline of the Japan's rural regions and the rapid acceleration of this process due to the disaster, creating 'something new' was felt with urgency among the long-term residents and migrants alike. The urgency for this to happen was reflected in Mr. Takeda's (REF 6) explaination that his community had "*suddenly been flung into the distant future*", forcing them to live the future they had long anticipated, where decline, depopulation and death of their communities that was no longer just around the corner, it had already arrived. The story of Japan's rural regions often emerges as a victim of Japan's rapid post-war prosperity, highlighted through contrasts: decline against prosperity, backwardness against progress, and expansion against exploitation. The contrasts between the urban and rural are premised on the idea of growth or and the lack of it, where both regions perform distinctive roles, ideally, in support of one another, but not often in reality. Both decline and growth are measured and discussed along demographic and economic metrics, reflecting the different stages of development between the urban Japan, where the rural peripheries emanating from metropoles have existed in an extractive relationship with these urban sites of growth (Matanle and Rausch 2011, Aldrich 2012), as the "dumping

ground for externalities of post-war economic growth" (Hopson's 2013, p. 7). Even in counternarratives of the rural regions, growth remains an integral part of the story. Imaginations such as the *furusato,* as the native rural home and the ultimate essence of Japaneseness, has been periodically revived and proliferated through tourism, marketing and media, into a persistent trope where the rural regions are characterised as a respite for the urban individual, weary and tired of the toils in the city (Robertson 1991, Ivy 1995, Knight 1997). Despite the powerful position *furusato* occupies in the Japanese imagination, sojourns there are imagined as short-term and temporary with the ultimate return to the city rarely questioned. The *furusato* is a site of healing, whereas the city a site of growth offering unending opportunities for employment, prosperity, and personal fulfilment.

Through 'awakening', *ikigai* and transformative actions in the sphere of the alter-political, these contrasts were however changing shape and new values were attached to both rural and urban spaces, and the relationship they were envisioned to have with one anonther. Hopson (2013) recounts the statement of Nitobe Inazou from the late 19th century, describing the newly constructed Tohoku railway line as a "giant straw" that is bleeding the rural regions dry (p. 5), and crippling the local development and while extracting the human and physical power of the region for the benefit of the metropolitan regions. In the post-disaster context, the need to build a new society that would break this cycle of decline and exploitation was felt with urgency. Contacts across geographical, social, and generational lines between the long-term residents and outsiders were instrumental in the development of new imaginaries that questioned the accepted and familiar order between the centre and the periphery. Mr. Hashimoto (REF 32) explained to me that rurality should not stand at odds with the perceived progress and quality of life in the city, but in fact that the rural regions can offer "*some keys to describing the next society*". He continued that "*rural versus city is not what I'm saying, both are necessary*", but stated that in order for a new society to emerge, the position of Tohoku (and rural regions in general) within Japan was no longer about residing at the end of a straw and being sucked dry of its resources and people, but rather to actively provide (or push) new ideas, values, and progress based on sustainability and degrowth in order to not only change Tohoku and rural Miyagi, but entire Japan.

These radical ideas bordering utopia were not unrealistic notions of grandeur or fantasy, but functioned as a metaphor for the change and tangible actions that people were working towards in the recovery. It was the story that was being constructed through acts of both resignation and rejection that generated affective states of empowerment among the communities. More importantly, as I want to stress in this chapter, the endogenous story that was shared by long-term residents and migrants alike, and disseminated through informal networks, have resulted in real life behavioural and attitudinal changes toward the community and ones personal life, leading people to take a number of actions toward the realisation of the new society, or aspects of it, and feel empowered by those actions. The notions of a new society are also refrenced on the pages of of the governmental vision that paints a picture of a 'New Tohoku' (Reconstruction design council 2011a), as a response not only to improving the safety and comfort of the communities left in ruins after the disaster, but to turn the tide on Tohoku's long-term decline and propel the country and the region onto a path of growth. One could argue that for communities that have all of a sudden been jolted into their distant future and are facing radically different degree and intensity of challenges than they did before the disaster, such sudden and drastic changes require equally radical thinking.

Like the authorities, the local affected populations were drawing on the notion of disaster as a 'blank slate' and a 'window of opportunity' narrative, offering them avenues for empowerment and positive interpretations of post-disaster development. Radical visions can help people "make sense of today's realities and articulate a vision for the future" (Curato (2017, p.1). As Solnit (2010) writes: "[after disasters] a struggle takes place over whether the old order with all its shortcomings and injustices will be reimposed or a new one, perhaps more oppressive or perhaps more just and free, like the disaster utopia, will arise" (p. 16). Where utopias are imaginary perfect entities and by nature unreachable, what I have argued in this chapter is that the pursuits and aspirations toward utopian dreams as I found them in Tohoku were nevertheless concrete and tangible. Ranging from recalibrations of the relationship between humans and nature to the slow life movement, reappreciation of the hardness of life, and the romantic simplicity of rural communities, these utopian imaginaries are all taking multiple shapes in Tohoku under the aspirations of building a new society. These efforts had concrete effects on the type and nature of change that the disaster as a 'window

of opportunity' had awarded to the affected populations. Building utopias and taking steps toward their realisation had an empowering effect on people.

Disasters and utopias are integrally linked. Along the lines of Kantian thinking, the obstacles to creating a 'better world', 'new society' or a 'utopia' lie in people's prejudices, selfishness and focus on differences, and only a disaster can open people's eyes and allow them to see beyond the divisions and recognise the mutuality they share in humanity (Ashworth 2013). The prevalence of utopianism is the result of the destruction that functions as an assertion of the order that is desired against the disorder that is witnessed (Biel 2001, p. 5), providing an opportunity to reorganise the desired order in a different way. Shaw (2017) writes that "awakening is often understood as a collective experience" (p. 60), where The Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disaster can be seen as a moment of transformation for the entire nation, on hindsight perhaps less so in the direction of national politics and democracy (Samuels 2013, Koikari 2017), but certainly in the popular psyche and the intensity and direction of social action we are witnessing in post-3/11 Japan (Aldrich 2013, Geilhorn & Iwata-Weickgenannt 2016, Brown & Mackie 2015). In Tohoku this collective nature of awakening was not only internal, but relational, where the initial "*craziness of survival*," as Mr. Kondo (REF 40) put it, has diversified into tones of anger and frustration toward the injustices and exploitation Tohoku has experienced throughout Japan's modernisation.

What 3/11 has enabled is the movement of Tohoku's troubles from a peripheral issue of isolation to a national issue of exclusion, from an internal predicament to a relational one, revealing the relationship between Japan's prosperity, and Tohoku's lack of it. Shaw (2017) argues that systemic issues of exclusion, isolation and marginalisation, are historically embedded into the structures of Japanese society and the collective awakening refers to the realisation that Tohoku's isolation and exclusion from national prosperity resulted from structural exploitation that set the limits of what citizen's local self-responsibility in the post-disaster context can achieve. In this sense, Tohoku has never been isolated from national politics, merely from reaping the benefits of the growth it has been instrumental in producing. Shaw furthers this point when she argues that the post-3/11 era activism, and everyday politics in general, has moved it's focus to this exclusion, away from the dominant ideas of national cohesion (p. 62). Where the imaginary or vision promoted by the official recovery is

about pulling together as a nation under the banner of national cohesion, mutuality, and unity, in the localised imaginaries we see social belonging and the criteria for nation being built on the ideas of inclusion through diversity that end up foregrounding the problematic processes of exclusion. Thus, 3/11 has become a highly politicised event where its consequences have been broadened into a larger shared framework: not only is te responsibility for Tohoku's survival shared but so is the culpability for its demise.

Therefore, instead of engaging with the administrative recovery processes, many have turned their gaze inward to community cohesion and connectedness, self-help and doing things with their own hands (*jibun no te de dekiru koto*). While echoing notions of social capital, resilience, self-responsibility, and communality that were unequivocally highlighted by the community members as social goods, these actions were more than anything associated with informal *politics* and socially prescribed and assumed duties (Nakano 2004), or to follow Ghassa Hage's (2015) denomination of 'alter-politics', through which the majority of these post-disaster social actions were articulated. For Tohoku's populations 'political' had come to mean the search of alternatives to the future in terms of economic organisation, modes of sociality, and relationship with the living environment, thus breaking from the continuation of the same old that had produced the conditions from which the disaster emerged.

Against resignation from and rejection of the formal politics of the recovery, that many identified as disempowering, emerged a strong sense of connectedness, mutuality, and a common narrative for the future that was more than just an aggregation of opinions, but rather a joint vision within which individual aspirations and actions could be accommodated. It was this vision that many saw as empowering, wanting to take advantage of the window of opportunity left behind by the disaster to explore alternative ways of building a better future. This vision was not written on the pages of recovery and reconstruction plans, but was being developed and existed in the actions individuals were taking and the social networks and relationships they were creating. The role of the social interactions is a crucial one in this context, not only from a demographic perspective, but as an integral part of the community bulding process that was taking place. It was through these community building processes, sociality and communication, that alternative imaginaries and explorations for the future were being created.

*Chapter 6*

# Between physical and social resilience: Building 'safe and secure' communities

The disaster hit Japan during a comparatively 'unremarkable' era, having travelled far enough from the booming 1980s and the economic crash of the 1990s, with the discourses of the 'lost decades' giving way to relative socio-economic stability and modest growth (Adams et al. 2007). 3/11 has since been followed by further disasters in Kyūshū where a strong earthquake induced widescale damage in 2016, and further in Kansai region that suffered from severe flooding in succeeding years. Yet, national economic imperatives seem to have dominated public discourse with the impending 2020 Olympics in Tokyo; the declaration of the new Reiwa era; and, Prime Minister Abe's continued emphasis on creating a "strong Japan" (Hughes 2015) and renewing national cohesion (Shaw 2017). Alongside the question of demographic, socio-economic and cultural vitality, discourse around Tohoku's reconstruction has been constructed as needing to respond to the necessity to build more 'resilient' towns with the principle four of the disaster recovery stating: "While preserving the strong bonds of local residents, we shall construct disaster resilient safe and secure communities" [8] (Reconstruction design council 2011, p. 2). By examining the key documents at the base of recovery planning in Japan (Annex 3), the government's approach to rebuilding more resilient communities rests on two interconnected pillars: physical and social resilience, also noted by

[8] 「地域社会の強い絆を守りつつ、災害に強い安全・安心のまち」

Ubaura (2018). Social resilience in the report was explained to rely 'linkages' between people, regions, businesses, organisations and institutions (p. 8), while physical resilience would be achieved through infrastructure and engineering solutions.

The separation of resilience into physical and social spheres is a further characteristic of the dualities that separate Tohoku's recovery into two distinct domains of action, meaning, and direction. Resilience in the physical and social spectrum referred to safety, with the post-disaster towns imagined as places where, people can live safe from the dangers of natural hazards and re-establish 'linkages' to improve social support and sense of safety. The term 'safety' in Japanese encompasses two ideas, *anzen* and *anshin*, most often uttered as a pair and commonly used by my research participants as well. Roughly translating as 'safety' and 'peace of mind' (Walravens 2017), where the former is often used to denote to objective, measurable and science-based safety, and the latter is a subjective and value-based sense of security. Subjectivity of *anshin* refers to individual and collective sense of security, as Novak (2017) states, being "an affective term, denoting to a sense of personal well-being, protection from danger, and the benevolent feeling that one’s community is out of harm’s way" (p. 237). Creating resilience through these two notions of safety therefore automatically separates safety into two different spheres of action, including different actors. Where *anzen* emits from public accountability, *anshin* relies on public trust in that accountability (Sternsdorff-Cisterna 2014, Novak 2017). Where it is the technocracy (the government, scientists, engineers, and academics) that operates primarily in the sphere of safety, or *anzen*, objective and scientifically measurable engineering solutions for safe rebuilding for instance, it is the communities and the 'linkages' throughout that are seen as instrumental in the development of peace of mind, or *anshin*, the subjective sense of safety residing within the community.

While ideologically connected as part of the same resilience building process, the siloing and separation of the different responsibilities over collective safety into two spheres has created a discourse that does not reflect the way resilience is understood and experienced in the post-disaster reality by Tohoku's communities. Trust was severely shaken in Japan after the 2011 triple disaster. Failures in the *anzen* axis of safety took place in the disaster, relating to the procedures and monitoring of nuclear facilities, effectiveness of tsunami walls, and incorrectness of hazard maps (Chapter 1), shocking people across the country (Kawato et al.

2013, Coulmas 2012). These shocks have had a considerable effect on the levels of trust and confidence on authorities, the civil society, technology, and in fact research itself. The Edelman Trust Barometer of 2012 for instance showed dramatic drop in trust in technical and academic experts after 3/11, with levels of public trust in academics dropping 38 percentage points in a single year (Edelman Trust Barometer 2012). Trust is an essential component in post-disaster recovery and community development (Gilchrist 2004, Aldrich 2012, Aldrich & Meyer 2014); such a profound lack of trust in the preparedness, safety, rescue and recovery mechanisms in Japan has broken the interrelationship between *anzen* and *anshin*; As Novak (2017) notes, "once lost, this affect [of anshin] cannot be easily recovered" (p. 237).

This tension between public accountability and a sense of safety, manifested in the terms *anzen* and *anshin* as representations of physical and social resilience in the exogenous discourse, reflects one of the many dualities that constitute the experience of recovery in Tohoku. Even though rigorous training and disaster drills had developed an understanding of the physical phenomenon that took place in the earthquake and the necessary preparations for the tsunami, the scale of the tsunami nevertheless surprised the locals and created conditions where no existing framework of previous disasters could have prepared them for the destructive forces and explain the event that took place on 11 March 2011. The notion of the unprecedented disaster was equally present in the expressions of those who experienced the event first-hand: "*The whole scene was like hell, and I was thinking is this my last day on earth*" (REF 6). Despite the disaster being widely accepted as being 'unprecedented', and like Mr. Kimura (REF 1) noted, "*these communities were simply not ready for a disaster of this magnitude*", a sense of betrayal by the authorities existed in the communities. Individuals and groups had carried out their responsibilities (*jiko sekinin*) of making emergency preparations and doing annual disaster drills in their communities, yet so many perished on account of simply not being prepared enough. Mr. Takeda touched upon this topic during one of our meetings, angrily exclaiming "*why didn't they tell us!?*", referring to the experts both near and far, who did not provide them the information that would have enabled more accurate preparedness.

In the context where public trust has collapsed, the integral connection and reliance of *anzen* and *anshin* as the two sides of overall resilience also began to break down, with community

members now increasingly relying on the affective sense of security (*anshin*) as their main source of communal resilience against natural hazards, over the physical and technological safety measures. Local residents in Tohoku had increasingly begun to see strong social ties among community members as not only contributing both to their sense of security and communal well-being, but also as the best form of resilience against and physical safety against disasters. The mistrust in physical resilience is understandable, given that many physical safety measures had failed in communities across the region: "*We had a tsunami wall, but many people still died waiting in their cars when the roads got congested with people trying to escape to higher ground*" said Mr. Sasaki (REF 26) remembering the day of the disaster. Instead of tsunami walls that fell onto the *anzen* axis of safety when it came to resilience, community members were more eager to develop efficient escape routes away from the seaside onto the mountains, maintain good public transport, and increase social connectivity in neighbourhoods, that were seen as more effective ways of mitigating disaster risks and damages.

Some were even ready to take tsunami related risks in order to maintain semblance of normalcy and community in their lives. On one of my very first visits to Minamisanriku, I was shown around town by the Kimuras (REF 1), taking me to the well-known places such as the ruins of the Disaster Prevention Centre (Image 7). Toward the end of the "tour" we entered a small valley that lay low compared to the rest of the landscape, and Mr. Kimura told me that this area used to be full of houses but since the tsunami they are not allowed to build here anymore. Just as the words came out of his mouth, we turned around a bend in the road and in front of our eyes stood a newly built house in the field, immediately prompting me to blurt out: "what about that one?". Mr. Kimura explained that some people simply chose to take the risk. Like Ms. Wada (REF 43) in Chapter 5, they wanted to rebuild on the piece of land they owned, deciding to forgo the ability to insure their houses and live outside the reach of future tsunamis, thus waiving the notions of financial and physical safety in favour of resilience through continuation and familiarity.

Image 7: The former disaster prevention centre in Minamisanriku. The site has been left as a memorial of 3/11 in the town and part of the disaster legacy. The land elevations that are an integral part of Minamisanriku's tsunami resilience strategy can be seen behind. Anna Vainio, 2015.

Throughout this chapter I will argue that for the authorities, resilience still firmly resides within the sphere of *anzen*, where both physical and socio-economic resilience is to be achieved through physical means of better and safer town building, with the Japanese reiteration of *shinzai ni tsuyoi* (strength against disasters), exclusively used in the 'Hope beyond disaster' report for instance clearly indicating the government's conceptualisation of resilience. The report discusses safety solely in conjunction with physical resilience, namely the rebuilding process and infrastructure and resilience against future natural hazards. Against the loss of trust and people's discomfort with the notion of an 'unprecedented' disaster, the first part of this chapter will explore the affected populations' relationship with the sphere of physical resilience and its impact on not only the safety of their communities, but the sustainability and abilities to build a sense of security and peace of mind through sociality. Through the field data I will further show how local residents are seeing that the physical recovery, and the infrastructure rebuilding as a threat to the recreation of social resilience, whose importance in achieving overall better levels of resilience and preparedness against future hazards has increased in importance among the affected populations.

The second part will then look at how individuals and communities are more willing to bear physical safety related risks in order to gain and protect their social connections and cohesion. When the disaster happened in Tohoku it induced not only severe physical damages, but also dramatic changes in the composition of the community and social cohesion. Hundreds of neighbours, family members, and acquaintances were lost to the disaster, followed by a dispersal of communities into different temporary housing complexes, as well as the trickling exodus when people simply could not persevere any longer and made a permanent move away from the communities. Simultaneously, the coastal towns and villages became suddenly aflush with visitors, volunteers and new migrants, who symbolised Tohoku's exit (even if temporarily) from its long-term peripherality and isolation. These various developments have implications for how the desire for *anshin* connects to communal notions of sociality and community. Sociality is a foundational concept and a process, "a dynamic relational matrix within which human subjects are constantly interacting" and "through which they come to know the world they live in and find their purpose and meaning within it" (Long & Moore 2012, p. 41), but one that often remain poorly understood in by external agents in disaster recovery contexts (Okada et al.2018).

In this context not only was the community itself in flux, but their sense of *anshin* needed to be reconfigured and restructured. The very basis of trust, sense of security and peace of mind was therefore shaken up by the disaster and the dispersal of communities that followed. As resilience for the local residents was primarily linked to the community building process rather than physical rebuilding, in the changing social context after disasters, it is vital to understand how people are rebuilding their social connections, while grieving for those who perished, missing those who departed, and welcoming fresh faces into the community. These affective ways of building resilience were articulated as being threatened by the physical town building processes that preferenced physical safety and economic prosperity over local connectedness.

## 6.1. "We can sleep easy now, but..."

Toward the end of my field work I stayed for two weeks in Onagawa, aiming to gain a small glimpse of what daily life was like in the recovering areas. I stayed in Urashuku, an area of town that had not been affected by the tsunami, despite being by the sea. The area had been protected by the narrow opening leading to the bay area that prevented the onslaught of the tsunami from reaching the main residential areas, with the damages from the earthquake and small tsunami remained relatively minor, as explained by a local resident of the area (REF 39). I cycled each day to the new town centre across the mountain, experiencing the drastic change in atmosphere and development during that short journey. For me the two areas seemed a world (and decades) apart from one another. Where Urashuku remained a typical sleepy Japanese rural suburb, the Onagawa Bay area in contrast was buzzing with construction activity and visitors arriving near and far to see the town's new railway station and promenade and get a glimpse of the recovering Tohoku. One of the most tangible things that separated the two areas from one another was the visible line in the road paving at the top of the hill, where the pot-hole littered and uneven road surfacing on the Urashuku side changed to the freshly paved asphalt leading to Onagawa Bay area. During this time, I wrote in my research diary the following passage: "The central area of the town also seems like somewhere you have to 'arrive' to rather than just 'pass by'. [...] the flow of people has to arrive from the periphery to the centre which is the destination. When something becomes a destination, might it lose some of its essence?" (Research Diary 28.9.2016).

The distinction between 'arrival' and 'passing by' seemed to resonate with people's reports about the changes in the relationship people held with the physical aspects of their hometowns. Ms. Shimizu (REF 7 and REF 11), a long-term resident of Onagawa for decades now, for instance was able to expand on my impression by explaining how her life and behaviour in the town before the tsunami was carried out in what she called an "instinctive" manner: "*I knew where everything was without thinking. I went to the fish market, then to get other groceries*", continuing to explain how the development of the new town centre had altered her behaviour: "*I used to stop at the town centre but now I hardly ever stop at there. The prices have gone up and it seems to be a place for visitors*" (REF 7 and REF 11). Ms. Shimizu's reflections provided further depth to my own musings about the town centre

becoming a destination where one "arrives", by forcing me to ask who is it that is supposed to arrive to this town, and what are they arriving for? For Ms. Shimizu the town centre had become increasingly removed from her previous daily routine where she had instinctively moved through the town's landscape. Instead, what she found in her once familiar geography was a destination that she felt no longer belonged to her and her community, causing anxiety and loss of attachment to the space that used to be so familiar to her.

Like with many other individuals I spoke with in Tohoku, Ms. Shimizu however couched her main thesis into the language of gratitude. In response to the reality of accelerated decline, the experience of personal survival from the tsunami and the impact of coming to contact with a steady stream of outsiders who 'had never experienced communities like this before' (e.g. REF 1, REF 4, REF 3) had helped people experience new sense of pride of place, reconsider their social roles, and reflect on the future, as well as bring new ideas and resources (both material and immaterial) into the communities. The wonder expressed by outsiders toward these locations has turned what had always existed as the mundane everyday reality, into something special: "*Many outsiders have come here and fallen in love with the place. This makes many locals feel proud of the town. I think* [through these connections] *local people here have come to understand the value of normal things around them* (REF 18). Reflected by the government's emphasis on both physical and social resilience, much of the new town building and reconstruction in Tohoku is trying to sustain the new influx of people and interest toward their towns as part of their planning for long-term socio-economic resilience.

Many of the new town plans are therefore built in a compact fashion in order to facilitating better access and accommodation of new tourism industries. While echoing these oft heard reflections regarding the new-found openness and influx of visitors, Ms. Shimizu however finally admitted that perhaps too much attention was being paid to building and catering for that which had never existed before. The post-disaster and post-recovery vibrancy and long-term sustainability and socio-economic resilience was built upon a sense of specialness and amazement of the everyday lives and landscapes, compactly presented and easily consumed at the centre of town, with vibrancy becoming manufactured and built upon brief sojourns by outsiders into the town, rather than the sustained everyday experience of life in these rural

communities by the local residents. While many of the revitalisation and recovery initiatives did focus on the normal everyday things in the villages and towns, the commodification nevertheless distanced these experiences from the real daily experience of life whose charm lies in its very mundaneness that emerges from the lifestyles that have been cultivated by the pattern and cycles of nature for centuries; across the valleys and mountain passages, where life has settled itself into familiar patterns in the small hamlets dotting the coastline.

While vibrancy is something that revitalisation initiatives great and small have aimed to maintain for decades, the context of the disaster has made many municipalities respond to the number of visitors, intensified contacts, and the media spotlight that brought many of these communities to public consciousness as a result of the disaster. Much like the rural treasure hunts of the past revitalisation initiatives, aspects of daily life had become isolated into marketable products (Love 2013, Knight 1998), further promoted as part of 'the rural life experience' that was made accessible through an established calendar of seasonal festivals, rites and events. Each town had become to promote aspects of its landscape, cuisine, environment, and the like as the foundation of its rediscovered identity. Ranging from localised specialty foods and dishes (*kirakiradon* in Minamisanriku and *sanma* in Onagawa for instance) to 'experience tourism' (*taiken kankou*) among fishermen and farmers, the 'specialness' of each town was promoted through a similar pattern, where various elements of everyday rural life were picked and elevated into a consumable status that emphasised the rurality and authenticity of these aspects of the experiences.

However, tourism-based revitalisation was increasingly promoted as a key component of Tohoku's socio-economic resilience, and was now being embedded into the key infrastructure of these towns. I was often puzzled by this when I visited the coastal towns, thinking what the costs and benefits of this development in the long run would be as these processes were becoming more established and structured, with policies, legislation and town planning adjusting itself in efforts to maintain outside interest and circulation of people and capital beyond the fervour of the disaster and recovery. Within overall planning for compact cities, to maintain the vibrancy that has been undercut by population exodus and rapid aging, vibrancy becomes concentrated and contained within the boundaries of the central areas of towns. Ironically, the more larger the plans for long-term sustainability and revitalisation, the

longer it will take to realise them, leading to what Nagamatsu (2018) has dubbed as the "reconstruction paradox", with more and more people leaving due to the inability to persevere; making it even more necessary to ask what this concentration does to the nature and meaning of vibrancy, particularly when combined with the context of a disaster recovery and long-term resilience building both in the physical and socio-economic aspects.

In connection with the notion of overall future resilience of these towns, I wondered whether local sense of security, or *anshin,* that rested in the affective notions of the community, sociality and mutual support networks, could be built upon the relationships that by nature composed of short sojourns and were primarily founded on capitalist and commercial transactions. Despite local residents being eager to share their stories and for the disaster to develop into a moment of learning for Japan, the attention paid to the aspects of their towns related to the disaster has raised equally serious concerns among the local residents about their home towns being labelled as "disaster towns", and being forgotten once the recovery is finished, when the tours and visitors can no longer contribute to the recovery effort simply by turning up.

To facilitate reductions in overall population, availability of developable land, and the establishment of a new tourism industries, like most affected towns (Hirano 2013), Minamisanriku was being rebuilt as a 'compact town' as a way of enabling better concentration of services and attractions for visitors, while simultaneously fostering increased physical resilience against tsunamis and other natural hazards. The topic of 'compactness' came up during my conversation with Ms. Nakamura (REF 22), a woman in her mid-20s who had lived all her life in Minamisanriku and passionately confessed loving the town and wanting to live all her life there. She explained how the new town centre along with the majority of the key public and commercial services would be located on elevated land near the former railway station. Just the day before I had had a discussion with one of the *machizukuri* council members for the commercial district in Minamisanriku, Mr. Ogawa (REF 21) and had the plans shown and explained to me in detail. Mr. Ogawa stated early on in the interview that one of the key aims of the new shopping district was to serve what they hoped would grow into a steady tourism industry in the town, while also providing vital services for the residents. The shops in the plan were all clustered together, with a car park to the side of

the retail units. Mr. Ogawa was in favour of having all the shops in a single location, with the new BRT station (replacing the Kesennuma railway Line) also being located in the area. He stated that having the shops clustered together would bring more people into the area, enable people to park at ease, and spend time doing their shopping and visiting restaurants in a single location. In general, he was explaining that this way there would be more people circulating in a single area, echoing with the arguments I heard multiple times over in relation to the positives of the new centre heavy towns.

For Mr. Ogawa there were multiple positives, with him listing downsides to this arrangement mostly occurring only to the shop owners in relation to having to work more together as a community from now on. However, my conversation with Ms. Nakamura in particular challenged some of these notions of ease and comfort. She offered a different perspective to the new town design. She recounted her memories of the childhood in Minamisanriku, explaining how she knew every kid in her neighbourhood, and who their parents were. She knew who the butcher’s child was, whose parents ran a vegetable shop, whose father was a fisherman and so on. She was telling a concrete story of social relations that were fostered in mixed purpose neighbourhoods, where residential and commercial districts fluidly intertwined together and barriers between commercial and social activities were lowered. For Ms. Nakamura the objective of buying groceries for instance was linked to forming closer bonds with those who lived and ran businesses in the neighbourhoods. It was these overlapping objectives of everyday routines and actions that facilitated organic coming together, forming bonds across people in the neighbourhoods, leading to strengthening of social networks and creating what she noted was a sense of security, or *anshin*, that she argued was being destroyed by the centralisation of commercial activities: "*now you have to have a car. You drive into the centre to do your shopping. When you're walking in the neighbourhood* [doing your shopping] *you stop and talk to your neighbours. You won't do that when you are in a car just driving past*".

She was referring to the separation of the commercial and residential districts that was seen as the solution for fostering socio-economic resilience in these towns, a key element in the new 'compact town' logic. Following the trauma of the tsunami, the majority of the new town designs the residential areas were to be located on higher ground, while the central areas of

town were reserved exclusively for commercial purposes, with the government's reconstruction funding geared toward compact town style development and communal relocation to higher ground. These efforts have ensured a successful, if slow, reconstruction of basic infrastructure, upgrades to the municipal and private housing stock, and compact town centres that are hoped to facilitate the circulation of people, good, and capital in cost-efficient and atmospheric ways (Oguma 2013) that sit at the foundation of the government's vision for a physically and socio-economically more resilient Tohoku. The residents too wanted safe and resilient communities of course, but the steep mountain sides where residential neighbourhoods were relocated in the name of safety and the city centres rebuilt in a compact fashion proved a threat as well as a promise. "*Our bodies are growing old*" and "*I don't even know any of my new neighbours*", remained constant anxieties for people living in the suspended reality between the past they lost and the future that remained full of uncertainties: "*We can sleep easy now, but how are we to live our lives high up there on the mountain side?*" (REF 45).

The residents however feared that the centralisation of commercial services and their separation from people's daily habitats would disrupt the very processes through which strong communal ties and social relations were built, that were seen as an integral and cherished part of the local rural lifestyle. Both locals and outsiders referred to community as having a different character in these towns compared to urban areas for instance, with this character being primarily associated with the depth and strength of social networks. When I asked people what they loved about these towns, most often I heard the response *hito* (people), *komyuniti* (community), or *ningen kankei* (human relations). Community was seen as being closer together in these rural towns, where people were looking out for one another (*mimamoru*). It was this social character of the community that brought sense of *anshin* for people, that was simultaneously seen as being destroyed by the reconstruction logic.

### *6.1.1. Town planning as resilience*

For the Government, socio-economic resilience building happened through physical rebuilding, with the responsibility for the safety of citizens being executed primarily through

methods and procedures in the sphere of *anzen*. Yet, the government also tried to foster other less tangible principles in their plans for rebuilding. Through ‘compact cities’ and ‘inducing vibrancy’, rebuilding edged on the side of the immaterial, where safety-oriented rebuilding, such as the separation of commercial and residential districts, was also seen as creating social and economic resilience.

The phrase ‘compact towns’ represents a planning principle where towns are developed to accommodate a larger number of residents and services into more compact geographical areas. Originating in the context of rapid urbanisation in the 20th century, 'compact cities' have tried to respond to the "paradox of urban desirability and suburban livability" (Neumann 2005, p. 11), where people sought the convenience offered by the urban service infrastructure without the accompanying urban problems by residing in the suburbs, leading to a problem of 'urban sprawl'. In Tohoku the anticipated demographic and social decline has led to most municipalities across the regions needing to reduce the infrastructure investment and the long-term management costs. Developing post-disaster town planning under the concept of a 'compact towns' is hoped to facilitate economic growth in the context of overall decline (Hirano 2013, Ubaura 2018). Despite the original logic of 'compact cities' as an urban solution diverging greatly from the rural context, the concept is now being widely applied in Tohoku's post-disaster recovery, and was therefore an imported concept embedded into the government's exogenous narrative. Compact cities are linked to multiple benefits, ranging from advancing sustainability to reducing ecological impact (Jenks et al. 1996, Burgess 2002) that are also noted as desired outcomes for Tohoku's post-disaster future (Reconstruction Design Council 2011, Ubaura 2018). Compact cities have also been argued to induce better social cohesion (Katz et al. 1994, Raman 2008), that as we have briefly explored above, is not the experience local residents associate with their new compact towns. There are multiple paradoxes in the application of compact town planning into the rural context that gave rise to anxiety and worries among the affected populations regarding the survival of local lifestyles many saw as the main charm and attraction of the region.

Compact cities in the context of reconstruction have to serve multiple roles on the local level, while nationally the primary driver of the recovery is to increase safety and resilience against natural hazards (Hirano 2013). The vast majority of the core reconstruction funding is

earmarked for infrastructure rebuilding and upgrades toward physical safety and resilience in line with new regulations on zoning and coastal planning (Iuchi et al. 2015, Edginton 2017, Hirano 2013). Such approaches follow the long-established pattern of top-down development where municipalities become marginalised from their local planning processes due to fiscal and policy arrangements (Satoh 2012 in Murakami et al. 2014). In order to prevent the reoccurrence of similar tsunami damages in the future, new planning regulations prevent re-establishment of housing along the low-lying coastal areas (Hirano 2013). Due to the nature of Sanriku's ria style coastline, with narrow stretches of land and valleys nestled between the sea and steep mountains, most affected towns in Tohoku will be divided into coastal commercial districts with residential areas being located on higher ground and surrounding mountains (Hirano 2013), in places shifting commercial life away from the neighbourhoods to the town centre. The separation of commercial and residential life however goes directly against the main principles of compact cities where the distances between residences and services are ideally reduced to facilitate a primarily pedestrian life (Neumann 2005). In rural areas private vehicle ownership is a necessity due to scarcity of public transportation and greater traveling distances. Centralisation of services will increase private vehicle usage and is linked to loss of social cohesion in peripheral areas (Gray et al. 2010), a point to which Ms. Nakamura was referring to above.

Walkability was a major theme in the affected towns, where the centralisation of public and commercial services would force people to come to the town centres. While walkability overall has a positive impact on the area development (Kimura et al. 2018), in Tohoku, walkability in the compact town centres however came at a cost to the walkability in the peripheries, and the eventual sustainability of life in these peripheral settlements. Mr. Takeda (REF 6) for instance was worried about the gradually advancing age of himself and his neighbours, wondering how long they as a community would be able to manage their daily lives in these new safer (*anzen*) residential areas, many of which were located far from the central area of town and high up away from the sea. He wondered how long they would be able to manage by simply organising car sharing to make sure that everyone in the neighbourhood made it to their hospital appointments and were able to do their shopping in the central town area. He recounted with some anxiety to me during one of our meetings: "*once you get up into the housing area it's very difficult to get down, and once you get down*

*it will be very difficult to get back up* ", adding, "*Anna-san, please think about something for our future life! Any good idea! Now nobody knows what will happen to our lives*". It became clear that while compact cities might increase pedestrianisation, the centralisation of social and commercial activities as well as the circulation of people in the central parts of town, they were having a negative impact on daily life management and neighbourhood relations, and causing anxiety and loss of the sense of security and peace of mind (*anshin*) that people relied upon.

The increased safety promised by the compact town model was however met with increased sense of insecurity, thus making the new towns overall feel less safe than before. It was the management of daily life in the new space that was of major concern to local residents, particularly those who were returning and who would need to renegotiate their pre-disaster attachment and daily activities and find ways to accommodate them into the new architectural design. People worried about who their new neighbours would be, where their children would end up going to school, would there be functioning public transport, and how would they manage to do their shopping once they grew older and could no longer drive a car. These individual and household arrangements are vital for social cohesion that is developed and reinforced through routines that adapt and operate within the structural and institutional environment of habitats (Jarvis et al. 2001, Neumann 2005, Barrios 2017). The development of social relations and cohesion in Tohoku's coastal communities was strongly associated with these daily routines, interactions and relationships established and nurtured directly at the neighbourhood level.

This diffusion of daily routines was precisely the point Ms. Nakamura (REF 22) was lamenting by reminiscing on her memories from her childhood neighbourhood. As everyone lived in close proximity to their shops and businesses with main footfall comprising of neighbours and local residents traveling on foot to do their shopping, social life was built into the very fabric of daily routines that would now be separated due to the compact town models. This led to residents worrying about the changing social character of their hometowns, many fearing that the new town designs were not suitable in accommodating the familiar, and mundane, lifestyles that people wanted to return to in order to feel settled or satisfied in their neighbourhoods. Due to the nature of change people were experiencing resulting from the

loss of opportunities for organic socialisation facilitated by the physical alterations to their habitats, it is therefore questionable whether the compact towns would come to increase resilience in these towns.

Therefore, re-establishment of everyday normalcy and social relations in the spatial setting of the compact town was a priority for the long-term residents, that some felt stood in direct competition with the emerging priorities of fostering new industries like tourism. While recognising the importance and potential of tourism that could be better fostered through compact town models, and the benefits that could be received from developing a vibrant tourism industry, many were skeptical about the role of tourism in the long run and struggled to identify what was 'sellable' in their hometowns. Despite eagerly hoping for the increase in *kouryuu jinkou* (visitor populations), most were careful not to overestimate their abilities to pull visitors and rely on tourism to keep their hometowns livable. Mr. Kondo (REF 40) for instance laughed at the intense focus on tourism in his town by saying that there was "*nothing of interest in this town*"; it boasted no big temples nor sites of interest and was surrounded only by endless vistas of mountains and the sea, but remarked that it was from the nature and the interconnectedness of human life within the environment that had created life as it existed, and this was the charm that he could see in his town.

The main focus for local residents resided in building new forms of permanence in their neighbourhoods, rather than temporary character of visitation and consumption of the local culture. It was therefore the affects of these towns, like the sea breeze upon the skin, from which the charm and character emitted. Their focus was more geared toward how to attract younger residents and get people to return to their hometowns. Revitalisation was not so much associated with a new sense of vibrancy, but to the rejuvenation of the familiar atmosphere from which resilience was seen as emerging. Vibrancy was eagerly desired by long-term residents but associated with more young people moving into these rural towns and seeing friends and neighbours return after the post-disaster reconstruction was finished. Equally, new arrivals explained that they wanted the places to maintain an open and welcoming atmosphere so that other people like them would feel comfortable and excited moving to the towns and make these towns their permanent homes (e.g. REF 1, REF 42). The new arrivals were in fact seeking for the everyday mundaneness as the desired new normal

for the everyday. For the new arrivals who were seeking a different life for themselves and were motivated enough to make the transition, and the long-term residents alike, everyday life was about the mundane feelings of being satisfied with one's life (*manzokukan*).

### 6.2. "Our community is wider and stronger now"

The emphasis of social resilience expressed by the local affected populations, as discussed above, indicates that in many ways coastal communities were already resilient against disasters. This impression certainly seemed to strongly exist in the reports of local residents, through references to the failure of physical safety measures (Yamori 2013, Coulmas 2012, Nakahara 2011, Ando et al. 2011, Suppasri et al. 2013), with many local residents contrastingly stressing on the role localised networks and knowledge played in saving lives and mitigating damages. The main fear locally resided in the loss of these networks as a source of social resilience, due to the disaster causing a massive reorganisation of these relationships through loss of life, displacement and intensified outmigration. Equally, the influx of new residents and visitors was contributing to the diffusion of communal networks. Overall, the community was in a state of flux that necessitated the rebuilding and reconfiguration of the basic foundation of resilience.

Collectively, post-disaster depopulation has reached critical levels in many locations that were already experiencing population exodus prior to the disaster (NIPSSR 2013). The population of Onagawa for instance is projected to shrink by 20% by the end of the recovery period, reaching approximately 8000 inhabitants after resettlement, but expected to carry on decreasing after (NIPSSR 2013). Similarly, Minamisanriku whose population was around 17,000 in 2010, is now looking to lose 17% of its population by 2020 (NIPSSR 2013). Combined with the impact of the disaster that has accelerated the exodus from Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, these three most affected prefectures in Tohoku are on average projected to lose 15% of their total population by 2030 (NIPSSR 2013). Together with Japan's overall population decline that has been taking place since 2005 (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2017), the context of absolute population decline has resulted in a condition where a gain of population in one location will automatically mean a loss in another. With merely seven of Japan's 47

prefectures experiencing population increases (mostly those hosting major population centres) (Statistics Bureau of Japan 2014), rural regions like Tohoku are likely to bear the brunt of this development. Under these conditions, population growth for Tohoku's disaster affected regions therefore remains unlikely, forcing municipalities, communities, and families to make critical choices regarding their futures and adjusting to sustained decline.

At the same time, the area has drawn 'unprecedented' attention from the outside, pulling the region from obscurity into the limelight. Since the disaster, Tohoku has attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors from across Japan and abroad to help with the immediate emergency support, as well as long-term development and recovery (Klien 2017, McMorran 2017, Leng 2015). Within the first few months of the disaster, Tohoku's devastated communities had welcomed nearly half a million volunteers to the region to help with the immediate emergency aid and the subsequent cleaning operations (Leng 2015). Since then the number of volunteers has quickly waned and been partly replaced by a small but steady stream of tourists and visitors to the region (Suma 2012), with the landscape and intensity of the local visitor-oriented industries and attention paid to the temporary visitor populations (*kouryuu jinkō*) rising to the attention of local residents and authorities alike. Despite depopulation remaining a critical concern for local communities, positive population changes have taken place alongside overall decline. For communities who have suffered the constant companionship of depopulation for many decades, the influx of new visitors represented a breath of fresh air, and when intertwined with the 'window of opportunity' that had never existed before, brought a new sense of hopefulness and vitality into the communities.

During my field work I often puzzled about the notion of the community and people's attachments to each other and the surrounding landscape, when 'unprecedented' social and interpersonal changes had taken place in his community alongside the 'unprecedented' environmental and physical transformation. The rapid drop in population numbers due to the disaster, loss of neighbours and family members, communities being dispersed into different temporary housing units across the regions, and many eventually relocating elsewhere for not being able to persevere the long recovery period. Community members had in many cases recognised the exacerbated impact the disaster would have on the resurrection of life in these communities immediately after the disaster, with Ms. Murakami (REF 39) for instance

remembering the first moment she saw the destruction in her native Onagawa that "*this would be a defining moment for our community*".

During one of my meetings with Mr. Takeda, our conversation veered towards to the notion of the community. For Mr. Takeda, the dispersal of communities as regrettable (*zannen*), but that he understood the motivations behind people's personal choices but expressed joy over the interest outsiders were now paying toward their community. For Mr. Takeda these parallel changes were viewed with adjustment and hopeful anticipation where the *"community is stronger and wider now as a result of the disaster*", indicating toward the unity that he argued was now in many ways shared across geographical, generational, and social boundaries. While everyone's experience was unique, and each individual, family, and neighbourhood had been impacted by the disaster in various ways, the local residents nevertheless regarded the disaster as a levelling and uniting experience that had brought them closer together (REF 5, REF 6, REF 14). Individuals and members of a community, the interviewees expressed a sense of humility in front of the forces of nature, where the "*sea got angry with us*" (REF 6) and brought them together as bare humans. Nature itself did not discriminate, and everyone had been touched by it whether they had lost their homes, their family members, or none of it. Each member of the community who was alive after the tsunami had recoiled back to the sea had, irrespective of their remaining circumstances, survived. Surviving, and connecting in that survival with others had made communities "stronger", bringing people into a shared space of searching meaning within the 'unprecedented' destruction and making the future emerging from that destruction more meaningful, better, and valuable.

Mutual survival and the impact of the disaster had brought people closer together, but also created conditions and atmosphere that was reported to be open and welcoming to new individuals who were inspired by their contact with Tohoku. Even I became part of their communities, *"You too are part of us now*", Mr. Takeda. said, jokingly adding "*I will issue you your membership card very soon*". The joke was reflective of the shifts that had taken place in the communities throughout the recovery, with new arrivals to the communities often noting on the welcoming and open atmosphere that resided in Tohoku's tsunami ravaged coastline (e.g. REF 1, REF 42, REF 20). Together with the loss of neighbours and family

members to the disaster, post-disaster population exodus and dispersal of communities, as well as influx of visitors, and importantly, new permanent residents into the communities has dramatically changes the notion of community itself, "widening" the scope of who belongs to it and what is its purpose.

My curiosity in this arena resided primarily in the interactions between the locals and the non-locals, including visitors, tourists and the new arrivals, and will use the rest of the chapter to discuss importance placed upon population, not in terms of numbers, but the notions of *hito* (people), *komyunity* (community) and *ningen kankei* (human relations) that many referred to as the most important things in these communities. Locals were realistic in relation to population growth that was seen as unlikely, and what they sought instead was a sense stability and the feeling of continuity. Even if one family, or one young person moved into a peripheral neighbourhood, that alone was seen as a step toward a brighter future. Even the temporary visitors were viewed in a positive light and brought into the sphere of the "wider community", but in a different way than what the authorities envisioned. While the government presented compact towns as the best way to respond to the needs to rebuild socio-economic and physical resilience, for the locals the sense of stronger and wider community was built through engaging outsiders into the *affective* atmosphere and connections in the community.

The primary emphasis on building communal relations seemed to reside in the importance of establishing intimate and persistent interactions in the affective living space of the neighbourhoods and teaching and learning across the lines that had typically not been crossed in the past. In practice, much of community building work seemed to be condensed in the sphere of heritage and traditions, with a clear emphasis on the affective bodily entanglements with traditions rather than sheer consumption. In this affective type of community building, the boundaries between the locals and non-locals were diffused, with the performance of traditions and heritage moving from a distinction between performers and spectators to the mutual physical and active production and reproduction of the traditions and rites themselves. Concretely this meant the physical and bodily occupation of spaces and performances by outsiders in the production of traditions, ranging cycles of local

food production, harvesting, cooking and eating, to dressing up and carrying the *o-mikoshi* (portable shrine) during a local festival for example.

The curiosity with which many outsiders came to the region presented a sign of hope for Mr. Takeda for the sustainability of the new "wider and stronger community". He explained that perhaps through the influx of people into the communities, forms of living heritage and the very uniqueness of the lifestyles of the local communities would be secured into the future. Mr. Takeda gave the example of the local Lion Dance troupes (Image 8) that he himself was particularly passionate about, regularly performing in his local troupe as well. "*When we hear the drums, we get excited!",* he told me in relation to the local Lion Dance performance, explaining the physical and emotional feeling it induced in people, continuing to explain how he wanted *"everyone to enjoy this tradition*", equally noting with surety that "*many outsiders and visitors should experience the sensation* [of performing Lion Dance] *too".* For Mr. Takeda, it was continuity and community that mattered, a sense of common purpose and mutuality that would ensure the continuation of the past into the future amongst the unprecedented changes that were taking place in the physical environment around them; including the inception of the compact towns.

Image 8: Lion Dance performance, Onagawa. Anna Vainio, 2016

While community that existed prior to the disaster was not the same community that was reassembling post-disaster and planning a life in the community, the disaster experience had brought community members closer together through their collective survival, but equally the recovery had brought a steady influx of visitors and new residents who through their presence and personal connections reaffirmed the importance and the meaning of the events that took place. It was this process of ensuring the continuation and successful re-establishment of the community as a form of resilience that I was interested in. The traditions that the locals often emphasised as the essence of their community, vehicles and creators of the affective atmosphere through which communal resilience could be rebuilt, and thus metaphors for communality and sociality themselves. Traditions in Tohoku therefore often seemed to form the connecting points through which sense of common future and mindset of connectedness for the new "stronger and wider" community was created.

#### *6.2.1. Community building for resilience*

Communality has been a persistent theme in Tohoku's post-disaster recovery. In the government's discourse about the recovery, sociality in post-disaster Japan has been built upon the notion of 'linkages', with idea of 'linkages' is prominently present in the government's philosophy toward the recovery. Equal to the notion of 'hope', 'linkages' too are prominently superimposed in the government's philosophy for Tohoku's recovery, with the 'Hope beyond disaster' -document mentioning linkages nearly 30 times, where communality and sociality are shown as integral components to resilience building for the future. Given the attention and detail paid to these 'linkages', it is necessary to ask what is the nature of these linkages, what is their purpose, and how are they to be formed?

In Japanese version of the report, 'linkages' was referred to as *tsunagu* (to link together, to fasten and tie together), a common verb utilised in conjunction with sociality, as will be discussed below. For the government 'linkages' meant "[...] activities that will help the people in the disaster-affected regions to first work to achieve “harmonious coexistence” between humanity and nature, from which they can engage in “disaster reduction”. Such an approach

will generate independent efforts to revitalize local communities and local industries. This, in turn, will elicit “hope.” The capacity to live through this disaster with “hope” will become a testimony to the reconstruction process" (p. 8). In this conceptualisation, 'linkages' were characterised as individual, person-to-person connections that when aggregated would have a ripple effect on societal level, bringing communities and the entire society under stronger ties of mutuality and learning. Through linkages communities are envisioned to become more resilient against natural hazards, but also importantly, leading to their revitalisation.

*Tsunagu* was not merely present in the official documentation on the recovery and the parlance of authorities. Like Mr. Takeda pointed out when he said, "*when this recovery is over, we can start to rebuild our communities*", community building and social cohesion were in fact the prime objectives of the recovery for the communities themselves. Concepts referring to sociality, harmony and solidarity, such as *fureai* (coming together), *tsunagari* (connection, togetherdness), and *kizuna* (bonding, linking), have been widely attached to the triple disaster in research, popular discourse and people's everyday conversations (Slater et al. 2012, Hommerich 2015, Gerster 2019, Forgash 2011). The local populations too often referenced their broadened sociality through *fureai*, *tsunagari*, and *kizuna*, that are all common idioms used in Japan to refer to sociality (Nozawa 2015). *Kizuna* was even selected as the kanji of the year for 2011 to reflect the mood of the year (Hommerich 2012), but perhaps due to the wide-spread media co-optation of the term, *kizuna* in the local usage has gained some negative connotations too (NHK 2015). The terms I heard most often were *fureai* and *tsunagari*, almost exclusively uttered as a pair, indicating the interrelation they carry with one another.

*Fureai* and *tsunagari*, used in reference to sociality, can collectively be described as forms of mutual (and emotional) human contact (Plourde 2014). Their prevalence in the post-disaster context is interesting, as it can be seen as a clear countertrend to the public discourse of Japan as *muen shakai* (relationless society) (Hommerich 2012, p. 48), along with the precarity of social and economic conditions (Allison 2013). Noting back to the media coverage in the immediate post-disaster setting of the spring of 2011, the emphasis of the stoic Japanese and their mutual solidarity and persistence in the face of adversity in the immediate aftermath of the disaster (Burgess 2011), is therefore interesting in relation to the broader narratives of *muen shakai* (relationless society). It is important to note however, that Japanese people are

not uniquely attuned to altruism. In fact, altruism, solidarity, and mutual assistance as examples of post-disaster growth have been typical presentations after multiple disasters across the globe (e.g. Zahran et al. 2009, Siegel et al. 1999, Krzysztof & Norris 1995). Despite some arguing that altruism quickly disappears and changes to disillusionment and can have a distinctly negative and disruptive impact on communities leading to feelings of inequality and injustice (Krzysztof and Norris 1995), what my research however found is that notions and emphasis on sociality very still very active in the post-disaster communities of Tohoku in 2015 and 2016, with similar findings having been made elsewhere as well (Silver & Grek-Martin 2015). Sources of solidarity and social trust however, as Solnit (2009) argues, can be "largely dormant and unacknowledged" until an incident where such relationships are vital strikes a community, appearing only when the normal order of things is disrupted. What I witnessed in Tohoku however is that it is through the process of building these relationships that people understand and communicate their recovery experiences and the way they anticipate their futures to unfold. Dismissing solidarity and sociality as a quickly disappearing phenomenon, or one that is culturally affixed, can distort and oversimplify the ways in which post-disaster communities create new meanings for their communities and the very recovery process that is taking place around them.

Nozawa (2015) argues that *fureia*, or contact, is in fact an idiom for communication itself (p. 386), and as explained to me in detail by a contact in Ogatsu, denotes the moment of contact between people in a common space, for instance through events and social actions (Research Diary 19.8.2016). *Tsunagari* on the other hand is used to refer to the mental and emotional connection between people, through shared values, memories, feelings, and directions, representing relationality or networking in society (Ikuyo 1992 in Ogawa 2004) that in cross-cultural terms has sometimes been argued to reflect 'social capital' (Indrawan et al. 2014). While there are elements of social boding and bridging (Putnam 2000), and social capital certainly has been found influential in Tohoku's recovery (Aldrich and Meyer 2014), the examples in this chapter will show that despite sharing some qualities of social capital, the multiple forms of linkages that have emerged in the changing communal context of disaster and recovery have further meanings that cannot be captured purely through concepts like social capital and networking.

Community building instead seemed to rely upon the re-establishment of the affective atmosphere in the communities as the foundation of social connections and resilience. Ranging from shared experiences in a physical space, the bodily experience of participating in community life by being involved in the Lion Dance, experiencing fishing and farming, and similar activities that many local people were involved in, were integral parts of understanding (*wakaru*) of community life and showing interest and investment in the everyday life in these regions. Like Ms. Shimizu explained above, the recovery and the focus on vibrancy and revitalisation of life through compact town building had changed the entire atmosphere of the town into a destination, thus distancing it from the affective nature of the community (Martini & Vainio, forthcoming). My thoughts returned to the traditions that Mr. Takeda saw as the vehicle for community building, and I wondered whether traditions like Lion Dance could truly be salvaged with the help of outsiders, however. Like Lahournat (2016) explored in her article on *Kagura* heritage in Ogatsu, I too wondered about the care for authenticity and form of the ritual and whether locals who had lived and practiced these traditions their whole lives would be comfortable to slowly relinquish them in the hands of the outsiders.

Mr. Takeda considered this question carefully, finally responding: "*these traditions are quite patriarchal you know. Lion Dance, for instance, is supposed to be performed only by men*". He continued to explain how for a number of years now, dating to the period before the tsunami, his neighbourhood has caused a stir among the Lion Dance troupes in the region by allowing women to perform as well. "*It didn't seem fair that they should be deprived of being part of this heritage, so we started allowing women and girls to perform as well*", he concluded. What Mr. Takeda was alluding to was therefore the importance the affective nature of performing Lion Dance had over the authenticity of the tradition itself. Belonging and communal connections therefore emerged not from the shape, authenticity and formal continuation of the tradition itself, that was divisive after all, but from the fact that it kept being performed at all due to communal effort to ensure its survival. Traditionalism therefore was not simply longing for the past but represented a dynamic perception of traditions whose role and performance had become critically assessed in the post-disaster crisis of continuity along several axes: gender, generation, and geography most importantly. In these discussions the tradition as a rite, skill, or habit and the values and meanings attached to in the past were

separated from each other, with the continuation of the tradition and diversity of heritage rising as the primary values over historical formal characteristics.

It is important to understand the different meanings placed on heritage and tradition, and the power that is contained in these characterisations. By focusing on the framing of heritage in universal narratives produced through processes of heritage protection by transnational organisations, Rico (2014) for instance critically assesses our understanding of heritage and traditionalism, arguing that we have a tendency to place heritage into a framework of 'risk and vulnerability' in post-disaster situations and that this can overshadow the capacity of heritage to develop resilience through transformation.  Rico has argued that heritage, when seen as a dynamic rather than a static process, can aid in the development of positive post-disaster identities, attachments, and adaptations to the new context. While the locals I encountered in Tohoku placed their heritage and traditions in the framework of 'risk', quite rightly so considering the Tohoku's long-term decline that has had a heavy impact on the diversity of localised traditions and festivals (Thompson 2008), what I found is that new reinterpretations of heritage and tradition were advancing continuity by taking place in the context of change rather than permanence, indicating that perhaps 'vulnerability' and 'resilience' are not mutually exclusive.

By emphasising the continuation of traditions as an affective embodiment of sociality, over the historical authenticity of the form and performance, traditions are seen as vehicles of resilience where their continuation is ensured through transformation and change, thus maintaining their relevance in the present day rather than as vulnerable artefacts of the historical past. Through increased contact with outsiders, both visitors and new arrivals, and their continued presence in these previously rather isolated communities has brought new hope for the continuation of traditions, and life in these declining communities more broadly. Resilience within the local imaginaries resided in the process of creating "stronger and wider" social relations and the sense of security and peace of mind (*anshin*) that accompanied these intensified interactions. As Novak (2017) explains, *anshin* is an affective state, with non-locals being invited to experience the community through the affective spaces, such as the lion dance, local *matsuri*, industries and everyday lives, rather than through transactions and mere interactions within the bounds of a compactly planned commercial centres.

Indeed, there seemed to be little tension between continuation and adaptation, expressing remarkable dynamism of Japanese culture and lifestyles as has already been observed elsewhere (Lahournat 2016, Allison 2017). In people's imaginations, tradition and the survival of all aspects of communal life were integrally connected and not in competition with one another, and change was seen as complimenting the survival of traditions. For many traditions and the importance of revival lay in the recreation and ritualistic observance of tradition as part of a living culture, rather than achieving authenticity of the performance of the tradition per se. Therefore, expressions of cultural history through local festivals and performances for instance, reconfirm the shared values and a sense of belonging in the present moment, and in the specific space (Schnell 1999, Lahournat 2016). Anne Allison (2013) points out that rather than seeing the threats and changes to traditions as a sign of death and decline, they can be seen as a sign of vitality of the culture itself that is able to persevere through changing times, increasing precarity, and even catastrophes, and continue to provide a sense of attachment, familiarity, and comfort for people (Allison 2013). It was this sense of continuity in the face of adversity and death that gave emotional comfort and a sense of security for people (*anshin*).

What the residents I encountered in Tohoku imagined for their futures and the post-disaster and post-recovery life was the re-establishment of lifestyles that have emerged from the relationships that human communities have with the nature around them as well as each other, and for life to carry out its cycles of birth and death. For the locals the 'window of opportunity' that the disaster awarded was as much about new beginnings as it was about endings with a peace of mind, both inescapable parts of life itself. For the communities rebuilding communities was not centred on the material recovery focused on housing and economic revival that were seen as mere tools for achieving what is really important, the realm of the immaterial and the re-establishment of the relationship people have with their memories, landscapes, ancestors, sense of belonging and local cultures and identities. For the local populations, who are dealing with the events of March 11, their own survival, and changing social fabric of their communities, the process of community building was about making sense of what happened and forging a path into a common future by realigning the trajectory between the past, the present and the future through their communal relations.

The aim of sociality for the affected populations was to create a sense of security (*anshin*), not only against future natural hazards through physical rebuilding and socio-economic resilience, but as a means for finding ones place, and establishing a sense of belonging as individuals, communities, and as a nation. In the context of continuing decline, further difficulties, and passage of time, the affected populations did not want their experiences to be forgotten. Equally, concerns over the future of the community as a comfortable place to live and die occupied people's pursuits toward the future.

The sense of comfort existed beyond public services, and how would people be taken care of when their physical bodies grew tired and unable to lead an independent life, but equally it was about finding a peace of mind for the afterlife. Who would take care of the family graves, who will keep performing Lion Dance and teach it to the next generation? Death of the community was a painful thought, and one that many people recognised as a possible future outcome for these towns, villages and inlets by the sea. The belief in the continuation of local heritage, lifestyles and cultures would live on after one’s own demise gave people emotional and psychic comfort, and a sense of security that tsunami resistant communities and "disaster preparedness" could not give.

*Chapter 7*

# Recovery standing in the way of recovery

Throughout the preceding empirical chapters, I have built the discussion on Japan's community-focused recovery in line with the key principles are driving academic debates, governmental narratives and development practices of community-based approaches. So far, I have focused on the principles of participation (Chapter 4), empowerment (chapter 5) and resilience (Chapter 6). The remaining principle is that of proximity, one of the foundational characteristics that make community-based approaches literally processes that are 'based in the community'. I have deliberately left this principle as the last one to be discussed, as it stands at the foundation of these approaches. In this chapter I will argue that 'proximity' as a tangible and physical iteration of closeness to the community, best illustrates the point of divergence and slippage between the exogenous and endogenous narratives for post-disaster recovery. As I have argued and further discussed in previous chapters of this thesis, for the local residents, the recovery presents primarily as an affective process, where the meanings, priorities, and language emerge as a distinct discourse from the connection between the affective context and the meanings that are formed from direct and embodied experiences with this context. It is therefore 'proximity' to the affective landscape and embodied experiences with the landscape that form the starting point for the recovery narratives, articulations, transmissions and practices of the disaster victims.

For the authorities however, 'proximity' has come to mean physical closeness of the administrative procedures with the geographical context of the recovery (Annex 3). The 'Hope beyond the Disaster' -report for instance reads: "[the government should] make efforts to make maximum use of the abilities of municipalities, which are the *main actors* in reconstruction" (Reconstruction Design Council 2011, p. 18, emphasis added), where the affected municipalities are expected to assume the lead role in reconstruction and recovery, as they are viewed to be in the best position to understand local conditions, respond to emerging needs, and consult local populations. They are also the administrative units that will work directly and independently within national reconstruction frameworks. This iteration of 'proximity' seems to follow the general conceptualisation embedded into academic and practitioner debates about proximity, that focus on the intensification of the relationship between the *developer* and the *developed*. Maskrey (2011) for instance notes that progress in the development of community-based approaches depends on the embedded closeness/proximity into the process, with "communities progressively engaging and involving supra-local actors such as local and central government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to support their activities" (p. 44). The principle of proximity in the Japanese government's reconstruction documents is primarily framed as a synergy between the municipalities at the centre, functioning as the primary actors designing a recovery based on local needs and wishes, while being financially and legally supported by the government.

However, the focus on the administrative closeness and proximity not only makes the starting point for the disaster recovery diverge strongly from the affective experiences of the disaster affected communities themselves, but also limits the municipalities' abilities to even consider the affective nature of recovery. To frame proximity as an administrative process where the municipalities hold the consultative power but only limited legislative and fiscal control, in itself radically limits the power of municipalities to realise the ideas, needs and desires of the populations who they are in proximity to, and whose voices are supposed to be guiding the recovery. Equally, the government's fervent commitment on equity in the recovery process (Oguma 2013) makes it increasingly difficult to fully service and respond to localised needs that can be radically different from one place to another. Paradoxically, the promotion of proximity of the process to the recovering communities, seems to be actually distancing

communities from the formal recovery, while also arguably standing at the root of the separation of the exogenous and endogenous discourses on the recovery into two different spheres of language, action and directions.

In this chapter I will explore the different starting points for these discourses through two concepts *gaman* (perseverence) and *ochitsuku* (settledness) that through their polarised affective states for the local residents, represent the discord and tension in the duality of the recovery process. *Gaman* and *ochitsuku* are verbal and articulated representations of these affective states through which the local populations were sequencing the recovery in the temporal space: One must persevere the discomfort before reaching a place of comfort. Achieving the goals set out in the formal recovery will simultaneously mean the onset of another recovery where the values and priorities outlined by the local populations, such as rebuilding communities, forming social bonds, and building a sense of homeliness, can finally be realised; as Mr. Takeda noted "*once this recovery is over, we can start to rebuild our communities*". These polarised states exemplify and illustrate the tangible aspects of the 'two recoveries' discussed throughout this thesis, where the end of the formal recovery period, with its embedded goals of increased safety and foundations for socio-economic growth being completed, will constitute the end of waiting and persevering in a state of discomfort. But despite the formal recovery making a promise to deliver communities that are safe from the harm of environmental hazards and contain the potential for socio-economic growth and prosperity, for the local populations this promised 'end goal' only formed the beginning of the second recovery through which the meanings embedded into the endogenous narrative could be achieved. In this way, the formal recovery was standing in the way of the communal recovery, suspending local populations into a persistent state of liminality between the past that was lost, and the future that is promised.

The chapter discusses the meanings of the different intensities these two states produce, from enforced waiting and longing for new beginnings, and how these states can illustrate the impact these intensities has on the recovery as proximal to the communities and thus 'community-based'. Despite the terms being embedded into the Japanese contextual, interpersonal and linguistic setting, these states and intensities are not uniquely Japanese (Cox and Perry 2011, Barrios 2017, Albrecht 2006). While *gaman* tends to be the accepted

state from which recovery begins within the exogenous discourse for the recovery, seen as the unavoidable period of discomfort and tensions, the chapter posits that perhaps instead of accepting of discomfort as necessary for a period of time, and should rather begin from the search of comfort. In the chapter I will show that both *gaman* and *ochitsuku* influence people's abilities, motivations, and directions in relation to the recovery and it is therefore imperative from the perspective of community-based approaches to recovery, that these varying intensities are taken into consideration both in the strategic and practical work of recovery.

In relation to the principle of 'proximity', I will argue that only bringing administrative processes close to the recovering communities is simply not enough, as reducing recovery into mere administrative efforts lacks genuine engagements with the daily reality of communities living in recovery contexts. As outlined in the previous chapters, the majority of communities included in this study were still leading their lives amidst physical reconstruction in 2015 and 2016, with the main forms of attachments emerging from the sphere of the intangible and the immaterial for the local residents. However, as I will exemplify in this chapter, while these intangible and immaterial values were at the forefront of the exogenous discourse, emphasising the latent, quintessential and unique characteristics of Tohoku's rural communities as the foundation for a 'better' society, I will show how the language utilised by the authorities nonetheless echoed romanticised appropriation rather than genuine reflections of contemporary rural societies. Such romanticised notions as grand aspirational goals for the recovery did not meet the real, and rather small and mundane, needs of the communities where residents were eagerly waiting for the re-opening of supermarkets, pharmacies and pavements that were holding people from feeling settled (*ochitsuku*). Due to such differences, proximity as an administrative process of 'listening to voices', 'empowering local populations' and 'building resilience' can only result in good intentions that can help people persevere, rather than real actions through which people would feel at home in their communities.

Hamdi (2014) refers to this process as finding "beginnings that count", where instead of strategic planning for the 'big' purposes meeting the broader goals of the recovery, fixing vulnerabilities and democratising the process through which these goals will be achieved,

overshadow the real needs of people are much more tangible, smaller and immediate, related to destroyed properties and loss of livelihoods that often have to wait for the big plans to be completed. Rather, 'proximity' should also include genuine efforts to understand the intimacy to the recovering context in which the recovering populations are existing and how this context tangibly impacts their capacities for action and engagement in the recovery. Recovery should therefore start from genuine attempts to understand the real lived experience of communities and the shape of the problems and challenges that reside at the heart of the motivations for disaster affected communities to engage with authorities and development practitioners. Solving these small problems would not only help to understand the shape of the problems through the act of solving them (Kay 2011), but also enable victim communities to increase their levels of comfort along the way. The chapter therefore raises questions on whether democratic and empowered community engagement into the big and strategic plans is ever really possible, if it leads to a sense of inescapable enforced state of waiting (*gaman*) where people only need to wait for the 'big plan' of the recovery to be over in order for its logic to be reveals and the reap the benefits it bring, while not responding to the immediate concerns and needs that emerge from the affective context that would help people reach a point of comfort (*ochitsuku*).

## 7.1. Prolonged state of *Gaman*

Anxiety over change is reasonable, as is the expectation that the majority of residents will in time successfully adapt to their new living conditions and be able to recreate the sense of community in their neighbourhoods. As outlined in Chapter 6, the majority of affected municipalities were engaged in large scale reconstruction projects that often included either community relocations to higher ground, land elevations, construction of tsunami walls, or all of the above. The length of the recovery was therefore set at approximately 10 years, so that these structural and infrastructure changes that would facilitate the emergence of the government's grand vision of a stronger and vibrant Tohoku and Japan to be brought into reality. While the majority of local residents well understood the realities of a recovery project of this magnitude, when I asked people what they thought about the recovery, the first

reaction to my question was almost universally "*osoi desu!*" (it's so slow!), usually uttered with exasperation and sense of frustration or disbelief.

To manage the long recovery period necessitated by the realisation of government's grand vision for Tohoku, affected populations were expected to persevere (*gaman*) (Gerster 2019, Slater et al. 2014, Samuels 2013). *Gaman* is a typical expression in the Japanese language, one that even foreign learners pick up and learn to use in everyday language relatively quickly. The word has its origins in Zen Buddhism, denoting one of seven types of human conceit, but since the Edo period has been used to refer to a positive meaning of stoicism, perseverance and the ability to endure difficulties. This contemporary meaning has been widely attached to the 3/11 disaster (Burgess 2011, Victoria 2012), and was strongly present as a theme in my discussions with the disaster affected populations too, with an emphasis on strength of character and abilities to wait out the recovery. One day as we were sitting in Mr. Takeda's and his wife's small temporary housing unit, he excitedly started telling me how much he was looking forward to their new house that they were planning to build on higher ground in the same inlet where they had lived for decades and raised a family, finally noting that "*we have to gaman (*persevere*) just a little bit longer*".

By its nature *gaman* therefore contains a sense of endurance of discomfort, that in the case of post-disaster context was often associated with the physical and mental precarity of the temporary living situations. While lack of space and poor insulation with noises from the neighbouring units causing a great deal of discomfort and irritation for residents, these temporary houses nonetheless were the first semblance of home after the loss of their long-term, and often ancestral, homes in the tsunami. Ms. Shimizu who was Mr. Takeda's neighbour in the temporary housing complex, explained feeling a sense of relief when they had finally been allocated their current abode, saying: "when we got here, it was the first time I started feeling more at ease". Simultaneously however, these homes were not permanent, and often residents had had to move from one temporary unit to another as the recovery went on, with each move including a series of complicated and emotional decisions for individuals that cannot be overlooked in housing and relocation policies (Watanabe and Maruyama 2018), leading many to proclaim their tiredness of waiting, and coming close to

joining those who had already permanently moved out of these communities as they simply could not persevere anymore.

The slowness of the recovery and reconstruction, the distance and voicelessness people experience in the recovery, and the barriers it presents in helping people move forward have forced people in Tohoku to exist in a prolonged, and often enforced, state of *gaman* for years. Even those who remained positive about the official reconstruction process, and who had actively participated in it, seemed tired: "*We have been very patient*" Mr. Takeda sighed, hoping that soon, in six months or a year people will be able to return to their communities, but also noting on the opaqueness of imagining one's long-term future: "[the new neighbourhoods will be] *very safe but no one has experienced them yet. In six month or a year, we will know what our life will be like when we live on higher ground* [...] *But actually no one is still very sure*", Mr. Takeda continued, referring to the uncertainty over the future that reigned in people's minds. Similarly, Ms. Ishida (REF 44), worrying about her children's future wondered "*what will this community be like, I cannot imagine it, not even a little bit*".

Disasters are primarily associated with destruction. They do not only destroy physical landscapes but significantly impact the emotional and psychological attachments people have with localities (Blunt & Dowling 2006, Morrice 2013, Cartlidge 2010, Barrios 2017, Albrecht 2006). Disaster experiences result in both disorientation and reorientation; disorientation is caused by the loss or change of familiar markers of the community, while reorientation refers to the psychological process of forming a new sense of identity and place within the changing landscape (Cox and Perry 2011). More importantly, Cox and Perry (2011) found that the restoration of the physical community as a meaningful place was found to help people form positive place-attachments and make them feel at home. As we were driving in Minamisanriku, Mr. Kimura made a familiar turn but suddenly found himself somewhere he was not meant to be, stating that *"the roads keep changing all the time"*, noting on the impact this fluctuation has on the daily life in the town and the ability to connect with the landscape, and the loss of 'instinctiveness' that Ms. Shimizu noted on in the earlier chapters. Due to the length and complexity of the physical recovery, the processes of disorientation and reorientation in Tohoku were in constant motion. Therefore, the sustained and prolonged state of recovery that was "*osoi desu!*", had suspended locals from establishing such

permanent and meaningful connections with their landscapes, having a detrimental effect on the recovery of the localities in the long-run. The physical landscape no longer bearing resemblance or holding physical points of attachment with the past, nor yet giving clear indications of the shape of the community in the future, was also impacting people's abilities to finding a sense of home in their communities.

Such attachments however are fundamental for coping and adaptation (Brown & Perkins 1992), making trajectories into the future increasingly difficult to imagine. Similar to Klien's (2017) findings along new migrants to the Tohoku region, many new arrivals I spoke with recounted the opaqueness of their futures when viewed from the present. Many had moved to the region in subsequent waves of recovery and reconstruction action, taking on new jobs and roles in non-profit initiatives, new businesses and ventures that had emerged as a result of the increased interest in the Tohoku region. While many of the individuals I spoke to were happy with their choices, feeling an increased sense of life satisfaction in the rural regions and wanting to start lives and families in the towns, similar to the long-term residents who could not yet imagine their new lives at all, the future of the new migrants seemed uncertain with lack of permanent employment, housing and continued decline of the region (e.g. REF 1, REF 4, REF 32, REF 33, REF 42). The long time scale and grand scale of the recovery resulted in a distancing and misting over the path from the present to the imaginative future, where the distance not only made imagining a concrete and tangible future difficult. Determined to continue on their chosen path and hoping that their dreams would come into being "sometime" in the future, they also recognised that the realisation of their dreams depended on the sustainability of employment and access to housing that stood at the foundation of the possibilities to build a stable life in the rural regions, far away from family.

The desired stability in many ways culminated in the completion of the physical reconstruction, whose absence, or delay, can often accentuate attachments to the immaterial that gains new meanings and importance in people's adaptation to unfamiliar situations and contexts (Forbes 2017, Sou & Webber 2019, Meyer 2012). Because the populations in Tohoku were not yet physically inhabiting their permanent homes, the material community remained imagined and idealised and was not yet connected to tangible affects that a physical community would induce. Morrice (2013) argues that these immaterial aspects of the

community are often idealised, drawing on affective states and memories as the building blocks of what communities of the future would mean. Such idealised sources of affective intensities can however also lead to political and ethical consequences (Ahmed 2004), with nostalgic notions of traditionalism and authenticity becoming projected into the future as the ideal goals for the recovery to achieve, while also propelling the framing of tangible actions in the present.

As noted in chapter 6, the emphases on the immaterial, such as resurrection of local festivals and traditions were overtly dettectable, functioning as invitations for outsiders and visitors to share this affective atmosphere with the locals, that also resonated with the outsiders' views of rural Tohoku. For the urbanites who visited or moved to Tohoku, rurality was generally accepted and recognised as 'good', or 'better' than the city, with natural life cycles, cultural authenticity, seasonal eating, or wholesome and close knit communities that in Japan are quintessentially associated with the 'rural' (Traphagan 2000), or mutually agreeable and shared positive values that people wanted to foster in the new post-disaster spaces. Frameworks for idealistic aspirations of slow life and de-growth for instance, especially common motivators for new rural migrants (Klien 2017), were equally utilised to envision the future and give it shape.

While providing psychic comfort and points of contact between the outsiders and the local residents, the immaterial assets and points of attachment were simultaneously being appropriated by the government under the guises of rurality. Protecting the 'special' rural character and Tohoku's "latent strengths" (p. 2) is overtly present in the government's aims for the recovery in the 'Hope beyond the disaster' -document, also including a sections on cultural restoration (p. 24-25) and tourism promotion (p. 31-32) in which the elements of rurality are promoted through emphases on nativist concepts like *kizuna* (social bonding) and the establishment of a 'Tohoku brand' based on promotion of "indeginous cultural assets" (p. 31), such as fishing, farming, festivals and food. These emphases on romanticised notions of rural harmony and natural abundance broadly coincide with the government's neoconservative aims of regaining Japan's national strengths and calls for national solidarity in order for the recovery to be successful (Forgash 2011).

These imaginaries of that romanticise the rural regions however are often regenerated and recreated at a distance, in hyper-urban regions of Kantō or Kansai by urbanites living away from the authentic and natural order of Japanese life (Nishimura 2014) and therefore distant from the daily experiences and affective mundaneness of contemporary rural regions. The rural ideal functioned as a metaphor for a promise of a 'better' post-disaster reality, enabling the juxtaposition of discomforts and displeasures, such as anxieties over the future, uncomfortable living conditions and continuously changing landscapes of the recovery of the present, against the future comforts of a more safer and resilient communities, socio-economic prosperity and growth. This embedded liminality is mirrored in the government's 'big plan' for the future of Tohoku, that too induced a state of discomfort and the future existing in the real of "sometime" at the end of the opaque pathway to the future. Abram (2017) argues that such opaqueness is characterstic of contemporary participatory city planning processes, where genuine envisioning and imagining of the future is not often happening, but rather that the delivery of the promised future is embedded within the very making of a promise itself (p. 77-78), where the goals and 'big plans' of the future are used to justify the actions in the present to enable the coming of the promised future; thus also justifying making people wait for the government's exogenous grand vision of the future to be completed and helping to maintain people in an extended state of *gaman*.

The suspension embedded into the recovery planning and practical execution that maintained people in a constant state of waiting is integrally linked to the duality of the recovery, exemplified by Mr. Takeda saying that "*once this recovery is over, we can start to rebuild our community*". Andrew Littlejohn (2018) writes that "rebuilding is not, and can never be a strictly technical or bureaucratic process: it always involves value judgements", and it is the vast qualitative difference in the values between the two notions of recovery that I have tried to interpret throughout these chapters. Mr. Takeda's utterance in itself encompasses the duality of the recovery, organised into a sequential order, linked to the inbuilt hierarchies, prioritisation and value orientations that remain persistent problems within participatory governance processes. It is therefore questionable to what degree can simply pushing externally driven administrative processes of strategic planning and participatory governance really bring in a sense of proximity to the recovery process, if the negotiation of different value judgements between 'building housing units' versus 'rebuilding homes and

communities' for instance are not included into the establishment and negotiations of the bureaucratic processes guiding the recovery. What Mr. Takeda's utterance above indicates is that for the local populations the 'recovery' did not include 'rebuilding communities'; raising the question of whether recovery process can truly be 'community-based' if the community that is supposed to be a part of the process is not there yet.

### 7.2. Building *ochitsuku* out of completion of small plans

Familiar values and rural ideals that were embedded into government's plans as the ultimate goals helped people to *gaman*, by regaining a sense of pride in their communities, and form attachments and maintain momentum. However, reaching the idealised goals did not constitute a full recovery in itself as I argue it did not respond to the immediate needs of communities to increase their sense of comfort and settledness in these locations, while also disengaging people from genuine engagements with the participatory recovery processes. This is exemplified for instance by the inabilities many locals presented to concretely imagine lives and communities at the end of the recovery, as outlined above, while also leaving people's immediate daily needs unattended. "*Saying that we still don't have a supermarket seems like such a small complaint compared to all the other bigger problems, but it is actually a very big issue for us*", Mr. Kimura noted, and through this observation honed in on the lack of comfort, stability, and consistency experienced in these everyday life of communities, that I argue stood in the way of people's abilities to engage with the the processes of solving the 'bigger problems'.

In response to my question 'what is the most important thing the recovery needs to achieve', people often referred to the re-establishment of housing that would enable people to return home, to which the success of the recovery culminated for many. Despite the sense of stability the temporary houses had provided to many, these living arrangements were nonetheless temporary, offering little sense of predictability or affective comfort that would fulfill the long-term desires for social cohesion, sense of security, and settledness in place. Many others too, were describing their future homes primarily through embodied and affective imagery, rather than through connections of references to the specific building plans of neighbourhood

designs. Mr. Takeda laughingly told me that while there were many bigger things to worry about, his dream was to be able to stretch his legs in the *furō* (Japanese style bath) once again, as the bathtub in their temporary house was too small for this. For Ms. Shimizu on the other hand, being at home was associated with the surrounding forests and the sea, and that way being able to experience the changes of the season around her through these natural elements. "*All I can think about is my house*", Ms. Shimizu exclained, for instance when I asked her the same question about what the future of her neighbourhood, and the town of Onagawa would more broadly look like. Home therefore referred to the affective intensities of comfort and stability, communal relations and security, representing the starting point for what Mr. Takeda referred to as 'community building', following the end of the formal recovery that in many ways was impeding and distancing the onset of building homes and communities.

The desires for settledness and permanence were at times exacerbated by the changing life circumstances that were taking place in exile. Ms. Wada (REF 43) had been a single mother at the time of the disaster. After the loss of her home to the tsunami, she found herself sharing a small sleeping area with her three sons in the emergency shelter, with little privacy or space for family activities. After months of waiting, they were able to move to their allocated temporary housing unit that, like for many disaster victims (Watanabe and Maruyama 2018), provided Ms. Wada and her family the much-needed respite and privacy. During her life in the temporary house, she met her new husband who moved in with her and her sons; soon followed by the birth of their baby daughter: "*all of a sudden we were six people sharing a small house like that!* [...] *there was no space to sit down and have a meal, we had to eat standing up*". The birth of their daughter enabled them to move into a larger temporary housing unit, but despite the added space, life was still cramped. Her sons who were 12, 15 and 18 at the time of our conversation, had all become teenagers during their time in exile: "*their bodies are so big now*", Ms. Wada said, hoping that very soon they would have a proper house of their own where all her children, and her and her husband could have their own space and settle down (*ochitsuku*) properly.

I heard this word *ochitsuku* frequently among the affected populations. Composing of two characters, 落 and 着, the first with the literal meaning 'to fall' (*ochiru*) and the latter 'to arrive' (*tsuku*) and to wear something on the lower half of the body, both refer to the

connection between bodily experiences, a sense of destination and belonging, and the proximity of these physical sensations. As a compound, *ochitsuku* refers to calmness, composure and presence of mind, and therefore a fitting analogy for reaching a place where one can feel 'settled'. The state of discomfort experienced through *gaman*, thus stood in stark juxtaposition with the longing for sense of *ochitsuku*, a state in which the long-term and prolonged tensions could be released. For the local residents, reaching *ochitsuku* culminated in the idea of being able to get home from which the community building process would begin, representing the starting point for the second, or perhaps the 'true' recovery for local residents.

Such transmission with affective characteristics are not unique to Japan, but still remain only an emerging aspect of scholarly work on post-disaster recovery. Clear patterns of the centrality of the affective can however be detected. Studying decision-making on return to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, Morrice (2013) found that the way people accommodate the stress induced by a catastrophe is an important determinant of the direction they take regarding their futures, where the non-material and affective attachment were the main drivers of decision-making. The importance of affective place attachment have been highlighted elsewhere as well (Smith & Cartlidge 2011, Chamlee-Wright & Storr 2009), specifically in relation to the sense of 'feeling at home' (Cox & Perry 2011, Barrios 2017, Albrecht 2006). Based on my research in Tohoku, the future-oriented imaginations of 'home' and the feeling of being at home also played an important role in people's imaginations of the future, the recovery, and adaptation to the new situation, thus making their apparent lack in the formal recovery process all the more acute.

Homes and feeling at home feature heavily as the central articulation of people's desires and personal objectives, but also clearly indicating toward the broader meaning of homeliness beyond physical reconstruction. Simlar to *ochitsuku*, Barrios (2017) found that people post-disaster relocation sites in Honduras rested their acceptance and adaptation to the new community on whether they felt '*hallarse*' (to find oneself) or not. What he found was that the majority of relocated populations were experiencing difficulties in feeling *hallarse* in their new homes, whose socio-material conditions were not inducing the sensory and affective familiarity or comfort that would induce a new attachment, leading the new homes to

perpetuate the sense of discomfort and displacement many already felt (Barrios 2017, p. 57). Similarly, Albrecht (2006) coined the term 'solastalgia', an amalgamation of nostalgia and solace, to refer to a sense of homesickness in the loss of familiar landscapes, memories, and landmarks, that they found among survivors of disasters; something that Ms. Shimizu seemed to refer to with the loss of 'instinctiveness' she experienced in her hometown.

What these reports exhibit is the dissonance that disaster victims often feel in relation to their affective desires and the tangible physical contexts and socio-economic outcomes that emerged and became fixed into place as a course of the recovery; eventually coming to stand in the way of finding such comfort in the new material context even after the recovery comes to its official closure (Barrios 2017). This dissonance is crucial to our understanding local dissatisfactions that are nonetheless present, despite the majority of community-based reconstruction processes executing a wide array of engagement processes with local communities (Barrios 2017, Curato 2018) and do end up meeting the promised objective metric of recovery (numbers of housing units, increased physical resilience, standard of living for instance). The dissatisfaction that disaster victims often feel irrespective of these processes, sense of voicelessness and '*kimochi ga wakaranai*', are indications of the connection between the articulate and the affective that is not being satisfied in the process.

Being able to engage with the big questions and big plans that existed outside of the immediate remit of the personal recovery depended on the ability to be able to feel at home and be settled into place that was still not a reality for many of the residents, thus compromising the very foundation of community-based 'best practice' as reflective and inclusive of the communal voices. It is therefore questionable to what degree are local residents who are still far away from being in a state where they could feel secure and comfortable enough to fully explore and engage with the possibilities of the recovery. But also, without such engagement, can the sense of settledness and comfort be truly recreated by a system of governance and reconstruction from which the affective intensities and sense of 'understanding how we feel' has been evacuated?

It is therefore important to recognise the differences in how narratives and discourses of authorities and citizens are formed, experienced and transmitted, and the inherent resistance

to articulations that remains characteristic of affective intensities (Wetherell 2013). Modern planning and community development practices do not seem conducive to include affective transmissions (Abram 2017) that form such a central part of the localised narratives that however resist precise and well-defined articulations. If it is affects that are driving people's experiences of the recovery and imaginaries of the future, how can we become better at recognising them and integrating the affective nature of recovery as a starting point for the community-based practices?

Kay (2011) argues that by solving the small problems in people's everyday (lack of a supermarket, crowded living spaces, loss of neighbours), the structure of the broader problems and societal challenged can be revealed through the very process of solving them. Kay's observation of the small problems being the tangible reflections of larger societal challenges themselves, is exemplified by the dissonance between the exogenous and endogenous narratives that have dominated the articulation and transmission of Tohoku's recovery. If the objective of post-disaster recovery is to be community-based or community-focused, with communities being the 'leaders' in recovery, then we need heightened consciousness toward the affective nature of recovery that are driving people's everyday experiences, articulations and the very meaning of community itself. This dissonance and tension also illustrate the impossibility of devising community-based processes from afar and how problems that emerge directly from life in recovering contexts cannot be determined without continuous efforts to try and understand shape of those problems in proximity to them. Stewart (2007) argues that the main motivation for focusing on affects is the need to slow down "the quick jump to representational thinking", referring to the clarity awarded by abstractions we form of the ordinary world, and instead point back to the ordinary world "whose forms of living are now being composed and suffered " (p. 4-5). We need to deconstruct the unidirectional movement from abstract and representational thinking to practical applications in post-disaster recovery processes, through which the affective intensities of the everyday get sidelined and subordinated to the technocratic objectives in the authorities' 'big plans'.

*Chapter 8*

# Finding the beginnings that count: Deconstructing the duality of development in theory and practice

Throughout the thesis I have drawn on concepts such as participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity as integral values in community-based development, and equally, discussed contextually embedded concepts such as 'window of opportunity', 'building back better', and 'everyone's voice' in relation to post-disaster recovery processes. Previous research on post-disaster recovery and risk mitigation has already widely discussed the conceptual development and applications, finding that these concepts remain fuzzy (Cornwall and Brock 2005, Kelman 2018, Quarantelli 2005), coopted from their original meanings (Bherer et al. 2016, Batliwala 2007, Leal 2007), or their arenas of usage are so broad that the concepts themselves have been argued to have become almost meaningless (Rushing 2016). Throughout this thesis I have contested the application of fixed abstractions and definitions to recovering contexts and have illustrated that these concepts do not in fact carry fixed contents or descriptions but are living entities that circulate in the power struggles and agendas within which they are used. By approaching the subject matter of recovery through individual experiences and lives, we can learn to understand the structures and behaviour of problems and develop strategies for solving them (Kay 2011, Hamdi 2014). My approach therefore relates to work on critical narratives relating to the utilisation and application of

terminology, concepts and glossaries on disaster resilience, empowerment, participation and localism (e.g. Williams 2004, Mohan and Stokke 2000, Rushing 2016, Leal 2007, Mason and Boutilier 2009), that do not fully capture what Kelman (2018) argues is the necessary depth of these concepts as on-going *processes*. The purpose of has been to demonstrate how the 'fuzziness' associated with the key concepts is not in itself a problem, but rather can be used as a methodological starting point to getting closer to the experiences and discourses that circulate within recovering contexts.

As I have discussed throughout this thesis, despite the language of "leaders of recovery" denoting either municipalities or individual citizens, the question of true leadership and location of power should be raised, as all actors at times work within conflicting power structures. Municipalities for instance, while gaining a say in the recovery process due to their physical proximity to the recovering space, nonetheless face structural barriers in terms of financial arrangements and fiscal procedures set by the national government that is effectively reducing their powers to actually take the lead in the recovery (Chapter 1). Similarly, on the community level, participatory processes that are designed to place affected populations in a position of power and leadership were often the very instruments that led to the sensation of disempowerment among the affected populations, and thus not seen fit for purpose (Chapter 4, Chapter 5). In terms of conceptual development then, we can ask, where do the definitions and meanings for concepts come from? Applying a process that has been defined as empowering, or participatory, or community-based on a theoretical level, does not automatically make it relevant to the life worlds of those who are subject to the application of these concepts. Unless we develop an understanding of what empowers those who have most at stake in the recovery, how they want to participate, what makes them feel safe, and what motivates them, can we truly understand how people are feeling in the recovery (*kimochi ga wakaru*)? Once we step into their life worlds and try to see the reality from their stand point, we can learn to understand not only what constitutes empowerment for those with most at stake, but also understand the intensities, feelings, and sensations that lead from empowerment, or in fact disempowerment, when it is genuinely experienced.

As I have discussed above, the majority of strategies within community-based recovery in Japan have relied on the articulated feelings, opinions, ideas and emotions, and the

verbalisation of knowledge and information to the authorities. However, throughout this thesis I have shown that the overarching trend in how the disaster affected populations were communicating their individual disaster experiences was in association with the affective context, forming into an endogenous discourse about the recovery that was distinctly separate from the government's narrative for the recovery. The strategies utilised within the authorities' community-based approaches to the recovery were however failing to capture the affective impact of the disaster and recovery on the disaster affected populations themselves. Affects by nature exist beyond articulations and are individually and communally experienced in the realms that can be hard to convey through verbalisations and abstractions alone. What matters is not only the surface level analytical verbalisation of key principles such as empowerment, participation, resilience and proximity, but also the intended affects and meanings that these verbalisations are trying to transmit.

It is these intended meanings that do not always neatly reflect the established abstractions of the concepts in the contexts in which they are applied, and from which I argue that the majority of tensions and dissonance between the exogenous and endogenous discourses emerges. As we have seen in the context of Tohoku's post-disaster communities, a sense of empowerment did not always lead from participation in the official recovery process. Indeed, participating in the official and legitimated spaces of participation, such workshops and community meetings, at times produced the opposite outcomes of voicelessness. While residents had been offered numerous opportunities to participate and voice their ideas and concerns, as Mr. Iwasaki noted, many had already ceased to come along, as participation only led to frustrations due to "everything having been decided already", recounting how the participatory processes worked for the 'yes-men' of the authorities, while leading others to give up. Equally, voicelessness in the recovery process was induced through the organisation of meetings in terms of timings and regulations that prevented people from taking part. While there were positive outcomes of participation too, like Mr. Takeda who expressed excitement toward the opportunities he had had to participate in the recovery workshops and felt like his ideas now lived on in the landscape, he too nonetheless kept recounting his inabilities to imagine a future in the new town and expressed worries about the shape that life would take in the new townscape, not quite able to grasp its possibilities and limitations in any concrete sense. The experiences people had in and out of the participatory spaces therefore leave one

to question whether physical verbalisation and voicing of concerns can ever be enough and can participatory processes that do not include the non-verbal and the non-articulate really capture the voices of the local affected populations.

While we cannot access the interior states of other people, we can trace these states through the way people affect each other and are in turn affected (Massumi 2002, Ahmed 2004). The performative quality of affects, sentiments, and narrating as a practice of affecting each other and being affected by others represent ways of transmitting the affects that move us and present useful and powerful ways to understand people's experiences in times of disaster and recovery. The question is, where does the affective landscape of performances, intensities and embodied discourses fit into within the spectrum of theory and practice? By approaching recovery from the affective perspective, more as a methodology than as a theory, can help the development of community-based recovery to become truly community-*based*, where the importance of direct entangled and embodied engagements with the affective context rises to the surface. The importance of the experiences in and with the affective context were reflected in the numerous frustrated iterations of local residents, such as Ms. Wada pleading people in Tokyo to "come and see for yourself", or Mr. Hayashi and Inoue recounting the small number of times city official come to their neighbourhood to talk to the residents, illustrating the points of contention that lead to people feeling like they are not being understood (*kimochi ga wakaranai*).

The key puzzle explored in this thesis has been an exploration of the gap between theory and practice in community-based approaches. This core problem is often analysed at residing in the process where theoretical and representational knowledge is applied into practice, with the context often not behaving in the way that the theory suggests. However, as I have outlined in this thesis, the problem is not a simple matter of application, as White (1996) recounts in her argument on the technocratisation of development processes. Rather the issue is how the meaning, shape and evaluation of the problems that are addressed in the development process are constructed and transmitted both verbally and non-verbally in remarkably different ways by the authorities. By approaching the gap between theory and practice from a perspective where the affective, the physical context and articulations meet, it becomes possible to see that what has been assumed to be a gap, is rather a deliberate

effort to structure paths and decisions that preferences one discourse while silencing another; reflective of the dominant epistemological positions held on the relationship between theory and practice.

## 8.1. Relationship between theory and practice

Throughout the research project I have tried to approach the subject of post-disaster recovery both from the perspectives of investigation and understanding, as well as the practices and interactions that take place in communities that do not necessarily follow the logic of our theoretical and abstract reasonings. I have discussed the recovery project in Tohoku both from the perspective of discourses as either emerging from the inside and or the outside, oscillating between the discourse formed by the so-called technocracy (experts, academics, policy-makers, bureaucrats), and the everyday experiences and affects of individuals who are creating a story for themselves, their communities, and the future of their regions (the affected populations). The dissonance and the gap between these two discourses was found to exist in a hierarchical relationship with one another, where despite the shared principles and goals for the recovery, the two discourses were driven by different emergent meanings, values and actors. The thesis finds that what we take as the gap between theory and practice points to different starting points in the way development is imagined, tensions rising between dissonant ways of transmitting what 'recovery' or 'development' might be. However, equally, I propose that by focusing on the everyday, as the domain where theory and practice converge, we can more flexibly navigate and understand these tensions, whether in the domain of theory or practice, without recourse to privileging one over the other.

I have discussed the gap between theory and practice but maintained a position where I do not frontload the research with definitions of what these two terms refer to, wanting to avoid fixing the reader's imaginations to a specific terminology and definitions. However, a discussion on what exactly is a gap between theory and practice becomes relevant at this juncture. Both theory and practice are necessary of course, but their relationship is often presented in a hierarchical manner, with some arguing that a "well applied theory answers interesting questions in a well-known thematic stream of work" (Straub 2009, p. vii), while

others emphasise on the necessity of empirical contributions and the focus on qualitative characteristics of the research itself rather than placing theory as the starting point for evaluating all research (Lee 2014, Avison and Malaurent 2014, Ågerfalk 2017). However, the question resides perhaps not in the straightforward linear hierarchy per se, but rather in the nature of the relationship that the two assume with one another. Whether arising from the sphere of theory or practice, the emphasis often remain on the systematic accumulation of knowledge and the influence of this knowledge in the real world (Gregor 2006).

However, I have shown throughout the previous chapters of this thesis, knowledge is not in fact always accumulated in a systematic manner. This notion connects with Tim Ingold's (2018) reflections on the nature of knowledge and who is considered to be producing knowledge. Processes of adaptation, sense-making, knowledge production, or understanding are not always conscious processes that follow a straightforward pattern leading from observations and experiences to abstractions and representative knowledge. In relation to the relationship between theory and practice, based on my own observations, experts are expected to draw from their knowledge, learning and training and in an agile and sensitive manner apply this to the specific contexts within which they are working. The role of the practitioners is to work with those who are affected and use their learning and training to connect, engage and empower local residents and affected populations into the processes of development in order to make the plans of the experts fit the needs of those for whom the plans are made. The process is imagined as fluid, with various actors working in conjunction with one another to meet the outcomes and objectives of plans that are set out in the beginning as the overall vision of the future. The affected populations themselves are seen as eager participants in knowledge production and decision-making as this is their future that we are rebuilding.

Applying outside knowledge to the inside, theory to practice so to speak, nor building a theory and abstraction from the knowledge and insights of individuals is never clear cut. Like the differences between inductive and deductive research get infused and the borders between them ebb and flow over and in between each other, so do the boundaries between what are termed as theory and practice. It is this fuzzy space in between theory and practice that I aimed to explore in this thesis. However, development processes are still persistently framed

in a vertical manner, either as top-down or bottom-up, where development practitioners and anthropologists (like myself) tending to lean toward the bottom-up approach. But direction of the movement along the vertical axis does not guarantee a process of being either bottom-up of top-down. Top-down efforts require at least minimal response from the bottom (Keare 2001), and bottom-up initiatives often require either a favourable operational climate or, in ideal cases, meaningful support from the top (Bek et al. 2004).

Both theory and practice develop in a circular relationship with one another. We develop theories that are then applied to contexts, after which we develop theories further and again apply them into practice. While it can be useful to think of theory and practice as separate domains, it risks rendering the domain of the everyday life worlds of those who are most affected by the upheavals as the fuzzy and unpenetrable space, where neither theory or practice can operate fully to their intended degree, thus rendering the drive for clarity as meaningless. To lend from Michael Fischer's (2007) notion that "culture is not a variable" (p. 39), nor are theory or practice with fixed meanings and fixed operations. Like Fischer's notion on the relational quality of culture, the meanings and performances of concepts, theories, and practices are in continuous motion, something that can never be reduced to a fixed concept or a variable, but rather a symbiotic relationship that exists in multiple discourses, multiple relationships and multiple levels of action simultaneously.

Theory means different things in different contexts, and the same principle can be equally applied to practice as well (Lee 2014). As exemplified in this thesis, the representational categories of knowledge assigned for the key principles or participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity in the recovery documents diverged greatly from the understandings and constructed meanings that affected populations were developing in close contact with the physical and affective context of their everyday lives of living amidst the recovery. While fixed meanings of concepts such as empowerment, resilience, participation or proximity cannot be applied upon the affected populations without due consideration for the localised contexts, but neither should we call for a simple extraction of meanings from the populations and treat those as universal truths. Instead, a better recognition of how the two converge in the spaces and contexts of development are needed.

However, this symbiotic relationship where both theory and practice emerge with different qualities depending on the contexts and circumstances in which they operate is often not the reality of the recovering contexts. While at the beginning of this research project I quite naively envisioning outcomes that would develop techniques and practices that would bridge the gap between theory and practice and lead to better development outcomes. What I became interested in during my field work in Tohoku however, was not how to bridge the gap I had assumed existed merely due to the dissatisfaction people presented toward the post-disaster recovery process, and thus validate the technocratic narratives of development from a theoretical and practical angles. Rather, through the long-term engagement with the everyday context of the recovery and explorations of daily routines, feelings and priorities, I began to recognise the disaster context as an affective space from which a wealth of alternative ideals, practices, theories and intensities were forming into distinct discourses that formed the primary strand of sense-making for local residents.

What I found in Tohoku is that local residents were caught between theory and practice, policy and daily life, knowledge and performance that split the reality of the recovery into two spheres. In one, the top-down reality of the 'big plans' and visions of the recovery, guided and supported by policies, legislation, financial arrangements, academic and technical knowledge were driving the recovery toward a long-term future. This sphere was the abstracted unmovable entity that local residents had to learn to live with, go around, or over. People were suspended between the past that was lost and the splintered future between their own plans and dreams for the future, and the official plans that pulled and tugged them in various directions, putting their own plans on hold, or suddenly jolting them into a place where they needed to make decisions. And the potentialities that existed at the mercy of the official recovery, and those that could exist irrespective of it.

These tensions in many senses resemble Jansen's (2014) notion of "enforced presentism" (S75), filled with running, chasing, and striving for things, while not actually being able to move forward toward the set objectives. In Tohoku, the temporal space of or enforced presentism was filled with administered hope that was encouraging people to persevere (*gaman*) and work hard (*ganbaru*) in the name of the recovery. Due to the evacuation of their own endogenous processes of imagination from the formal recovery, all affected populations

could do was to hope that the 'big plan' was going to deliver the promised prosperity and sustainability of the promised future, in which the affected populations could settle down in comfort (*ochitsuku*).

## 8.2. Different beginnings, different endings

It was the everyday performances of individuals and communities within this tug and pull motion between the two recoveries that were particularly present in the recovery experiences of the affected populations. Resignation from the formal recovery, awakening to alternatives, drawing on nostalgic notions, and the mundane experiences in the contemporary present of the community all reflected the motivations of the local populations, developing into specific forms of performances that that could be carried out in the state of *gaman*, while being motivated by the imaginaries of the future. In the beginning of Chapter 4, I explored the activities people were engaged in and the constant buzz that seemed to exist in these communities, filled with actions and performances in the enforced presentism. These actions were directional, toward the storyline or the future of the 'what can be' that had emerged through affective experiences of the disaster and the recovery. While directional and strategic, many of these activities contained a note of playfulness, attitude of "nothing to lose", and freshness, in the sphere of alternatives or possibilities beyond the norm. Performance of these alternative actions could be characterised as a form of improvisation. It is the human labour that went into improvisatory practices and knowledge production that also went unnoticed within the space between theory and practice, trying to bridge the space between the abstractions and the messiness of the everyday.

Improvisation is often characterised as a form of thinking on your feet, acting out things in the moment, and producing unexpected outcomes. Improvisation however has gained some traction in research in recent years, emphasising the role of improvisation in development practice (Hamdi 2014, Wetmore and Theron 1998), in imaginations of the future (Sjöberg 2017), organisational research (Zheng et al. 2007), education (Rush & Fecho 2008, Sarantou 2018), and disaster readiness (Tint et al. 2015) to name a few. Sarantou 2018 states that improvisation is "considered synonymous with play, offering only second-best solutions to

problems", further continuing that "improvisatory processes often respond to pressing demands and notions of having to do what needs to be done to sustain livelihoods" (p. 1358), therefore making improvisatory processes exceedingly relevant to the post-disaster context that combines elements of social well-being, design, art, culture, architecture, and economy.

However, improvisation is not mere 'grappling in the dark' or responding to unexpected situations, or externally forced actions. Nor is improvisation merely a "second-best solution" as Sarantou notes above, that can be sidelined as a frivolous past-time. Improvising is often strategic in a sense of getting things done (reflective of Kay's (2011) notion of learning about the structure of the problem by the process of solving it), but equally, of enabling people to keep paths open for different possibilities and alternatives from the expected or the norm to take place. Starting from the big plans requires strategic planning, where all the pieces are put together into a grand scale puzzle, all pieces fit and move together, orchestrated through a carefully crafted manual of operations, enshrined in legislation, policies and fiscal procedures, aiming to deliver equitable, fast, safe and quality recovery in a community-focused manner. But imagine if one piece of this puzzle goes missing, or in the flow of action one path gets blocked or overflows. Inevitably, big plans never go as they are planned. They always involve adjustments and readjustments, negotiated across actors, budgets, legislation, policies and needs of individuals.

These readjustments were present in Tohoku numerous times over, both on the level of national planning, and on the municipal level, and what Ms. Wada (REF 43) referred to when she recounted her frustrations over the slowness of the recovery: "*They make a budget for three years, and then for five years, but could they also finish the recovery in that time?".* The overall slowness of the recovery, delays in housing restoration, and population exodus for instance however have resulted in the real human costs, primarily experienced on individual and communal levels: Decisions to abandon communities that have provided homes for people for decades, often generations; the pressures of perseverance (*gaman*) in a state of discomfort; loss of sense of place and belonging; and the trauma relived everyday through the daily reminders of the disaster still lingering in the landscape of reconstruction. When all the pieces of the puzzle are drawn from the start, it leaves little room to maneuver and explore alternatives. The plans are fixed and once decided they are there to stay. In this

context where the 'big plan' dominates the recovery, improvisation can sometimes be the only way for individuals to navigate through the small cracks that emerge in the seams of the puzzle and mitigate the human costs of the recovery.

Twenty years ago Anthony Giddens noted that we live in "a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk" (Giddens and Pierson 1998, p.209), referring to the separation of the notion of risk from danger or hazards, with a specifically future-oriented landscape of uncertainty. Further noting: "in a world where one can no longer simply rely on tradition to establish what to do in a given range of contexts [...] the future becomes ever more absorbing, but at the same time more opaque. There are few direct lines to it, only a plurality of 'future scenarios'" (p. 210). What Giddens refers to is the fragmentation of the path to the future, or the 'evacuation of the near future' according to Guyer (2007), where each milestone that is reached contains a number of new trajectories, whose riskiness needs to be individually assessed and weighed against each other in order for a calculated decision to become possible. Improvisation forms a part of this broader process of imagination of the future and qualitative calculation of risks on a societal level; For the affected populations in Tohoku this meant navigating between waiting and acting, precarity and settledness, risks and opportunities.

In chapter 2, I refer to Lauren Berlant's emphasis on people viewing their lives as stories, and they recognise the arc of the story they can see themselves as the authors of those stories (Berlant 2011). The stories we develop for ourselves are not woven in isolation, but they are impacted by larger narratives in society as well. They impact the way we see our stories practically being realised, and the barriers and propellants that can make our stories come true or stop them in their tracks. The notion of a risk society is relevant for Japan's contemporary history, where, the post-1990s metanarratives of the Lost Decade/s, precarious society, uncertainty, the loss of stability and so on have dominated the social and economic analyses of the future in the field of Japanese studies for decades. Alongside these bleak and risk-filled imaginaries, as a form of antidote, discourses centering on hope and happiness have emerged to indicate that among the uncertainty that exists within the structures of society, individual lives need not be quite as hopeless and lost.

The emphases on hopefulness have gained traction in Japanese society for a long time before the onset of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami (e.g. Hirowatari 2009, Leheny 2018, Genda 2006) but gained specific meaning in the aftermath of the 'unprecedented' disaster. Hope as a broader social narrative does not in fact simply mean 'to have hope', but is incorporated as a propellent to the social processes of self-improvement, happiness, responsibilisation, effort, and hard work that are argued to provide individuals with personalised tools for mitigating the risks that are posed by the broader systemic troubles and risks of an existential nature. Against these individualising processes, a sense of social diversification, critiques of modernisation, and challenges to the nation's vision for the future became equally challenged in the disaster's aftermath (Morris-Suzuki 2017, Shaw 2017). For the populations in Tohoku, the 'unprecedented' disaster brought the most unimaginable destruction in its wake, shaking the very notion of risk itself, and how to prepare for them. The disaster exposed the weaknesses and futility within the emphases on risk mitigation; no matter how prepared communities were, the most unimaginable thing nevertheless happened.

In the post-disaster landscape, the focus on risks for many local residents however has shifted from risk mitigation to that of possibilities, where seeing the benefits of alternatives and untried options have become more appealing. While the actions of rural migrants were made and actioned on the individual level, they indicated toward a desired structural change where individual life choices and the rural society offered "*keys to describing the next society*", as Mr. Hashimoto (REF 32) explained it. For the locals, the disaster did offer a 'window of opportunity' for new beginnings, where the focus was on these alternative paths, aiming to bring about the alternatives and the possibilities that are removed from the norm that start to sprout through the cracks in the 'big plan', with a collective and even existential morality that was challenging the mainstream norms and values of consumption, employment, and sources of life satisfaction. Unfortunately, due to the lack of affective proximity and emphasis on articulable content and harmonious coexistence in the community development practice in Tohoku's recovery context made these alternative paths, visions and conceptualisation of the future sidelined from the formal recovery process.

### 8.3. Developing a new 'best practice'

The nature of the gap between theory and practice and how we approach it has implications for practitioners and their engagement with the populations whose lives they are supposed to support and whose problems they are supposed to intervene. From a methodological standpoint as practitioners we need better tools for learning *with* people (Pink and Salazar 2017, Ingold 2018); how the learning we can bring into the developing contexts can converge with and reflect the lived experiences of affected populations in that context better. Not in a sense of political or social advocacy, but in coming up with ways to understand the intensities of people's lived experience and how these intensities are transmitted to others. The methods and approaches that we use need to correspond with the reality that we are exploring in order to understand the complexities of multiple and often competing futures, and the consequences these struggles have on the future of individuals and communities.

While I began this journey by asking why there is a gap between theory and practice in community-based approaches to post-disaster recovery (Chapter 1), reflected by the localised utterance of *kimochi ga wakaranai* in Japan, reaching the end of this journey has enabled me to question the meaning of a 'gap' and how partitioners should approach it. When we discuss gaps, especially in the field of research, they are often discussed in terms of something that is 'missing', 'lacking' or questions that remain 'unasked' or 'uncovered' (George et al. 2005, van Evera 1997). A 'gap' therefore suggests a divide, an empty space that produces a divide that separates two entities from each other. In the field of development too, the gap between theory and practice remains a central concern that has been widely discussed both as a primary research question (Mason and Boutlier 2009, Reimers 2016, De Neufville 1983, Lloyd-Jones 2006), and as a research outcome (Davidson et. al 2006, Sou 2019b). However, Gustafsson and Hagström (2018), argue that often the focus on gaps is based on the "mere inclusion/exclusion, rather than why a certain gap is problematic and should be filled" (p. 637). The lack of qualitative content about the nature of such gaps has rendered the discussion to represent a divide, a static state of tension with little directionality. *Kimochi ga wakaranai* however did not represent mere inclusion or exclusion, but within itself represented a whole new way of approaching the way affected populations were patterning and making sense of

the past, present and the future in conjunction with the daily context they occupied. The endogenous discourse emerged through the shifting of focus onto the affective and the role the non-articulable characteristics play in the production and transmission of knowledge; thus helping to destabilise the fixed definitions, and give rise to the synergies between discourse, affects and contexts in contrast to the opaqueness induced by the processes embedded into the exogenous recovery narrative.

As I have argued with the help of the empirical material in this thesis, what the development discourse has viewed as a gap between theory and practice, is perhaps more a process of establishing and preferencing a discourse that determines both the content of knowledge and its application into the developing context. In this way, the work of development practitioners, as White (1996) argues, has become a technocratic process, an epitome of practitioners sharing the spaces of development with those who are "being developed" without sharing power. As she notes, what begins "as a political issue is translated into a technical problem which the development enterprise can accommodate with barely a falter in its stride. Incorporation, rather than exclusion, is often the best means of control" (p. 7). As White argues, development has increasingly moved toward the sphere of technical expertise, the aspects of power and politics have been removed from belonging to the subjects of development. White's notion of technocratisation arises from the critical debates that emerged during the onset of the Participatory Research in Action (PRA) boom of the 1990s (Williams, 2004), leading to strong critiques of participation as the catch-all solution for the woes plaguing the development sector (Mohan and Stokke 2000, Chambers 1994, Cannon 2008), with Cooke and Kothari (2001) going as far as arguing for participation as the 'new tyranny'.

However, while there are apparent problems with their practical execution, participation and citizen engagement nonetheless represent the importance of including citizens in decision-making processes as a core principle of democratic decision-making. In relation to one of this main technique of development practitioners, Williams (2004) shifts the debate toward *reclaiming* the activity by asking: "if participation has gained institutional power within development practice, what can this power be made to do?" (p. 94), arguing that this relationship with the institutional structures can also function as a source of power, as it has

the potential to bring up the potential for alternative visions and imaginaries through participatory processes, and raise these onto the political agenda (p. 101). This observation resonates with the arguments emerging from the post-disaster development contexts, echoing Littlejohn's (2018) statement that "always involves value judgments" in the context of post-disaster recovery in Japan, as well as Curato's (2018) findings on deliberation leading to positive outcomes in post-disaster Philippines. Williams casts the focus on the actual practice side of development, drawing on Mohan and Stokke's (2000) notion of a 'new political imaginary' for community-based participatory practices, that includes taking advantage of the power of the state, arguing that what is needed are genuine debates about political values in order to bring out denser interpretations on the nature and roles of both the community and the state (p. 102). Mohan and Stokke (2000) further argue that political opportunity structures contain both positive and negative features that can "facilitate or hamper collective action rather than simply being a monolithic 'other' for collective actors" (p. 260).

Community-based participatory approaches to development can therefore contain the foundations for genuine 'best practice', reflective of the discourses and affective contexts of local populations. The role of the practitioners, whether it is ethnographers or development workers, is to maintain sensitivity and recognition toward these power positions, and open space for alternative interpretations, ontologies and imaginaries where power is lacking. While the role of practitioners is to support and provide care for populations whose capacities in times of adversity are reduced, they should in equal measure try to engage with the local populations to "create generative forms of *not* knowing with others, which might involve imagining, planning, designing, enacting, intervening or anticipating the future on an everyday basis" (Pink and Salazar 2017, p. 16, emphasis added). Creating knowledge with people rather than for them can help to destabilise the reductionist, abstract, representational and theoretical thinking that takes place in sociotechnical contexts (Markham 2017, p. 239-240). Equally, it can help to unveil the synergies of existing and emerging knowledge and practices in conjunction with the developing context, where focusing on the purposefulness of improvisation as tactical steps, strategically leading from the small beginnings toward a bigger purpose (Kay 2011, Hamdi 2014) can take place. What this means in practice is the imperative to create understandings of the future that are more

radically anticipatory, interventionist and public (Pink and Salazar 2017), and accept a methodological stance of uncertainty (Pink et al. 2015) in our engagement with the contexts of development. Echoing Hamdi (2014) and Kay's (2011) call for reversal of normative order from strategic to practical, acceptance of uncertainty enables a focus on the improvisatory and the performative, and their operation within the imaginaries, affects and the everyday practices of those most affected, yet most distanced from the sociotechnical contexts, can provide the necessary and urgent insights into the problems that we are trying to understand and solve.

## Conclusions: Putting the 'community' back into the community-based approaches

This research started with a question and a puzzle, asking if community-based approaches to post-disaster recovery are truly sensitive to the needs of communities, then why is it that outcomes of community-based and participatory processes are consistently inconsistent, with affected populations reporting high levels of dissatisfaction toward the recovery processes? As a result, authors in the field of post-disaster recovery have indicated that there appears to be a gap between theory and practice in community-based approaches to post-disaster recovery, with this thesis setting out to explore why such a gap between theory and practice exists. A clearer understanding of community-based approaches is imperative, not only in the field of post-disaster recovery, but as the 'best practice' established in the field of development and social interventions in general. Community-based and focused approached today are a staple in healthcare, education, wellbeing, social support, and rehabilitation for instance, connecting themselves to the broader debates on public management, social justice and equality, but also economic discourses on efficiency and cost-benefit analyses. As the primary motivation of adopting such approaches is to highlight the benefits of interventions and development processes to communities, persistent dissatisfaction among community members toward the outcomes of these approaches is troubling.

Throughout these chapters I have built the exploration of the gap between theory and practice around the notion of voice, and the different outcomes that voice is envisioned to have in community-based approaches, specifically the articulations around the *lack of voice*,

chrystallised in the utterance *kimochi ga wakaranai*, 'they don't understand how we feel', that I repeatedly heard in Tohoku during my field work. I have argued that 'voice' in participatory and community-based approaches cannot be reduced to mere articulations of desires, needs and hopes, and shown how local affected populations were exploring and projecting their feelings about the recovery in highly affective terms in conjunction with the context of their daily lived experience and the material and immaterial characteristics of their communities. These affective elements that for the local residents were integrally involved in their desires to 'have a voice' in the recovery, with affects integrally emerging from the daily life context carrying communicative power, were however excluded from community-based approaches, thus reducing their effectiveness and inherent communality when reduced to mere articulations. The endogenous discourse that this thesis has focused on bringing to the surface in the empirical chapters, is not only constructed but also transmitted in conjunction with the affective context. The meaning of *kimochi ga wakaranai* as an expression and reflection of the lack of affective intensities and considerations in Tohoku's participatory and community-based recovery process has become increasingly clear throughout this research project.

*Kimochi ga wakaranai* therefore functions as an illustration of how the duality of recovery is experienced by the affected populations in Tohoku. The two recoveries that I reference throughout the thesis are formed through the competing imaginaries between the affected populations and the authorities. The recoveries not only diverge in their actor, temporal horizons and overall objectives, but are also carried out in a stratified and sequential manner, where ironically the recovery emerging from the local life stories and everyday practices of individuals and communities, was subjected to the formal recovery that promoted itself as community-based/community-focused. One recovery therefore stood in the way of the other, leaving the affected populations in a liminal condition where they could not move backwards, nor forwards, but simultaneously forced to both wait and keep moving. This context forced local communities to exist in a state of pausing, where they were running without going anywhere.

Due to this duality, I have approached the subject from the perspective of 'community', preferencing and accentuating the narratives and voices into post-disaster recovery that

people felt were being unheard, in order to highlight the missing affective elements in the community-based recovery in Tohoku. To explore the topic further, between 2015 and 2016 I carried out a 13-month ethnography in four locations in the Tohoku regions, affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The data I collected from the region that has been analysed for this thesis consists primarily of these oral narratives, but also includes field visits, participatory observations, and other qualitative data that has been thematically analysed in chapters 4 through 7 of this thesis. The organisation of the chapters has aimed to emulate the main description of community-based approaches summarised for the purposes of this thesis in the following way, outlined in Chapter 1: the closer to the community the development takes place, the more chances local residents have to take part in the development of their habitats, thus creating a more accurate understanding of the local needs. By participating in the recovery, local residents in turn are argued to become empowered, creating more resilient communities for the future who take pride and accountability over their habitats. Throughout these chapters I have broken down this basic characterisation, looking at each of the key principles (participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity) in more detail, and emphasising the local endogenous meanings that reflect them.

Chapter 4 began by focusing on the notion 'everyone's voice' and the possibilities of capturing it through different participatory spaces, only some of which were deemed as legitimate parts of the recovery. People's sense of voicelessness in the official recovery process due to this legitimation of spaces was visible, with the connections between the voice and people's everyday experiences being ignored in the process. Chapter 5 turned to the principle of empowerment, that is deemed to follow from participation. What I found in this chapter was that people were in fact becoming more empowered through the act of resignation from the processes of formal recovery, and finding (em)power(ment) in trying to establish the small alternative paths into the future that took place outside the remit of the official recovery process. It was these small paths that were united under a single vision for the future, aiming to take advantage of the possibilities awarded to these locations by the 'window of opportunity' that emerged from the destruction. Chapter 6 then focused the principle of building more resilient communities and explored the entanglement resilience with both physical and non-physical means of improving safety and sense of security for the communities through the duality presented by *anzen* and *anshin* as representations of safety

in Japan. Safety for the affected populations *anzen* was becoming increasingly rejected and the sense of safety instead had increasingly migrated into the sphere of *anshin*, emerging from the localised forms of sociality, and ties between individual members forged in affective spaces of the communities. Finally, with the focus on proximity of the recovery process, Chapter 7 has shown how merely moving the recovery as an administrative process closer to the communities is not enough when it still remains separated from the daily life in contemporary rural spaces where affected populations were structuring and patterning their lives in search of comfort and settledness.

To understand people's feelings about the recovery (*kimochi ga wakaru*), it is therefore vital to look beyond "everyone's voice" as an aggregation of articulated opinions, views and ideas, but rather see voice as a common story that transcends geographical, generational, and cultural boundaries, through which unique individual experiences can be legitimised as belonging to the mutual framework of experiences, values, and commitment to a common future, irrespective of differing opinions, values, views and ideas. For the communities hearing recovery process was therefore not about agreeing or disagreeing, nor even about consensus on the direction of the recovery, but a story through which individual experiences and instances of disagreement and agreement could nonetheless exist within the boundaries of the common narrative. Communal voice therefore emerged not through community workshops and consultations that affected populations associated with the formal recovery process but from the process of building a narrative for the community in which a sense of continuity between the past, the present and the future was formed; and within which everyone's individual experiences of the disaster, recovery, and life in the community could be accommodated.

The writing of this thesis speaks to both epistemological and methodological debates within post-disaster recovery, social anthropology and development fields more broadly. The thesis posits that in order to put the community back into the community-based approaches, we need to shift the 'beginnings' of development projects not only into the contexts and spaces of those whose lives are being developed, but also base the construction of processes and strategies upon the epistemological positions, knowledges and approaches of the affected populations themselves. As Kathleen Stewart (2007) notes that "politics starts in the

animated inhabitation of things, not way downstream in the various dreamboats and horror shows that get moving" (p. 15-16), where the meanings for participation, empowerment, resilience and proximity do not born out of themselves, but from the ordinary attuned affects and intensities that do not yet inhabit verbalised or abstracted categories. We therefore need to travel "upstream", to explore the affective landscapes from which different expressions and meanings of agency, empowerment, politics and voice are constructed, performed in the unique social, communal and cultural settings that they are supposed to develop.

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# Appendices

## Annex 1: Field Visits

| | Date | Location | Length of stay | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 25 October 2015 | Ishinomaki | 1 Day | Observation, participant recruitment |
| 2 | 15 November 2015 | Matsushima | 1 Day | Observation, Monitor tour to Matsushima |
| 3 | 21-24 November 2015 | Minamisanriku | 4 Days | Observation, participation in community activity, interview |
| 4 | 25 November 2015 | Ishinomaki | 1 Day | Participant recruitment |
| 5 | 28 November 2015 | Ishinomaki | 1 Day | Interview |
| 6 | 1 December 2015 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Observation |
| 7 | 16 January 2016 | Ishinomaki and Onagawa | 1 Day | Participating in Tohoku University's Disaster Tour |
| 8 | 21 January 2016 | Ishinomaki | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 9 | 6 March 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 10 | 13 March 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 11 | 4 April 2016 | Ishinomaki | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 12 | 5 April 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Participating in community activity, observation |
| 13 | 8 April 2016 | Ogatsu | 1 Day | Observation, Interview |
| 14 | 9-11 April 2016 | Minamisanriku | 3 Days | Observation, Interviews |
| 15 | 20 April 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Community event, Interviews |
| 16 | 16 May 2016 | Ogatsu | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 17 | 20 May 2016 | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | 1 Day | Observation, Interviews |
| 18 | 11-12 June 2016 | Onagawa | 2 Days | Tohoku University's Disaster education tour |
| 19 | 16 June 2016 | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 20 | 18 June 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 21 | 21 June 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 22 | 22-24 June 2016 | Minamisanriku | 3 Days | Interviews |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23 | 29 June 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 24 | 4 July 2016 | Minamisanriku | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 25 | 12 July 2016 | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 26 | 24 July 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Community event |
| 27 | 5 August 2016 | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 28 | 10 August 2016 | Onagawa | 1 Day | Interviews |
| 29 | 13-20 August 2016 | Ogatsu | 7 Days | Community volunteering, Observations, Interviews |
| 30 | 1 September 2016 | Ogatsu | 1 Day | Observation |
| 31 | 27 Sept.-10 Oct. 2016 | Onagawa | 14 Days | Observations, participation in community activities, interviews |
| 32 | 6-7 October 2016 | Minamisanriku | 2 Days | Interviews, Observation |

## Annex 2: Interviewees

### 2.1. Included in the study

| Number | REF | Pseudonym | Location | Type | F/M | Age range | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **1** | Mrs. Kimura | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | English |
| 2 | **1** | Mr. Kimura | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | M | 25-34 | English |
| 3 | **3** | Matsumoto | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 4 | **4** | Mori | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 5 | **5** | Ikeda | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 65+ | Japanese |
| 6 | **6** | Takeda | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 65+ | English |
| 7 | **7*** | Mrs. Shimizu | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 8 | **7** | Mr. Shimizu | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 9 | **8** | Yamada | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | Long-term Resident | M | 15-24 | Japanese |
| 10 | **9** | Mrs. Ono | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | Long-term Resident | F | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 11 | **9** | Mr. Ono | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | Long-term Resident | M | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 12 | **10** | Tanaka | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 13 | **10** | Maeda | Miyato, Higashimatsushima | New Arrival | M | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 14 | **11*** | Shimizu | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 15 | **14** | Miyazaki | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 65+ | Japanese |
| 16 | **14*** | Noguchi | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 17 | **15** | Iwasaki | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | M | 65+ | Japanese |
| 18 | **16** | Omori | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | M | 15-24 | Japanese |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19 | **17** | Nakano | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | F | 35-44 | Japanese |
| 20 | **18** | Miura | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | F | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 21 | **19*** | Noguchi | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 65+ | Japanese |
| 22 | **20** | Ito | Onagawa | New Arrival | M | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 23 | **21** | Ogawa | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | M | 45-54 | Japanese |
| 24 | **22** | Nakamura | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | F | 15-24 | Japanese |
| 25 | **23** | Kobayashi | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 26 | **24** | Kato | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | Long-term Resident | M | 65+ | Japanese |
| 27 | **25** | Yoshida | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 45-54 | Japanese |
| 28 | **26** | Sasaki | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | Long-term Resident | M | 65+ | Japanese |
| 29 | **27** | Anonymous | ** | Official | M | n/a | Japanese |
| 30 | **29** | Inoue | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | Long-term Resident | M | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 31 | **29** | Hayashi | Nobiru, Higashimatsushima | Long-term Resident | M | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 32 | **31** | Anonymous | ** | Official | M | n/a | Japanese |
| 33 | **32** | Hashimoto | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | New Arrival | M | 34-44 | English |
| 34 | **33** | Yamashita | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 35 | **34** | Ishikawa | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | Long-term Resident | F | 65+ | Japanese |
| 36 | **36** | Fujita | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | M | 25-34 | English |
| 37 | **37** | Goto | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | M | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 38 | **38** | Hasegawa | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | F | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 39 | **39** | Murakami | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 40 | **40** | Kondo | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 55-64 | Japanese |

| 41 | 41 | Fukuda | Onagawa | New Arrival | F | 34-44 | Japanese |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 42 | 42 | Okamoto | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 43 | 42 | Harada | Minamisanriku | New Arrival | F | 25-34 | Japanese |
| 44 | 43 | Wada | Minamisanriku | Long-term Resident | F | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 45 | 44 | Mrs. Ishida | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | F | 34-44 | Japanese |
| 46 | 44 | Mr. Ishida | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 45-54 | Japanese |
| 47 | 45 | Anonymous*** | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 55-64 | Japanese |
| 48 | 45 | Anonymous*** | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 45-54 | Japanese |
| 49 | 45 | Anonymous*** | Onagawa | Long-term Resident | M | 34-44 | Japanese |
| | | | | | | | |

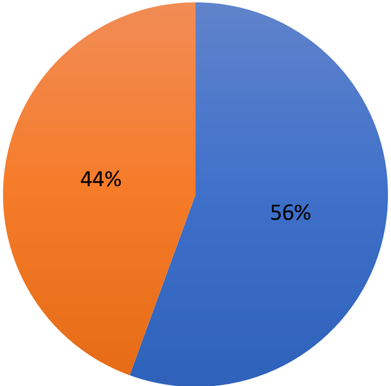
| * | The person has been formally interviewed twice |
|---|---|
| ** | To protect official's anonymity the location will not be provided |
| *** | Failure of recording makes it difficult to distinguish interviewees in the analysis |

**2.2. Excluded from the study**

| Number | REF | Location | Type | Reason for rejection |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | Ishinomaki | New Arrival (individual) | Location |
| 2 | 12 | Ishinomaki / Onagawa | Long-term resident (individual) | Location / Weak connection |
| 3 | 13 | Sendai / Miyagi | Official (individual) | Relevance |
| 4 | 28 | Ogatsu, Ishinomaki | Organisation (individual) | Relevance / Weak connection |
| 5 | 30 | Sendai / Miyagi | Organisation (Group) | Relevance |
| 6 | 35 | Kesennuma | Organisation (individual) | Location / Relevance |

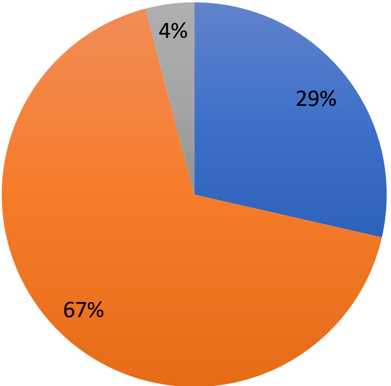
**2.3. Demographics of interviewees**

**Interviewees by gender**



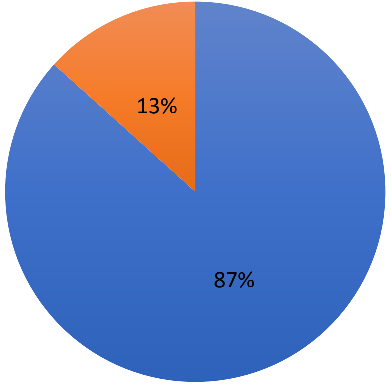

Men Women

**Interviewee profile**



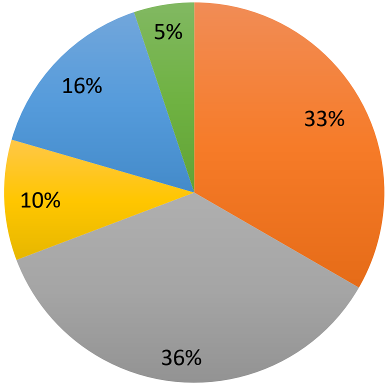

New arrival Long-term Resident Official

**Interview inclusion rate**




Accepted Rejected

**Interviews by location**




Location Minamisanriku Onagawa Higashimatsushima Ogatsu Official

| **Gender*** | | **Location**** | | **Type*** | | **Interviews**** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Men | 27 | Minamisanriku | 13 | New Arrival | 14 | Accepted | 39 |
| Women | 22 | Higashimatsushima | 4 | Long-term residents | 33 | Rejected | 6 |
| | | Onagawa | 14 | Official | 2 | | |
| | | Ogatsu | 6 | | | | |
| | | Official | 2 | | | | |
| **TOTAL** | **49** | | **39** | | **49** | | **45** |

* individuals
** Interview instances

## Annex 3
## Close reading of National Reconstruction Documents

1. *Towards Reconstruction - Hope Beyond the Disaster*, the Reconstruction Design Council's Report to the Prime Minister, June 2011. (Hereafter 'Hope beyond Recovery'). **In Japanese:** 復興への提言 ～悲惨のなかの希望～

2. *Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Reconstruction Headquarters, July 2011. (Hereafter 'Basic Guidelines'). **In Japanese:** 東日本大震災からの復興の基本方針

3. *Basic Act for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake*, Reconstruction Headquarters, July 2011. (Hereafter 'Basic Law'). **In Japanese:**東日本大震災復興基本法

**Summary:**

The three key documents were primarily read in English, using the official translations provided by the Japanese government that therefore fully reflect the original Japanese documents. The close reading of the document verified that Japan's 'Community-focused' recovery seems to follow the international best practice of recovery taking place as close to the affected community as possible, emphasising empowerment through citizen participation, with more resilient communities as the desired outcome for the overall recovery. Excerpts (both in English and Japanese) from the documents reflecting the principles of proximity, participation, empowerment and resilience are organised into the table below, accompanied by a summary of the general framing through which the principles are presented as being applied to and actioned within the recovery in Japan. The principles by their very nature overlap and are executed in an agglutinated manner. The categorisation of excerpts under specific principles in the table below is therefore an analytical tool that I have utilised to tease out a clear presentation and exemplification of the presence of these key principles in the documents, rather than the organisation of the documents themselves. Unsurprisingly, the main document outlining the principles of recovery in detail is the Hope beyond Recovery -document, and is therefore the most revealing in helping to understand the element of 'community-focused' recovery in reference to general participatory trends in development and recovery. The Basic Guidelines and the Basic Law on the other hand are more prescriptive in their language, focusing on the organisation and legal foundation to be established for the recovery, mainly describing the roles and responsibilities of various actors in relation to the goals of the recovery.

| Principle: | | |
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| **Proximity** | The principle of 'Proximity' in the Japanese government's reconstruction documents is primarily framed as administrative proximity. The affected municipalities are to assume the lead role in reconstruction and recovery, as they are viewed to be in the best position to understand local conditions and consult local populations. They are also the administrative units that will work directly and independently with national reconstruction frameworks. The principle of proximity is primarily framed as a synergy between the municipalities at the centre, functioning as the primary actors designing a recovery based on local needs and wishes, while being financially and legally supported by the government. | |
| | **English** | **Japanese** |
| | "*Given the vastness and diversity of the disaster region, we shall make community-focused reconstruction the foundation of efforts towards recovery. The national government shall support that reconstruction through general guidelines and institutional design*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 2) | 被災地の広域性・多様性を踏まえつつ、地域・コミュニティ主体の復興を基本とする。国は、復興の全体方針と制度設計によってそれを支える。(np.) |
| | "*The fundamental principle for reconstruction is that the main actors should be the municipalities themselves, as it is the residents who are closest to their communities and understand local characteristics best. Each municipality must work in cooperation with residents, NPOs, local businesses and others to formulate a reconstruction plan and promote measures that are autonomous, comprehensive and attentive to detail*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 18) | 復興の主体は、住民に最も身近で地域の特性を理解している市町村が基本となる。それぞれの市町村は、住民、NPO、地元企業等とも連携して復興計画を策定するとともに、自主的かつ総合的にきめ細やかな施策を推進しなければならない。(p. 16) |
| | *"[the government should] make efforts to make maximum use of the abilities of municipalities, which are the main actors in reconstruction"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 18) | 復興の主体である市町村の能力を最大限引き出せるよう努力すべきである。(p. 16) |

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| | "*Community needs must be prioritized when implementing reconstruction*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 13) | 復興に際しては、地域のニーズを優先すべきである。(p. 7) |
| | "*Active assistance should be provided for mechanisms for reconstruction assistance personnel who can reside in the affected municipalities and engage in a wide range of locally inspired activities*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 19) | 被災市町村に居住しながら、被災者の見守りやケア、集落での地域おこし活動に幅広く 従事できる復興支援員などの仕組みについて、積極的に支援する。さまざまに「つなぐ」 役割を果たす人材こそ、コミュニティの復興においてなくてはならないからである。(p. 17) |
| | *"In principle, the main administrative actors accountable for the reconstruction shall be municipalities, for the municipalities are closest to local residents and best understand characteristics of the regions [...] The Government will present the basic guidelines for reconstruction and implement necessary institutional design and support in a responsible manner, in regards to finance, human resource, know-how and other aspects with a view to meeting the needs of the disaster areas to help municipalities fully exert their capacities"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 1) | 東日本大震災からの復興を担う行政主体は、住民に最も身近て゛、地域の特性を 理解している市町村か゛ 基本となるものとする。<br>国は、復興の基本方針を示しつつ、市町村か゛ 能力を最大限発揮て゛ きるよう、現 場の意向を踏まえ、財政、人材、ノウハウ等の面から必要な制度設計や支援を責 任を持って実施するものとする。(p. 1) |
| | *"It is essential that community-focused reconstruction utilizing local resources and focusing on uniqueness of each disaster area be the base line for the reconstruction. Simultaneously, it is indispensable that not only people affected by the disaster and local residents in disaster areas but all living now in the nation play their roles accordingly based on mutual support and solidarity"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 4) | 被災地域のそれ そ゛ れの個性に着目して、地域の資源を活かした地域・コミュニティ主体の復興を基本 とするとともに、被災者、被災地の住民のみならす゛、今を生きる国民全体か゛ 相互扶助 と連携の下て゛ それそ゛ れの役割を担っていくことか゛ 必要不可欠て゛ ある。(p. 3) |

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| | *"Promote the allocation of reconstruction assistance personnel who can reside in the disaster-affected regions, observe and care for the people affected by the disaster and engage in a wide range of locally inspired activities"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 13) | 被災地に居住しなが゛ら、被災者の見守りやケア、集落で゛の地域おこし活動に 幅広く従事する復興支援員の配置等及び゛まちづ゛くり等に関する各種専門職の被 災地への派遣や人材の確保・デ゛ータベ゛ース化を進める (p. 10) |
| | *"[municipalities shall] promote concentration in safe locations when promoting town-building by the entire community, with due consideration to the elderly, children, women and the disabled and taking into account the characteristics of disaster-affected municipalities"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 14) | その際には、高齢者、子ど゛も、女性、障害者等に配慮し、 地域全体のまちづ゛くりを進める中で゛、被災市町村の特性を踏まえ、安全な場所 に集約化を進める。(p. 11) |
| | *"The office and ministries of the Government will delegate responsibilities necessary for the implementation of reconstruction measures [...] to local office located in disaster areas [so as to] promptly make decisions and reactions to the requests from the disaster-affected people and local governments"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 41-42) | 各府省は、被災地域における各府省の出先機関か゛、被災者や被災した地方公 共団体からの要望等に対して、現地で゛迅速に判断・対応することか゛で゛きるよう、 復興施策の実施に必要な事務・権限について、本省から出先機関への委任等を 行う。(p. 31-32) |
| | *"Appropriate allocation of roles and mutual collaboration between the central government and local governments as well as mutual collaboration among local governments shall be assured. "* (Basic Law, Article 2 (2)) | 国と地方公共団体との適切な役割分担及び゛相互の連携協力並び゛に全国各地の地方公共団体の相互の連 携協力か゛確保される (Basic Act, Article 2 (2)) |
| | *"Local governments, based on the basic philosophy under Article 2 and on the basis of the Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, have the responsibility to take necessary* | 地方公共団体は、第二条の基本理念にのっとり、かつ、東日本大震災復興基本方針を踏まえ、計画 |

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| | *measures for the reconstruction in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake in a well-planned and comprehensive manner"* (Basic Law, Article 4) | 四 的かつ総合的に、東日本大震災からの復興に必要な措置を講ず゛ る責務を有する（Basic Act, Article 4） |
| **Principle:** | | |
| **Participation** | Linked with proximity, communal voice giving, engagement and participation of local residents is equally highlighted in the documents. Resident participation is considered vital in order for the recovery solutions to reflect the wishes of those whose communities are being recovered. Participation in the documents is framed through a goal-oriented lens, where the purpose of participation resides in the delivery of recovery outcomes and solutions that will be satisfactory to the local populations and will meet their needs. Importantly, there is a lack of emphasis or overt recognition toward the process of recovery during the recovery period, with references to the format of the process remaining superficial or vague. The documents do however focus on the diversity of voices, specifically focusing on gender balance in consultative and participatory processes, while the responsibility over the institutional framework and outlining the main principles of the recovery nonetheless residing within the government, thus most likely reducing the impact voices on the local level can have on the goals of the recovery. | |
| | **English** | **Japanese** |
| | "*In order to respect the needs of local residents it is essential to create a system that duly reflects their various opinions in government administration [...] it is advisable to utilize "town and village community development associations" or similar bodies, comprised of local residents, business owners and other related rights holders as a means of engaging in region planning*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 18) | 地域住民のニーズを尊重するため、住民の意見をとりまとめ、行政に反映するシステム 作りが不可欠である。その際、住民・事業者・関係権利者等が構成員となって地域づくり に取り組むための「まちづくり協議会」、「むらづくり協議会」などを活用することも考え られる。(p. 17) |
| | *" The utilization of consultative organizations for concerned parties should also be considered for the purposes of implementing programs [...]Municipalities should show to the local residents the various options for community development and reconstruction, including the merits and demerits associated with each* | 事業実施のために関係者協議会組織の 活用も検討する。 今後の地域づくりのあり方については、市町村が、復興の選択肢をその利害得失を含 め、地域住民に示し、その上で、 |

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| | *option. They should then determine a direction for reconstruction and community development based on a broad range of opinions from local residents and other concerned parties"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 18). | 地域住民、関係者の意見を幅広く聞きつつ、その方向性 を決定しなければならない。(p. 16). |
| | "*It would be preferable for residents of municipalities to participate actively in reconstruction projects."* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 19) | 市町村の住民は、復興事業に主体的に参画することが望まれる。このため、できるだけ 住民自らが復興事業に携わることができるよう検討すべきである。(p. 17) |
| | "*In the context that local residents support and learn from each other, it will be effective to establish a forum where residents will be able to discuss the future of their own communities*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 21) | また、地域住民が支えあい学びあう なかで、地域の将来を話しあう拠点を設けることも有効である。(p. 19) |
| | *"From the standpoint of gender equality, women's participation will be promoted in all reconstruction process. Furthermore, society of harmonious coexistence where all people including children and disabled persons would be realized"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 3) | 男女共同参画の観点から、復興のあらゆる場・組織に、女性の参画を促進する。 あわせて、子と゛ も・障害者等あらゆる人々か゛ 住みやすい共生社会を実現する。(p. 2) |
| | *"Improve the environment that is likely to reflect opinions of women, children, youth, elderly people, the disabled and foreigners in the process of town-building, for instance, through appropriate composition of coordinating meetings or similar conferences"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 14) | まちつ゛ くりにおいて、協議会等の構成か゛ 適正に行われるなと゛ 、女性、子と゛ も・ 若者、高齢者、障害者、外国人等の意見か゛ 反映しやすい環境整備に努める。(p. 10) |
| | *"position the community focal center, which comprehensively provides services such as consultations and assistance, as a hub of exchanges in creating* | これにより整備される相談・支援等のサーヒ゛ スを包括的に提供する地 域拠点を、コンハ゜ クトなまちつ゛ くりの中 |

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| | *compact town-building to lead to re-establishment of regional communities*" (Basic Guidelines, p. 14) | の交流拠点として位置つ゛ けるなど゛、地 域コミュニティの再構築につなか゛ るよう留意する。(p. 11) |
| | "*Support municipal efforts to promote social inclusion so that the people can retain linkage in communities*" (Basic Guidelines, p. 15) | 地域において「絆やつなか゛ り」を持ち続けることか゛て゛ きるよう (p. 11) |
| | *"Prevent isolation of the disaster-affected people, and implement consultation service for women"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 15) | 被災者の孤立 を防止する。このほか女性の悩み相談を実施する。(p. 12) |
| | *"Promote the creation of environment in which local governments and residents in the disaster-affected regions are able to communicate smoothly and measures to facilitate livelihood support to the people affected by disaster"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 28) | 被災地域の地方公共団体と住民か゛ 円滑にコミュニケーションて゛ きる環境の確 保や、被災者の生活支援を円滑化するための取組みを促進する。(p. 21) |
| | *"[Municipalities shall] assist the development of community focal centers and community-building supports"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 32) | [...] 被災地て゛ 取り組む支援拠点の整備、まちつ゛ くり支援 など゛ に対し [...] 地縁組織等の多様な主体か゛ 主導する (p. 24) |
| | *"[...] building an inclusive society that does not leave anyone out by being mindful of those who are unable to easily voice their views will not only lead to reconstruction but also to development of Japanese societies. For this reason, efforts by municipalities such as accompanying support like the method of outreach and creation of place to which one belongs,* | 声を出しにくい人々に配慮し、誰をも排除しない包摂型の社 会つ゛ くりを行っていくことは、被災地の復興た゛ けて゛ なく、今後の日本社会の発 展にもつなか゛ るものて゛ ある。このため、こうした社会的包摂の理念に基つ゛ き、アウトリーチの手法や居場所つ゛ くりや伴走型の支援、人 |

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| | *comprehensive and preventive supports like development of human resources development will be assisted"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 32) | 材育成等の包括的、予 防的な支援を行う市町村の取組みを支援する。また、ワンストッフ゜ 型の相談や 寄り添い支援に関する先導的なモデ゛ ルの構築に取り組む。（p. 24） |
| | "*opinions of the residents in the disaster-afflicted regions shall be respected and opinions of a wide range of people including women, children and the disabled persons shall be taken into account*" (Basic Law, Article 2(2)) | 災地域の住民の意向か゛ 尊重され、あわせて女性、子と゛も、障害者等を 含めた多様な国民の意見か゛ 反映されるへ゛ きこと（Basic Act, Article 2(2)） |
| **Principle:** | | |
| **Empowerment** | In the documents, empowerment is closely linked with participation through a causal relationship: empowerment is framed as a direct result of participation. The documents highlight the importance of creating local participatory environments, as outlined above, that will both take advantage of and enhance local capabilities to rebuild communities and personal lives, thus leading to empowered positions within the recovery process. In the government's view, empowerment seems to relate strongly to local capacity building and skills development that will enable them to become integrated into the formal recovery process within the participatory environments established at the local level based on the institutional framework set out by the government. Aside from formal participation, capacity building as empowering also relates to self-responsibilisation and the improvement of individual the capabilities to carry out personal life and livelihood restoration. | |
| | **English** | **Japanese** |
| | "*first and foremost essential to listen to the voices of the people who have actually been affected and provide them with "linkage" that will empower them to realize their aspirations*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 11) | すべてを喪失した地域の再生を考えるにあたって、まず必要なのは、被災した人々の声 を聴きつつ、その要望を実現できる所に「つなぐ」ことである。（p. 4） |

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| | *"The job of accurately and promptly conveying the diverse wishes and ensuring communication lines to the appropriate locations will be borne by people who will lead these wishes through to fulfillment. These people will continue to link people to people and people to organizations, gradually forming a communication network and continuing to develop and grow as people who play a role in revitalizing the local community."* (Hope beyond the Disaster, 2011, p. 11) | 多様な要望を正確に迅速 に伝える機能は、要所要所にパイプをもち的確にその声を届け、実現に導く人材によって 担われる。彼らは、人と人を、また人と組織を「つなぐ」ことを続け、やがてはコミュニ ケーションのネットワークを形成し、地域のコミュニティを再生させる役割を果たす人材 に成長していく。(p. 4) |
| | *"[...] consideration should be given to ways of empowering residents to engage in such projects to the greatest extent possible*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 19) | 市町村の住民は、復興事業に主体的に参画することが望まれる。このため、できるだけ 住民自らが復興事業に携わることができるよう検討すべきである。(p. 17) |
| | *"The scope of such projects [community relocations] will have to be widened to allow for local circumstances to be taken into account and enable relocation for other purposes, thus developing a system that empowers appropriate community development"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 16) | 現在、住宅だけを移転させる「防災集団移転促進事業」を地域の実情に即して、多様な 用途の立地が可能となるよう総合的に再検討し、より適切な地域づくりが実現できる制度 に発展させる必要がある。(p. 6) |
| | *"In order to work towards reconstruction by responding to wide range of issues related to rebuilding lives of people affected by disaster and reconstruction of disaster-afflicted regions, it is necessary to enable people affected by disaster and local communities to fully utilize their capacities"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 32) | 被災者の生活再建と被災地の復興に向けた様々な課題に対応し、復興を目指 すには、被災者や地域コミュニティが、その力を最大限発揮できるようにする ことが必要である。しかし、全国的な経済活動の停滞等震災の様々な影響が、被災地はもちろん、全国的にも失業や病気などに脆弱な人々を直撃し、「社会的 排除」状態に追い込むリスクを急速に高めている (p. 23-24) |
| **Principle:** | | |

| Resilience | Resilience in the documents it framed in two ways: as physically more resilient and safer domiciles, as well as the resilience of socio-economic systems and human communities. The latter form of resilience is framed as emerging from processes of revitalisation and increasing the productivity and efficiency of local economies, and the maintenance and strengthening of social and communal ties within and between communities, organisations and regions. There are recognisable connections to social capital. The general framing reflects values of self-sufficiency and regionalism, while simultaneously through improving the safety of these locations through physical and technological infrastructures against environmental disturbances in order to reduce their impact. | |
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| | **English** | **Japanese** |
| | " *While preserving the strong bonds of local residents, we shall construct disaster resilient safe and secure communities and natural energy-powered region*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 2) | 地域社会の強い絆を守りつつ、災害に強い安全・安心のまち、自然エネルギー活用型地域の建設を進める。（np） |
| | "*Seek to construct regions that are self-sufficient and which create value*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 13) | 地域の自給力と価値を生み出 す地域づくりを行うべきである（p. 7） |
| | *We should make efforts to promote the "New Public Commons", through which actors may take a leading role in post-disaster reconstruction, including through public-private partnerships (PPP) that utilize private sector funding and knowledge, and civil society activities by volunteer groups, NPOs and others*" (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 19) | 復興事業に際しては、公的主体によるもののほか、民間の資金・ノウハウを活用した官 民連携（ＰＰＰ）や、ボランティア・ＮＰＯなどが主導する「新しい公共」による被災地 の復興についても促進を図る。（p. 17） |
| | " *It is necessary for the national government to create a new general structure that will become the basis for efforts to promote the rebuilding of regions that are resilient to tsunami disasters, and also to present a concept for the development of such communities"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 20) | 今回の大震災においては、津波により広範にわたって甚大な被害が発生しており、津波 により壊滅的な被害を受けた地方公共団体や、今後大規模な津波の襲来が想定される地方 公共団体において、津波災害に強い地域づくりを推進するにあたっての基本となる新たな 一般的な制度を創設し、 |

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| | | 津波災害に強い地域づくりの考え方を国が示す必要がある。(p. 18) |
| | *" Developing a new framework for comprehensive support and participation based on "mutual-aid" will provide a foundation for the future of Japanese society"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 44) | 「共助」を軸にした新たな包括支援・参加保障の仕組みを構築することは、これからの 日本社会を作りだすことにつながる。(p. 45) |
| | *"[...] we should aim to build a society in which each and every citizen has his or her own place and role, and one that values the joy of helping others."* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 44-45) | これによって、国民一人ひとりに居場所と出番があり、人に役立つ幸 せを大切にする社会を目指すべきである。(p. 46) |
| | *"it is of utmost importance that we engage in thorough research in all areas regarding this disaster as a way to figure out how best to develop future countermeasures against disasters"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 46) | 今後の防災対策を検討するため、東日本大震災について、各分野におい て詳細な調査研究を行うことが極めて重要である。(p. 45) |
| | *"When faced with a large-scale disaster, the following concepts are all of vital importance: "public-aid" offered by the central and local governments; "self-aid" taken on by individual citizens and private corporations; and "mutual-aid" whereby individuals, corporations and organizations of local communities work together and support each other"* (Hope beyond the Disaster, p. 46) | 大規模な災害においては、国や地方公共団体が行う「公助」、国民一人一人や企業等が<br>自ら取り組む「自助」、地域の人々や企業、団体が力を合わせて助け合う「共助」が、と もに重要である。(p. 47) |
| | *"[...]towards reconstruction with a future vision for the purpose of advancing social and economic restoration and rebuilding people's lives in the disaster area as well* | 国は、このような認識の下、被災地域における社会経済の再生及び生活の再建と活 力ある日本の再生のため、国の総力を挙げて、東日本大震災からの復旧、そして将来 を見据 |

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| | *as revitalizing vibrant Japan as a whole"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 1) | えた復興へと取組みを進めていかなければならない。(p. 1) |
| | "*In reconstruction of the disaster areas, shaping disaster resilient communities will be promoted, based on the concept of "disaster reduction" which gives utmost priority to secure human lives even when disaster strikes and minimize the damage from such disaster*" (Basic Guidelines, p. 2) | 被災地の復興に当たっては、被災しても人命が失われないことを最重視し、災 害時の被害を最小化する「減災」の考え方に基づき、災害に強い地域づくりを推 進する。(p. 2) |
| | *"Support community-led efforts to enable the Tohoku area to be concrete models for new community-building, such as rebuilding the regions taking into account the ease of living, anti-crime measures, landscapes, renewable energy, energy conservation, environment, recycling, safety and security, as well as enhancing regional self-efficiency and creativity [...] Review the regional revitalization system based on the outcome of support to community-led efforts mentioned above"* (Basic Guidelines, p. 9) | 高齢者や子ども、女性、障害者などに配慮したコンパクトで公共交通を活用 したまちづくりを進める。また、暮らしやすさや防犯、景観、再生可能エネル ギー・省エネルギー、環境・リサイクル、安心・安全等に配慮したまちづくり、 地域資源の活用と域内循環により地域の自給力と創富力を高める取組みなど、 東北の地が新しい地域づくりの具体的なモデルとなるよう、地域主体の取組み を支援する。また、このような地域主体の取組みに対する支援の実績を踏まえ、地域再生 制度の見直しを行う。(p. 7) |
| | *"Measures to create safe communities where preventive measures against natural disaster are effective and everyone can live with a sense of security for years and decades to come [...] Measures to promote regional culture, to maintain and strengthen bonds in communities as well as to create a society of harmonious coexistence*" (Basic Law, Article 2(5) a & c) | 地震その他の天災地変による災害の防止の効果が゛高く、何人も将来にわたって安心して暮らすこと<br>三 ので゛ きる安全な地域つ゛ くりを進めるための施策 [...]<br>地域の特色ある文化を振興し、地域社会の 絆の維持及び゛強化を図り、並び゛ に共生社会の実現に資 するための施策<br>(Basic Act, Article 2(5) イ & ハ) |

| | *"Such will be accomplished by promoting dramatic measures with the perspective of revitalizing vibrant Japan which does not limit itself to recovery from disaster which simply restores affected facilities to its original state, as well as reconstruction measures which aim to facilitate each individual to overcome the disaster and lead prosperous lives"* (Basic Law, Article 2 (1)) | 国民一般の理解と協力の下に、被害を受けた施設を原形に復旧すること等の 単なる災害復旧にとと゛まらない活力ある日本の再生を視野に入れた抜本的な対策及ひ゛一人一人の人間か゛ 災害を乗り越えて豊かな人生を送ることか゛て゛きるようにすることを旨として行われる復興のための施策 の推進により、新たな地域社会の構築か゛なされるとともに、二十一世紀半ば゛における日本のあるへ゛き姿を目指して行われるへ゛きこと。この場合において、行政の内外の知見か゛集約され、その活用か゛されるへ゛きこと (Basic Act, Article 2 (1)) |
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