Salvage in Yūbari: Machizukuri Against Decline

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts (Anthropology) at

Concordia University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

June 2017

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

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Master of Arts (Anthropology)

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Abstract

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Using Anna Tsing's (2015) concept of salvage, this thesis examines how *machizukuri* (town-building) activities salvage the effects of decline in the former mining city of Yūbari into building a rural Japanese town. Rather than evaluating *machizukuri* activities based on their ability to produce capitalist value, reverse demographic decline, and restore progress, these activities are discussed as projects of salvage concerned with finding value in and caring for places and people left behind by progress. I review the history of teleological projects of progress in Hokkaido to showcase Yūbari's historical association with progress, and its subsequent association with economic and demographic decline following the end of the mining industry from the 1950s and its bankruptcy in 2006. I discuss the activities of a local organization and its re-use of a former power plant, using this example to highlight how heritage and pride in local history is salvaged from what would otherwise be ruins. I then use the example of slag heaps to unearth problems with the use of "nostalgia" to describe rural revitalization efforts. Slag heaps are also used to interpret how the emotionally powerful language of the rural hometown is salvaged to showcase Yūbari as a warm, rural Japanese town instead of a declining coal mining city of the colonial frontier. I also consider how the conditions of rural decline can be salvaged to be part of networks of care in Yūbari: better ways of relating might be emerging from the places left behind by growth-driven development.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Fonds de Recherche du Québec (Société et Culture) for their generous support of my Master's research. This support has allowed me to concentrate more fully on my studies and build relationships that will help my future efforts.

I also thank those at Concordia University, too many to name, that have helped me get far enough to produce this thesis. I extend my thanks to a few here: Professors Kregg Hetherington, Christine Jourdan, and George Meiu who taught me fieldwork, theory, and everything in between during my BA. Professors Kregg Hetherington and Julie Soleil-Archambault have been of particular help in writing this thesis. Professors and graduate students at Osaka University have also provided me with advice and inspiration that I continue to be grateful for.

This thesis also benefited at various stages from the commentary of many graduate student readers including Tristan Biehn, Mark Doerkson, Mathieu Guerin, Elie Jalbert, Alix Johnson, Aryana Soliz and others from the Ethnography Lab and graduate courses at Concordia. My sincerest thanks goes to the people of Yūbari, who welcomed me and continue to inspire me to be not only a better researcher but a better person.

Finally, I say a personal thanks to friends and family who have supported me throughout this process. Without the companionship and care of Louis, Ger, Eric, Julia, Harry, Ryo, and many others, none of this would have been possible.

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Introduction

Suzanne Culter's (1999) sociological study of the mining industry in Yūbari, Japan in the mid-1980s entitled *Managing Decline* ends on a tense note: Yūbari's decline has been brought about by the end of the mining industry and the top-down attempt to create a tourism-centered economy, but citizens have not forgotten the lives they had and seem poised to make their own decisions about the future. It is interesting to note that while Culter (1999) notes that deindustrialization and the loosening of reciprocal obligations between companies, citizens and the state, decline is framed as somewhat of a localized problem in Japan, tied to "industry restructuring". Since then, Yūbari went gone bankrupt in 2006, becoming the focus of national media attention: Yūbari's situation now represents a more urgent and general decline of Japan's rural areas. Locals and allies in Yūbari and in other so-called declining towns are turning away from the grand ideas of progress and development that dominated the 20th century, turning instead towards their own localities to create the means for a more liveable future. For those trying to find ways to live better in Yūbari, the teleology of decline seems just as treacherous as that of progress.

Presenting her overall view of rural revitalization efforts in Tōhoku (north-eastern Japan), Bridget Love (2013) suggests that locally-based efforts to map and re-use latent resources may not make up for economic and demographic decline:

> "'Activation', as I argue here, is emblematic of broader devolutions of responsibility for Japan's rural future onto its regions. It is premised on an assumption that self-motivated work on the part of rural inhabitants to awaken regional identities will renew the vitality and viability of their homes. The problematic conflation of identity and agency that underpin this vision reveals itself vividly on Tōhoku's depleted margins in which no initiatives of local branding or heritage renewal seem adequate to overcome the demographic and economic decline that are legacy of the region's uneven development vis-à-vis Japan's center."

While I tentatively agree that these kinds of efforts are unlikely to overcome or reverse demographic or economic decline in Yūbari as well, I find myself unable to simply accept the common sense of demographic and economic decline. It is hard to ignore the concrete effects of

population decline in a community as shops close, and friends or family part, but demographic and economic decline are also bureaucratic categories with the backing of a state nostalgic for growth (Coulmas, 2007). Foreign media report on the fate of Yūbari within Japan's seemingly inevitable future: Yūbari seems destined to decline until it disappears (Hendy, 2014). Even the town's young mayor says that if nothing can be done in Yūbari then there is no hope for the rest of Japan (Tabuchi, 2012).

However, by reducing everything to a teleology of decline, the efforts people are making to change the town and find new ways to live within it are also reduced to merely managing their own decline. This thesis proposes we take a different approach. In Yūbari, locally-focused efforts to offer services or create new spaces of activity are generally called *machizukuri* or "town-building". Rather than judge *machizukuri* projects in Yūbari by their ability to bring economic and demographic growth as if these are inherent goods, we might instead turn our attention to the way these projects are actually re-building the town, finding value in places and people left behind by progress. In effect, different "towns" are being built out of Yūbari, but I argue that *machizukuri* in Yūbari shares a common attachment to the values associated with rural living that put into question the finality of discourses of decline. What I attempt here is to examine the ways revitalization efforts are not always primarily aimed at trying to bring back growth, but rather are part of strategies of living within the social conditions of so-called decline without necessarily being reinscribed into one kind of teleology or another. As Matanle and Sato (2010) point out, even where depopulation is intensifying, people may not be trying to revive growth, but instead aiming for the stability and sustainability at least symbolically associated with rural areas. Without seeking a return to the past, *machizukuri* efforts try to rebuild Yūbari as a rural hometown, revalue Yūbari's mining heritage, as well as create places of care and connection from within the rubble of a city built on extractive capitalism. While operating within the conditions of what might be called decline, *machizukuri* efforts are not focused on merely nostalgizing the past or importing progress. Rather, these are projects for living within and salvaging from the changes to Yūbari's environment following the end of the mining industry and the city's bankruptcy. *Machizukuri* efforts in Yūbari salvage a rural town from the ruination of the mining city.

Wider Relevance and Chapter Division

There are many reasons to be interested in the relations between Yūbari's past, and how the former city is being salvaged from or remade now. Readers of this thesis may take note of the way Yūbari's history resonates and differs from mining towns in Quebec, Papua New Guinea, Zambia, or the United States. In Quebec as elsewhere, mining towns have also tended to enact state-backed projects of capitalist development and progress as a technological, economic and cultural evolution. However, they have also tended to disappear, their work forces reallocated, as soon as the mining industry had extracted what it could (Duhaime, et al. 2013). At the same time, these developments have rarely gone uncontested, and once they end, the damage they have caused is no longer softened by the access to modern goods and technologies or the feeling of being part of national, modern development (Kirsch, 2014; Ferguson, 1999).

When discussing coal mining in particular, the literature on energy, environment and mining come together in interesting ways. Though coal might seem like a dead means of producing energy in so-called developed countries, the history of coal extraction continues to haunt political life and rural areas. Jessica Smith's (2017) recent commentary piece in *Cultural Anthropology* on the rhetorical use of coal as a symbol of making America great again in the Trump campaign reveals how coal can be tied to a nostalgia or longing for masculine, working-class greatness in a context where elites are seen as isolated, urbanite cynics. For the Trump campaign, declaring the possibility of reviving the "tragically unhip" energy source that is coal is a powerful symbol of the reversal of seemingly inevitable decline. For liberals, Smith (2017) says, this discourse merely reinforced the idea that Trump supporters were a backwards basket of deplorables. Paraphrasing Raymond Williams (1973) in his study of nostalgia and rural life in modern England, it seems that it is the other's nostalgia that offends. Though there are no all-out attempts to revive the coal industry in Yūbari, the potential for using the history of coal mining and what it has left behind to care for Yūbari are discussed in this thesis.

The argument of this thesis is also in conversation with other social science literature on economic paradigms, rurality, and social change in Japan. Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands, is not associated with the typical home of the rural idyll. Unlike Love's (2014) study of a village in Tōhoku, where modern ethnology began in Japan, in Hokkaido there is less of a strong history of nostalgia to obscure the extractive relationships that enriched the centre: if

Tōhoku is historically the rural homeland in the modern era, then Hokkaido was the naked frontier of progress (Hansen, 2010). Yūbari, as a former mining town in Hokkaido, provides an interesting case to dig deeper into the processes by which Japan created its own modernity to pursue, what exactly decline means, and how ideas of locality and care are becoming dominant means of salvaging a future from what is left of from the ruination of development. Love (2014) may be right to say that revitalization activities may not reverse decline in a normative sense. But I propose to look at revitalization activities in Yūbari without evaluating them based on this normative sense of decline and their performance according to quantitative indexes of economic or population growth. Instead, my focus is on what Love (2014) calls the "logistics of decline" in the lives of people in Yūbari: problems associated with providing care, closing schools, upkeeping vacant spaces, managing encroaching forests, and making do with shrinking budgets. The conditions of decline also bring about new and diverse ways of relating involving bureaucrats, academics, volunteers and others finding resources in unexpected places that might be the basis for a future outside of growth imperatives and temporalities of progress or decline. It is in this context, between progress and decline, and moving unevenly from city to rural area, that the following discussions of projects of salvage are situated.

Chapter one departs from the assumptions about progress and growth laid out by the likes of Tsing (2015), Morris-Suzuki (1997) and O'Bryan (2016). The historical picture I paint is of a city on the frontier of progress to a town taken to be the epitome of decline, trapped between teleologies, negotiating the shift from booming city to rural town. The island of Hokkaido, where Yūbari is located, was historically inhabited by indigenous Ainu people, and over the centuries was increasingly invaded and dominated by the economic activity of the forming Japanese state. As part of Japan's push to compete with world powers, ideas of progress and evolutionary schemes of society gained traction, and areas like Hokkaido were naturalized as part of the modern state. Yūbari was founded on the promise of progress and colonial expansion, fuelling wars and modern industries with coal. Though WWII and the reconstruction period created an increased demand for coal, and made Yūbari into a prosperous city, with high wages, corporate largesse, and access to goods that even the burgeoning metropolis of Sapporo sometimes did not have. But by 1955, under American pressure, the government had decided that imported oil was cheaper than domestic coal, and began the decades-long process of shutting down the country's

coal mines, also beginning Yūbari's demographic decline. As part of a nation-wide tourism boom, the city took on loans to finance a tourism economy with a ski resort, an amusement park and other tourist facilities, based on the assumption that building these would generate demand. The tourism economy failed to pick up in Yūbari, and the city's bankruptcy in 2007 brought changes not only to the way higher levels of government review municipal finance, but also creating a media discourse of Yūbari being a microcosm for Japan's post-bubble, aging society, a dark mirror of the fate of Japan without a return to growth. In other words, this chapter can be read as a story on how progress matters now in Japan and in Yūbari, how Yūbari has "declined" into a town, and how the idea of progress can be useful for understanding the relationship between Japan's urban cores and rural peripheries.

Picking up on themes of nostalgia, ruination, and the shift or creation of a more rural space as part of touristic development, chapter two interrogates what potential for unsettling assumptions about progress there can be in salvaging heritage from ruins, and turning a city into a town. The Shimizusawa Project is a machizukuri group responsible for the re-use of slag heaps, former miners' residences and the remains of a power plant in the Shimizusawa area of Yūbari. I use the power plant as a means of introducing the problems of salvage, value and ruin. The power plant itself was under deconstruction by an industrial recycling company, which in a classic instance of salvage, is taking this unused building, translating it back into raw resources to create capitalist value. The Shimizusawa Project is also engaged in a kind of salvage: by staging tours and art exhibits at the power plant, this project asserts that what is left of the power plant may not be worth recycling as raw material for capitalist value production, and could instead become a community resource. The Shimizusawa Project's town-building is an attempt to create something closer to a commons from a place that is otherwise just another "ruin" or 廃墟, valuing the power plant as part of a living heritage against the background of failed mass tourism, bankruptcy and teleologies of decline. I examine the Shimizusawa Project within the history of the *machizukuri* movements and discuss the ways in which rural spaces come to be re-valued as part of living communities rather than commodified ruins.

The following chapter introduces how people from within and without Yūbari try to understand and value what is left in their town as part of projects of salvage. In this and in the next chapter I examine what ways of thinking or being can emerge from these salvaged spaces.

Focusing on Yūbari's slag heaps, I discuss these projects as not necessarily being solely focused on producing capitalist value or growth-oriented futures. In the mining days, children and women would gather the bits of slag or play on the heaps, sometimes the heaps would also catch fire. Now, many of these heaps have turned green, and the heaps that remain offer views of the increasingly vegetated landscapes of Yūbari. The use of slag heaps by the Shimizusawa Project and the Yama no Kioku NPO resonates with the wave of rural tourism development invoking heritage, ideas of warm sociality and nostalgic design. However, these projects are less clearly oriented towards producing a nostalgic past designed for green-starved urbanites. Instead, I consider how some have found something emotionally moving, and perhaps some image of a hometown in this half-cleared landscape, still haunted by extractive capitalism. Using the ideas of traditional rurality is a contemporary response to Yūbari's so called decline, which makes the ruined mining city into a town with affective and moral value, beyond its ability to produce capitalist value. What are otherwise waste or ruins are salvaged as the marks of a *furusato*, or rural hometown. By becoming more like a rural hometown, Yūbari might be valued beyond its ability to repay its debt or foster mass tourism.

Chapter four is about the networks of care being made possible by the current conditions in Yūbari. I focus on an organization called Laplace that manages several welfare services throughout Yūbari, including a daycare, and a workplace for people with disabilities operating out of a former school. Laplace's representative Saito-san is trying to create spaces in which people with disabilities can live well in a more rural setting. He cites the slower pace of life as part of what helps make Yūbari a feasible place to live for people who are unable to work the hours of most city jobs. In this sense, some of the conditions of decline can be made into the possibilities of people left behind by progress. In this sense, Laplace is not trying to replace state medical services, but rather Laplace is part of emerging groups of people who are tired of depending on the government, and find paternalistic care models lacking, instead searching for better ways of being. The language of these projects of care is not strictly one of independence, but is one of choosing different, locally-oriented dependencies: building new networks of checking in, valuing work that does not really translate into capitalist value, and helping each other in the space left behind by decades of extractive capitalism and rationalization. Particularly in Saito-san's case, by multiplying the means of access for people with disabilities, by letting

their experiences begin to modify how everyone else lives, the diversity of the personal becomes a force to care collectively (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012).

Chapter 1: Progress and Decline

Like much of Yūbari, the local coal museum is sandwiched between the two rows of mountains that range from the southernmost point around the Shin-Yūbari train station and farmland, to the northernmost end where city hall and the museum are. Being only a 5 minute bike ride from the house I was staying at, I visited the coal museum multiple times and volunteered there a few times over the course of the three months I was there. On the way to the entrance, past the sign indicating the road to follow to the 石炭の歴史村 (The Coal History Village), there is a massive and slightly weedy parking lot that is empty on most days. It was originally intended to serve the large tourist attractions of the area that included the museum and the now-defunct amusement park built during the tourism boom of the 1980s. A red chimney stands alone to the side of the parking lot, with 夕張希望の丘 Yūbari's Hope Hill painted on the side in white. Seeing it now in the middle of the empty parking lot brings home the fact that this is a town that is said to be at the forefront of Japan's sociodemographic decline, a story that the museum itself tells in its own way and that I aim to retrace in this chapter.

The first part of the exhibit on the inside of the museum showcases ammonite fossils and very vibrant, scaled-down metasequoias like those that would have grown in Yūbari 40 million years ago. A plaque in English and Japanese extols coal as a precious heritage or *isan* (遺産) left over to humanity from long ago by primordial Nature (*Daishizen* 大自然). It also specifies that where coal from countries outside Japan tends to have come from giant fern-like plants hundreds of millions of years ago, Japan's came from trees, and much later.[1] This deep time of trees turning into coal contrasts with the time of progress and coal exploitation that forms the majority of the museum's exhibit.

The second section of the exhibit jumps from the primordial landscape of enormous trees millions of years ago to the discovery of coal in what is now called Yūbari. The focus is on the American prospector, Benjamin Lyman, tying in Yūbari and its coal into Hokkaido's history of colonization and development with the aid of invited experts from "developed" nations beginning in the late 19th century. The image of the American pioneer figure dwarfs discussion

[1] Metasequoias were present across half the globe for a significant part of the cenozoic period, but went extinct. But, the panel at the museum says, in a rare case of surviving great climactic change, some metasequoia were found to still exist in one area of China in 1946.

of his Japanese assistants like Ban Ichitarou who would, years after Lyman's findings, actually take up the task of analyzing the coal beds in Yūbari. The seven Ainu guides of these assistants, and the major financial interests that bankrolled Yūbari's mines are entirely left out of the museum's story of the early development of Yūbari's coal (Yamada, 2006). So is the previous survey by Matsuura Takeshirou in 1857, who went up the Yūbari river to conduct survey as part of wider surveying in Hokkaido. A humanist, he would later quit over the treatment of Ainu people[2] (Yamada, 2006: 5).

Going up the stairs to the main area of the exhibit, there is a large relief in the wall depicting muscular, male miners digging in a pose reminiscent of soldiers in a war memorial statue, with children playing behind them, seemingly protected from the danger of the working miners. Similar to other carvings in the museum, the figure of the muscular miner speaks to a history of strong labour and socialist tendencies in Yūbari, particularly after World War II. The figure of the Japanese *tankō man* (炭鉱マン literally Mine Man, with the English word "man") is invoked even today as a reference to the image of rugged men who lived in the mines, risking their lives every day, supported by their wives at home. A large section of the main area is devoted to pictures and displays that testify to this lifestyle. In the impressive mock-mine beneath the museum, life-size mannequins show men digging at the face of the mine with enormous, deafening machinery. Women are shown to be maintaining equipment, and sifting through coal. Only a small plaque mentions that women worked in the mines carrying coal and doing other support tasks until it was outlawed for women to work in the mines. What goes understated or unsaid in the exhibit can be found in books on the history of mining in Japan: they show that women often laboured in teams with men around the turn of the century, and that children of age also worked in the mines sometimes even after it was outlawed. Children and women were also called on to work in the mines in times of crisis (Kimura et al., 1996).

[2] Matsuura came up with the name Hokkaido, with the "kai" of Hokkaido as phonetic characters standing for an Ainu word meaning people born of this land. In the final version, this reference to the Ainu was removed, and replaced with a reference to the centrality of the emperor and Hokkaido's natural belonging to the rest of Japan (Mason, 2012: 24).

Relief of Mine workers and Children at Play at the *Sekitan no Rekishimura*

Unlike museums in former mining communities described elsewhere in Japan, Yūbari's *Sekitan no Rekishimura* (Village of Coal History) is not an ode to the industry's paternalistic protection and provision for workers living in harmony and luxury (Allen, 1994: 18). The museum does not hide the town's many deadly gas accidents, socialist leanings, contests with mine management and, albeit minimally, alludes to violence and criminal elements as part of Yūbari's history. A caricature portrays the shadowy American military issuing the 1949 order to increase the production of Hokkaido coal, as Japanese labourers frantically try to cope. The main area of the exhibit contains many moving pictures of grieving in the wake of deadly accidents, opposed to the relieved and smiling coal-dust-caked faces of workers ending their shift on the other side of the room. Also among the captioned photos are ones of union meetings and shows of solidarity by the miners. The rest of the exhibit is focused on the tools and products of coal extraction through time, but also the means of surviving the harsh work it took to produce the "black diamond". Before unions, contractual bonds between two miners under the *tomoko seido* (友子制度) would ensure support in times of injury or other crises. The overall impression of the main area of the exhibit is of strong bonds of solidarity among male mining workers in an incredibly dangerous work environment.

Conspicuously absent from the exhibit is any mention of the thousands of Korean and Chinese forced labourers that worked in the mines of Hokkaido during WWII. These workers are said to have outnumbered Japanese miners at the end of WWII, and they notably led the push for better conditions once the war ended, even before Japanese workers mobilized (Irish, 2009). Many Chinese and Korean labourers died as a result of the horrific labour conditions of the mines during the war. The issue of forced labour by prisoners of war (and of the associated issue of Korean-Japanese who stayed in the post-war) remains contentious, with right-wing nationalists claiming that they were paid, voluntary labourers, or otherwise downplaying their existence in general (Akashi Shoten, 1990).

My point here is not to critique the coal museum for its colonial, masculinist depiction of the history of mining in Yūbari, but rather to use these narratives and their constitutive absences as starting points for situating Yūbari within the history of Hokkaido and Japan. In other words, I mean to explore the constitution and process of progress and colonialism centred around Yūbari. Because much of the *machizukuri* activities I studied bear some relation to Yūbari's history of mining, and I expect some of my readers will not be familiar with the context of my research, I feel it is important to explore in sufficient detail the historical stakes of studying community revitalization efforts in Yūbari.[3] In addition, even though a matter-of-fact recitations of events in a neat order would likely suffice to describe the context of my research, I see this chapter as nonetheless constituted by my fieldwork: many of the opinion pieces, memoirs and complementary data I include are drawn from books in Yūbari's library, some of which were recommended to me by people I spoke to.

If I use the terms progress and growth throughout this thesis it is to point to the way these ideas became important to Japan at the moment that Hokkaido became a colony and Yūbari became a city (Morris-Suzuki, 1997; O'Bryan, 2009; Tsing, 2015). Talking about progress matters in Yūbari also as it has gone from a place that represented the economic and territorial advancement of the nation into a place that represents its economic decline. Nonetheless, as O'Bryan (2009) says in the case of the spread of the idea of measuring "growth" using economic

[3] That said, this discussion of history also necessarily has its blind spots. Readers may find the material I present about (among others) the history of indigenous people and the history of Japan outside of Hokkaido wanting. Without erasing these histories, I only deal with them in so far as they bear relevance to setting the context of my research.

metrics in Japan, modern rationalities have not achieved a hegemonic status that would prevent the emergence of imagining alternative temporalities, economies and living environments. What the museum represents is not the "future perfect", the planned future of development experts, but rather the struggle for greatness and a future interrupted (Hetherington, 2016). I propose a history of Yūbari that details how Yūbari came to be associated with decline in order to show that a certain promise of progress was broken, and that the very tense or rhythm of progress no longer has the sway it had.

Hokkaido as Ezo

People of what are called the Jōmon group came from the Northern region of the Asian continent around 14 000 BC. They mostly lived in the main island of Honshu, but were also in Hokkaido and Okinawa. Beginning from around 1000-800BC, the sedentising hunter-gatherer Jōmon seemed to have been gradually taken over by farming people who came from the mainland during what we call the Yayoi period of rice farming and clear hierarchical society. However, in Hokkaido and Okinawa, the situation was different. In Hokkaido, Jōmon groups persisted until later into the first millennia CE. Over the two millennia between 1000BC and 1000CE, the diversity of groups within the archipelago continued to have contact, for instance with more Yayoi-influenced groups, and with the Okhtosk groups of northern Hokkaido. Even from the beginning of Japan's social and political formation, a diversity of groups had contact with each other and with the mainland (Kimura et al., 1996; Hudson, 2003).

However, it seems that at first, as the *Nihon shoki* attests, the Japanese court saw all the lands to the North that were not part of their domain as the land of the Emishi/Ezo, existing as a separate polity. In the 8th century, the extreme parts of the main islands had not yet come under Japanese imperial rule. People on the losing sides of the wars between feudal clans of the sedentary society to the sotuh had fled to the north, and to Ezo. The government also sent prisoners and exiled various undesirables to the southeastern part of Ezo. By the time of the *Shoku Nihongi* in the late 8th century, Ezo was not a polity, but merely "regions" of barbarians[4]

[4] A note on terminology: since terms like *Ezo* and *Ezochi* carry this derogatory connotation of barbarian, I only use it to indicate when the things I am saying come from the perspective or relationship between imperial Japan and indigenous people in the north. I use the term Hokkaido to denote the geographical territory now identified as "Hokkaido", although the term is Japan-centric and projects unity onto a territory I am trying to depict as

(Horimoto, 2004). The original characterization of the *Nihon shoki* does not do justice to the diversity of factions but was perhaps still more accurate, as the people of Northern Honshu and Ezo had the organization to mount large wars that involved even the Mongolians across the sea. There are few documents from these earlier periods of Hokkaido's history, but according to documents dating from the 17th century supported by documents of the time, during the 14th and 15th centuries, people from Northern Japan invaded and created a fiefdom in the south of Ezo. Pressure on the environments and livelihoods of indigenous people, notably from overfishing, forced labour, and competition for the support of the Japanese were factors that led to fighting among indigenous groups that became the Koshamain war (1457 CE) and Shakushain war (1669) between the Japanese and united Ainu groups (Kimura et al., 1996).

What I want to make clear here is that the people living in Hokkaido were not seen by the authors of the foundational texts of Japanese imperial society as being remnants of a primitive past. Rather, they were uncivilized and foreign by virtue of their different way of life and physical distance from the centre of all civilization. In what we might call the medieval period of Japan a Sino-centric view of the world still prevailed, in which China's imperial core emanated righteousness and civilization outward, with imperial centres of Japan having equivalent if sometimes subordinate or derivative place within the concentric circles of imperial civilization. This view of the world emphasized spatial hierarchy over temporal hierarchy (Morris-Suzuki, 1997). As such, while Hokkaido has a long history of being seen as a foreign and barbaric place far from the home of civilization, the idea of Hokkaido being backwards in an evolutionary understanding of civilization did not exist.

To demonstrate how clearly Ezo was still considered foreign up to the early modern period, it is useful to think of what the borders were like at this time. In the East Asian world order of the time, Japan and Korea paid tribute, much like vassals, to China. However, once the Tokugawa clan had consolidated its power over Japan in the early 17th century, Japan would emphasize its sovereignty by implementing four "gates" with which to deal with approved

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fragmented. The Ainu term *Moshir* is used nowadays to refer generally to original Ainu/indigenous territory, though it does not presume a unified territory`. Like Mason (2012), I support the current use of the term as an alternative to the derogatory Ezo or the Japan-centric Hokkaido, but as the term is not used by all indigenous groups in Hokkaido, indigenous people are not the focus of this research, and I am not Ainu, I do not use the term (193). Nonetheless, if I do allocate this space in my writing to the history of the land before its history as Hokkaido, it is because I am trying to bring out how indigenous issues in Japan today are also issues of sovereignty, and are perhaps even more deeply-rooted in the formation of the Japanese state than other colonial or imperial states.

foreign nations: just as Nagasaki dealt with China and Holland, the Matsumae domain (established in 1643) dealt with Ezo (Horimoto, 2004; Kimura et al., 1996). In the view of the Tokugawa rulers, Ezo was part of the continent, but not part of Japan. This is why Christian priests were allowed to enter Ezo even though they were forbidden to enter Japan. Many social undesirables like Christians had escaped to Ezo during the 12th to 15th centuries, and Ezo continued to act as a land within Japanese influence that could act as a place to isolate figures seen as threatening to the social order (Irish, 2009: 17). The Matsumae and the descendents of former undesirables were seen as half-Ainu, half-Japanese by the central government (Horimoto, 2004). The Matsumae were also, or as a result, assumed to have power over the Ainu in a way that other gates did not over other countries.

That said, the Matsumae could also be characterized as seeing their domain as neither Japanese nor Ainu. Trade relations between Ainu and Matsumae quickly became exploitative, to the point that Ezo was run almost purely as an extractive colony without much regard for the lives of the Ainu or the interests of the central government. The Matsumae would forbid Ainu from wearing the clothes of *Wajin* (a term developed to differentiate Ainu from "Japanese"). Even as Japan's relationship with China changed, assumptions about Ezo as foreign, barbaric and distant from the centre of civilization underwrote Matsumae attempts to distance themselves from Japan's indigenous people as they continued to exploit them for their benefit (Walker, 2001).

As a result, Ezo was economically integrated by force into Japan before it was politically integrated. The Matsumae feudal domain manipulated the Ainu and monopolized trade over fishing, forestry and gold, the latter being mined and gathered from Yūbari among other places from the early 17th century (Yūbari Museum of Coal, 2015). Howell (1992) has called the Matsumae economy proto-industrial and proto-capitalist because of the large number of people mass-producing for inter-regional or international trade[5]. This economic control marginalized the Ainu most of all, but also the Japanese in Ezo. Though the Tokugawa government saw the Matsumae domain as a point of control, it also saw the area controlled by the Matsumae, like all of Ezo, as not quite part of Japan. Conversely, the Matsumae seemed content to run their domain

[5] While the retrospective labelling of the Matsumae domain's economy as proto-industrial or proto-capitalist risks reproducing the tropes of teleological history I am fighting against, Howell's argument is useful for undoing the idea of capitalism as being the sole property of an imagined "Euro-American" sphere of influence.

as if it were a country working mainly for their own benefit and those of the merchants exploiting the Ainu. Ezo was alien enough to require treatment as a foreign country. Not unlike the colonization of North America, prolonged contact with exploitative agents seems to have broken the way of life and environment of indigenous people in Hokkaido even from before the period Matsumae control (Walker, 2001). In many ways, Japan was active in creating the foreign frontier[6] it would later seek to subjugate.

Colonization

The previous section illustrates some of the difficulties of claiming when Hokkaido was colonized. Under names like Ezo it had clearly been within the sphere of Japanese influence, and the economic hold of the Matsumae and powerful merchants tore at the very fabric of life on the island, with violence, disease and exploitation destroying Ainu lives en masse. Ezo was an important source of fishing products (particularly for use in fertilizer) to the Tokugawa government. Control of the Japanese-settled portion of the island went back and forth between the central government and the Matsumae as the value of economic activities grew, and the threat of Russian and American encroachment grew. Attempts were made to Japanese-ify the Ainu to promote claims of sovereignty over Ezo internationally, but the Ainu were also kept largely separate from the Wajin and their settlements. However, lack of investment and political will from the Tokugawa ensured that settlement of the entirety of Hokkaido would not really begin until the Meiji Restoration and the "modernization" of Japan from the 1850s onwards. Because of the prolonged history of influence I have outline above, this project of further settlement and exploitation is uncommonly referred to as colonization in the English or Japanese literature. Instead, terms like "internal colony" (国内植民地) and "development" (開発 or 開拓) tend to be used for Hokkaido (and Okinawa), while recognition as formal colonies tends to be reserved for Korea, Taiwan and others[7]. This classification of Hokkaido nonetheless betrays a teleological reasoning that assumes Hokkaido's subjugation and incorporation as inevitable and fitting within a totalizing ethnic identity (Mason, 2012: 2, 4 17-19; Ōe, 1992).

[6] I use this term as Hansen (2010) does. Brett Walker (2001) argues against the term because of its connotation that Hokkaido was merely the next natural place for Japan to colonize. However, I use the term as a colonial project, something created on purpose with clear links to frontiers of North America.

[7] Perhaps resistance to using colonialism comes in part from differences with *archetypical* colonialism as the European colonization of the Americas or Africa, but I do not feel any need to qualify the colonization of Hokkaido as "internal" or attenuate its violence by only calling it development.

As I have tried to illustrate in previous paragraphs, the history of Hokkaido leading up to colonization fit within a particular political understanding of the world that cannot be subsumed by the terms of modern European or U.S. history (Chakrabarty, 2000). Nonetheless, the colonization of Hokkaido was part of a deliberate effort to modernize the country and establish a place in the world by using and adapting the terms set by powerful European and American nations. I use "colonization" to reflect this reality, and to reflect the ongoing struggles of colonized peoples in Japan today. To different degrees, indigenous-allied actors in Okinawa and Hokkaido are still denouncing the glossing over of colonialism by the state and Japanese people in general: the Vice-governor of Okinawa responded to the political debacle around a crashed U.S. osprey by saying it's a blatant example of treating Okinawa as a colony (Yoshino, 2016), and Ainu in Hokkaido opposed a sports banner at Hokkaido's main airport that said Hokkaido is the land of pioneers[8] (Japan Times 2015). Because I rely on the idea of there being a colonial history in Hokkaido for the rest of this thesis, and given the controversy around the terms of this history, I wished to first justify my position with regards to the history I have outlined.

The political upheaval starting with US Admiral Perry's forcing open of Japan in 1853 that led into the period of modernization and colonial expansion of the Meiji era starting in 1868 foreshadows the image of Hokkaido that persists to this day. Tokugawa loyalist Admiral Enomoto, seeking to escape the victory push of the rebels, would attempt to establish a Republic of Ezo with the assistance of French captain Jules Brunet. Enomoto saw Ezo as a blank slate upon which an independent, democratic country for the samurai could be formed away from the Japanese state (Horimoto, 2004; Irish, 2009). The Republic of Ezo would be short-lived, but the image of a blank slate, a new land developed with the assistance of foreign actors and the reintegration of the samurai would be key to the Meiji government's policies in Hokkaido (Irish, 2009). The frontier spirit, the project of progress and making the nation-state that emerged at that period (particularly after Japan defeated Russia in 1905) was also a rejection of the previous and more particular world order focused on Chinese civilization in favour of resisting Western imperialism through participation in the universalistic world order as upheld at the time by the West (Sakamoto, 1996).

[8] The word used was 開拓者, related to the word 開拓 for land reclamation or development. This incident demonstrates how even words that might seem more attenuated when translated into English as "development" still horrify indigenous survivors of this "development" in Hokkaido.

Along with international relations and state finances, colonization of Hokkaido was a priority of the Meiji government. The Meiji Restoration saw an overhaul of the entire country in order to create a modern nation-state that could compete with the West in the contest of teleological progression (Mason, 2012: 11). This entailed cutting down on diversity, imposing controls on religion, education, and identity, as well as legal and military reforms (Mason, 2012: 4). In 1869, the second year of the Meiji era, Ezo was renamed Hokkaido and became the fourth island of the country. The project of developing Hokkaido was, according to the dominant narrative of the Meiji elite, one of extending the knowledge and technology of an enduring civilization to an underdeveloped area of the country (Mason, 2012: 15). To further create the divide between the civilized centre and the undeveloped frontier, the line between *Wajin* and Ainu was strengthened by differential rights to land, despite centuries of inter-mingling between indigenous people of the north and people (e.g. exiles and outcasts) from the south (Hansen, 2010; Hudson, 2003; Walker, 2001). By repressing complex overlapping histories of this area, and by inventing Hokkaido, the Meiji elite naturalized Hokkaido as part of Japan (Mason, 2012: 5).

As in the Americas, one of the ways the Meiji government created the blank slate was to displace and assimilate "backwards" indigenous people, and declare all the land of Hokkaido ownerless, opening up the land to ownership by private individuals and corporate entities. In these and other ways, Hokkaido became a land without people or *mujinchi* (無人地), and the Ainu were made into primitive natives to be further dispossessed and subjugated (Mason, 2012 :57-59) There were settlements by migrants from Japan's other islands all over Hokkaido by end of 1800s, although the creation of settlements was marked by repeated failures, with many pioneers returning home or moving to other destinations (Mason, 2012: 8; Irish, 2009: 261). Various companies promoted migration to Hokkaido to prospective pioneers as a utopian escape from traditional obligation and poverty. [9] Though many saw this move as a means of making new lives, and developing their own land, often migrants would end up working on land owned by individuals in Tokyo, Osaka or Kyoto as land ownership concentrated into the 1910s (Mason, 2012: 113, 115; Kimura et al., 1996: 131).

[9] Ōe Shinobu (1996) translates the name of one of these companies, 興福社, as Revitalization Corporation. The nuances of the characters are hard to translate in English but speak to the hope of new fortune and prosperity being marketed.

For the Meiji elite, Hokkaido's development represented not only an opportunity to test new technologies and profit from the development of new land, but also a chance to prevent Russian encroachment in the north. The image of masculine warrior-farmer *tondenhei* (屯田兵) at the frontier is prevalent, and while they were apparently relatively few in number, they speak to the reintegration of the samurai class into modernizing Japan, and to the attempt to suppress both external threats such as Russia and the internal threat represented by disgruntled samurai (Mason, 2012: 33).[10] While for the Meiji government, Hokkaido represented a significant investment to enrich, grow and protect the modern nation-state, but the colonization of Hokkaido also shaped the formation of Japan as a nation-state. One of the main means through which the colonization of Hokkaido was implemented was the Hokkaido Colonial Office. 20 million yen was invested into the Hokkaido Colonial Office before its abolishment in 1882. It built cities, roads, prisons, invested in farmland and forestry, and created profitable railways, factories, fisheries, and breweries. The Hokkaido Colonial Office's abolishment over a collusion scandal itself is pointed to as a pivotal event that set off a societal push for a constitution and assembly of representatives in Japan (Mason, 2012: 22, 28).

Colonization produced Hokkaido as a crossroads of different influences and processes, abounding in contradictions. Hokkaido served as the empty canvas upon which the desires of the government, intellectuals, radicals, farmers and social outcasts were projected. It existed (and perhaps still exists in the popular imaginary) at once as foreign island and natural part of the archipelago, a promising frontier and a harsh land of exiles and prisoners, a land wealthy in resources and a desolate cold wasteland (Mason, 2012: 2). The writings of authors who traveled to Hokkaido from Tokyo are teeming with these oppositions. Doppo's story "The Shores of the Sorachi River" pits an alienating Nature against a lone colonist initially enchanted by the bare, unpopulated landscape far away from the cultivated, orderly, enlightened home he left. In contrast to the rugged, modern frontier of Hokkaido, Japan's islands become places of stability, peaceful scenery, and timeless tradition (Mason, 2012: 61-62). Likewise, Arishima Takeo wrote of urban idealists and romantics coming to Hokkaido, and finding behind its beguiling

[10] The distinctly masculinised image of pioneers as embodied by the *tondenhei* should be seen in the context of contest with the West, and Western Orientalist discourses on Japan. For example, a record from the 1853 mission by Admiral Perry calls the Japanese childish, emasculated, and morally inferior. As part of Japan's colonial project, the romanticized pioneer image is perhaps best seen as also being a response to these Orienalist tropes (Mason, 2012: 14).

appearance an alien and unyielding Nature. The colonist fails to become a manly frontiersman, longing to return to the warmth of his family and friends in Tokyo (Mason, 2012: 63).[11] As Konishi (2013) argues, Arishima saw in Hokkaido the possibility of resisting the dominant society, and the possibility of progress through the establishment of an anarchist society. Hokkaido's "blank slate" brought not only government and corporations, but also radicals and social outcasts who sought to replace Hokkaido's colonial modernity with their own visions of progress.

Still feeling the pressure of Russia, the Meiji government sought to make alliance with the United States and other colonizer states to benefit from its experts in order to tackle the challenge of developing a land with a climate and peoples that remained mostly foreign to them (Yaguchi, 2000). The example of the "Indian water wheel" as described by anthropologist Heather Swanson (2013) speaks to the way the technologies and ideas of the American frontier were imported and modified to the Japanese frontier. Fisheries expert Ito Kazutaka visited Oregon in 1886, combining Oregon's salmon-catching water wheels with fishing weirs from the main island upon returning to Hokkaido, naming his invention after Native Americans. As I discussed in the beginning of this chapter, a similar story played out in Yūbari around Benjamin Lyman's investigation of Hokkaido's mining potential, with American technical knowledge being imported for Japanese development. Another example of the project to transform Hokkaido into a frontier land that attests to the evolutionary framework into which the Ainu were backward-ized was the Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act of 1899 that used as its model the Dawes Act of the United States (Hudson, 2003; Walker, 2001). This reveals important associations between Euro-America, indigenous genocide and progress operating at the time, as well as Japan's desire to pick and adapt for itself what was deemed to be the best of modernization.

Despite the large amount of investment into Hokkaido industry and development, much of this was aimed at extracting resources for further expansion, and in many ways the history of coal mining encapsulates this trajectory of extraction for expansion elsewhere. Hokkaido not only helped sell the idea of modern progress and expansion, it was also developed to enable this

[11] These stories of failure to dominate the landscape and assume the role of the rugged individual are interesting to compare with stereotypes of the frontier in North America in particular.

expansion by the Meiji government (Mason, 2012: 123-124). As I mentioned previously, the Hokkaido Colonial Office had funded the construction of infrastructure for different industries. As if to underscore the fact that Hokkaido was leading the way to progress, the central Sorachi area, of which Yūbari is part of, had railroads built at the same time as Osaka and Tokyo. The Agency-funded Horonai mine and railway, operational by 1882, were the first part of this early network of trains (Mason, 2012: 126). The significance of this development is hard to understate, as there was hardly a more potent symbol of progress and prosperity than trains during the Meiji era. To be included among the economic pillars of the country to first have train networks conjured the promise of civilization and upward mobility: a "future perfect" embodied by foreigners and elites as well as the infrastructures and technologies they used (Hetherington, 2013; 2016).

However, where the trains of Tokyo mostly carried the middle and upper classes to well-frequented places, the trains of Hokkaido would mostly carry resources to port cities (Nakamura, 2012). A speech in praise of Yūbari's development potential by a mining company employee reflects in its lofty language both the promise of progress, and the fact that from the beginning this promise was made by an elite interested in the products of extraction rather than progress in the lives of the mine labourers: "In the middle of this reclaimed world/is the story of the incredible prosperity of the Yūbari mine enterprise./Horokabetsu, until two years ago the dwelling place of bears and badgers, today has been transformed into a city./Lump and pulverized coal are sent out daily/on a railway laid down from Otaru to Muroran./Over one thousand miners fervently extract the coal/on three shifts day and night./An inexhaustible mine, Yūbari really is Japan's gem safe./Indeed, a warehouse of jewels./" (Mason, 2012: 129). This ode, read now, seems ironic as many in Yūbari joke that the bears have come to outnumber people, and that it hardly looks like a city (that is suggested by its designation as 夕張市 or Yūbari City). The ode is an affirmation of coal and trains as symbols of Hokkaido and progress, but also hints at an objectification and instrumentalization of Yūbari that foreshadows the limits of that progress for Yūbari.

Coal Capitalism

In the same way that the history of coal mining is crystallized in the history of Hokkaido's overall development, the history of the Hokutan Corporation in many ways *is* the history of coal capitalism and monopoly-oriented capitalism of the Meiji era. Hokutan was founded by Hori Motoi, an insider to the Hokkaido bureaucracy, who bought the modern and well-equipped Horonai mine and railway from the Hokkaido Colonial Office at a fraction of the cost during a sale of government assets soon after the mine was founded. Hokutan quickly added the Yūbari mine, the richest and largest coalbed in Hokkaido, and the Sorachi mine, which benefitted from prison labour until 1894 when the practice was abolished, into its portfolio. Cheap labour, subsidies, and an early start created the conditions for Hokutan to monopolize the coal market of Hokkaido: it maintained 90% market control up until the government nationalized the railroads in 1906 (Hokutan still had a 73% control on the market in 1907) (Kimura et al., 1996: 155; Mason, 2012: 127-128). The corporation's connections allowed it to diversify into shipping and arms production. It also provided coal for Japan's major railways (Mason, 2012: 129).

It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that Japan's largest financial empires were built on coal. Hokutan was bought up in 1913 by the Mitsui financial group, which had made its fortune from the Miike mine in the south of Japan. Despite being disbanded in the post-war period, Mitsui has re-constituted itself along with another financial goup to become Mitsui-Sumitomo, one of Japan's colossal banking conglomerates (Allen, 1994; Mason, 2012: 129). Mitsubishi opened the Ōyūbari coal mine in 1916, the same year Sumitomo started its own mine collection. Revenue from coal made up the majority of the revenue from the financial cliques at the time. For instance, from 1894-1918 Mitsubishi's coal profits amounted to 52.5% of its total earnings (Mitsubishi has since merged with UFJ to become Japan's largest banking conglomerate) (Mason, 2012: 129). These financial cliques (財閥 *zaibatsu*) would use their economic supremacy to later reinvest their profits from coal and other ventures into military and arms industries as Japan became embroiled in military expansion and war in the first half of the 20th century. Given the massive early boost that coal extraction provided to Japan's most powerful corporations, the claims of former mining communities of having contributed to the growth of Japan as a powerful nation-state are hard to brush aside. This history shows the development of the town of Yūbari and that of the megalopolis of Tokyo to be more intimately

related than the current disparities between them might suggest. The ties between coal, money and military expansion also connect Yūbari and Tokyo to the colonization of Korea and Taiwan, and imperial expansions across throughout the Pacific.

The invasion of Manchuria in 1931 signalled a new period of Japanese military expansion that would culminate in the Second World War. Colonization of more recently conquered territories like Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria would overtake Hokkaido from the 1930s, with many leaving Hokkaido disillusioned and in search of bettering their prospects elsewhere (Kimura et al., 1996: 163; Irish, 2009: 240). The population of Yūbari was not stable during the 20s and 30s, fluctuating between 40 and 52 thousand (Kobayashi, Nakgawa, and Iwaki, 1976). Nonetheless, Hokkaido's resources, particularly its coal, only increased in importance. During the 30s and 40s, Yūbari's mines fuelled Japan's war efforts, with mine workers encouraged to think of themselves as warriors. There was a great demand for coal as carburant, and for use in the production of iron. As iron found ubiquitous use, Japan's coal reserves were all the more valuable. To match increased production quotas, women were allowed to work in the mines during WWII even though this kind of work had been outlawed in 1933 (Irish, 2009: 250). While famine and bad living conditions were everywhere, Hokkaido saw little of the bombing that and combat that occurred elsewhere throughout the empire (Kimura et al., 1996: 206; Irish, 2009: 257).

Also working in the mines in WWII were labourers brought over from Korea and the other conquered territories. At first, Japan contracted the work of recruiting labourers from Korea to companies, but as the state became more desperate, it would conscript people although this may have merely been a nominal difference (Nakano, 1997). The issue of WWII forced labourers, especially from China and Korea[12], continues to generate political controversy (Morris-Suzuki, 2009). It is also an aspect of Yūbari's history that was not discussed often during my fieldwork.[13] The library was well-stocked with books on the issue, but for all the deaths from methane gas explosions that were discussed fairly openly, and the deadly oppression

[12] Japanese people were also part of systems of forced labour during WWII (and even slightly beyond). The takobeya system, named for the fact that the rooms of these labourers were so small they resembled octopus cages. (Yohei Achira, 2015)

[13] There has been some growing recognition of this history. In 2015, Mitsubishi apologised to US prisoners of war for being forced to do labour during WWII. The following year, Mitsubishi admitted to using forced labour in Japanese mines during WWII, and apologized as part of a settlement with former Chinese forced labourers (BBC, 2016).

of the Ainu that were mentioned if rarely and timidly[14], the labour and deaths of prisoners of war (some of whom are still buried in Yūbari) were not. This is not very different from Canada, where more sinister parts of history are less likely to be featured as part of national "heritage". The auto-biography of a former mayor of Yūbari is telling: it reveals that his father's life was saved by a Korean mine labourer during the war, but the history behind his presence is left unmentioned (Fujikura, 2015) Nonetheless, the silence is just as significant. Although in general the conditions of labourers during this period were little better than prison, thousands of forced labourers died. The number of foreign, underground mine workers by the end of the war reached around 75%.

Once the war ended, forced labourers were the first to strike, beginning a labour movement that would mark the post-war period in Yūbari. For instance, on October 2nd, 1945 7000 Korean miners protested in Yūbari, demanding better conditions, and ultimately repatriation. The labour front was largely divided by country of origin, with management repressing at all costs the foreign labourers in order to continue production as per the orders of Allied Command, even as the latter began the repatriation process. The push for unionization of miners in Hokkaido nonetheless benefitted from and started from the struggle of forced labourers. Even though awful labour practices continued[15], unionization of Hokkaido miners reached 75% only a year after the end of the war (Kimura et al., 1996: 214; Irish, 2009: 259-261). The stories of Chinese miners like Liu Lianren (who remained in hiding in Hokkaido for more than a decade after the war after escaping a mining camp) and Korean miners like Kang Myongbong (who escaped Hokutan Yūbari Mine, but was re-captured and tortured) silently haunt the image of the unionized mining man that emerged from the mining heyday in the 1950s (Irish, 2009: 251 Kimura et al., 1996: 210).

[14] A publicly available example of this is a critical opinion piece by the head of the Yūbari Shinbun published on the 3rd of May, 2017, in which he reacts to a publication by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's office on the upcoming 150th year since the beginning of the Meiji Restoration (1868), saying Japan was turned into a military state by the West, and calling Japan's involvement in WWII an effort to end colonial control by countries like England, France and the United States, emphasizing its role as a victim of the war (Yūbari Shinbun, 2017).

[15] Irish (2009) gives the example of 15 000 poor people hired from Tokyo in 1946 to work in Hokkaido mines who were found to be living in slave-like conditions (260).

Boom and bust

Though the period of Yūbari's history following from the end of WWII could be described as a quick boom before a long decline, the creation of this narrative takes the work of demographers, bureaucrats that replicate and produce this pattern from their point in time. The importance of the "decline" is furthermore primarily salient within a national discourse over aging and depopulation: these are not direct indexes of the well-being of the people living in an area, but rather something closer to the performance of progress. The steepness of Yūbari's "decline" in terms defined by the nationally-salient figures of population count and population by age, as well as Yūbari's large debt, repeated over and over in the media create the image of total inversion of the growth associated with progress and the post-war boom. In examining the retreat of Yūbari's coal industry and Yūbari's bankruptcy, I want to denaturalize this narrative of decline, and the term decline itself, which risk merely reproducing the tropes of progress that reduce everything to a single, predictable, self-justifying process.

Many of the people I spoke to in Yūbari had stories to share about the town's heyday, back when Yūbari was known as the "mining metropolis" (炭都). Despite being far in land and up in the mountains, I was told, Yūbari had access to expensive bluefin tuna, had a movie theatre, and had a luxury department store with goods that sometimes one could not even find in Sapporo. The shopping streets of the city bustled with people on a daily basis. Many upper-class people lived in Yūbari and frequented places that catered to their lifestyle. Some said the expenditures of mine workers largely followed the fluctuations of the market: in bad times, people would live rather poorly, but in boom days, they would spend lavishly, a trend observed in other mining communities and other places made reliant on a single industry (Culter, 1999; Duhaime et al., 2013). The extensive but mostly quantitative study of miners' lives in one of Yūbari's mines conducted by Fujii (1981) notes how life was stratified in Yūbari, divided between white-collar workers and miners, with significant differences in salary and living conditions within these classes even for the workers of a single mine. Though the work was well-payed and changing technology made some aspects safer, it continued to be dangerous. Many miners came to Yūbari from other places, often coming to Yūbari from other mines or their hometown, where jobs had become scarce. These accounts of Yūbari's heyday testify to general economic prosperity

through the 50s, 60s and 70s, but also to a reality other than an all-middle-class society and stable employment that was said to characterize Japan in the decades of high economic growth.

When people told me about these days, there was an element of reminiscing the golden days of Yūbari and a fascination for this past, but what prevailed from these statements was mostly a sense of irony. Often the landscape itself was the conductor for this irony, as statements would be preceded by saying things like "You wouldn't believe it by looking at it now" and then referring to how much the landscape had changed since the closures of the mines started. The imprint of the mining town's grandeur had largely faded as rail lines were removed, buildings demolished and paved over, and miners' residences removed at great cost to the city, and often causing great sadness to the residents. The Yuparo river is also no longer black with coal dust as it was during at least the 1950s and 1960s (Kobayashi, 1983; Yokuyama, n.d.). The traces of this landscape from just 50 years ago are out of the way and mostly covered in overgrowth. Perhaps the most ironic comment on this fading landscape and its history of both opulence and destruction was the rhyme circulated in highschools in Yūbari "夕張、苦ばり、坂ばかり、ドカンと来れば死ぬばかり" (roughly meaning "Yūbari, naught but suffering and hills, and when the BOOM comes, naught but death"). This sense of irony about how out of joint the current landscape seems with stories of Shōwa-era[16] opulence and destruction points to how high economic growth left Yūbari before it ever really started: I take these not as nostalgic eulogies of the past, but rather a kind of admission of economic folly within a post-bankruptcy environment.

High economic growth and the creation of an entirely middle-class society colour the image of the 50s, 60s and 70s in Japan. However Yūbari, like much of Hokkaido, was largely left behind by this wave of economic growth, as key industries like fishing and coal declined, and plans to develop larger cities like Tomakomai and Nemuro into industrial hubs failed to meet expectations or retain desired population numbers. The post-war reconstruction period created demand for coal, and Yūbari's population would grow to almost 120 000 people by 1960. But already by 1955 the Japanese government had decided that reliance on even domestic coal could no longer compete with imported oil. Encouraged by American oil interests, the Japanese government's "energy revolution" began the decades-long process of closing all coal mining

[16] Era from the mid-1920s to the end of the bubble in 1989, encapsulating the main period of growth of Yūbari's mines to their end.

operations in Japan (Kimura et al., 1996: 236). By the 1970s corporate profits were discussed in government documents as the leading factor of high economic growth. Financial giants closed their dirtier and less profitable elements of their portfolios (Mochida, 2008), workers lost their jobs, and governments tried with mixed results to find other lines of employment for miners. Though workers mobilized with renewed zeal in Yūbari and elsewhere to keep mines open, the movement away from coal already had the backing of Japan's political and financial elite. Some new mines opened in Yūbari during the 1950s, 60s and 70s, but these were plagued by many of the same deadly work conditions that had caused the deaths of thousands in previous decades (Kimura et al., 1996: 238). Particularly deadly and mediatised methane gas explosions in 1975 and 1981 drew media attention. In particular, the October 1981 gas explosion at the Yūbari Shintankou (New Yūbari Mine) which killed almost a hundred people attracted blame on Hokutan (the operator of the mine) for imposing an overambitious extraction plan. The mine that was the hope of maintaining a mining industry in Yūbari became the death knell of the industry there, and the incident remains engraved in the popular consciousness.

Restructuring and Revitalization

The loss of Yūbari's mining industry in the early 80s coincided not only with Japan's unprecedented influence in world finance and booming speculation, but also with a movement to promote tourism to rural areas within Japan. Under mayor Nakata, Yūbari was supposed to transition from mining to tourism under his *machizukuri* plan (Tsujimichi, 2010). Despite centering much of this development around the culture of Yūbari, citizens themselves were not very involved in much of the realization of this town-building policy, and no real measures were taken to ensure the benefits of this development returned to the people of Yūbari (Morishige, 2009). Transition to becoming a tourism town involved making use of the history of coal mining to build a theme park and museum around coal (the same described at the beginning of this chapter), building a massive resort and ski slope, and using the town's association with movies such as *The Yellow Handkerchief* to promote Yūbari as a movie-culture town.

The latter in part became the impetus for the Yūbari International Film Festival in the 1990s (The Daily Yomiuri, 2008). The festival benefited from the national Furusato Sousei Jigyou (ふるさと創生事業) Policy, which attributed money to new, local initiatives aimed at

helping to support rural areas as part of 復興 (revitalization) or 地域づくり (region-building) (Taniguchi, 2010). The language of *furusato* runs through the project even today, as during the 2017 edition of the festival, organizers would say *okaerinasai* (welcome home) even to people who had never come to Yūbari. Some guests pointed out how this sounded odd, but understood that they were trying to project a warm, rural image associated with *furusato*. While mayor Nakata's policies are now panned as being overambitious failures that in large part created Yūbari's debt crisis, the policy to move to tourism prompted a rebranding of Yūbari around cultural and natural particularities along the lines of the *furusato* tourism boom of the 1980s (Moon, 1989). While this attempt to create a tourist economy failed in part by assuming stable demand would follow simply by building grand tourist-oriented facilities, it nonetheless was an important step in beginning to transform Yūbari into a rural space, re-aligning it with other rural towns on Japan's other islands that aimed (and often failed) to become resort towns.

From 1974 to 1994, Yūbari's municipal government had spent almost 60 billion yen reconfigurating the town in the wake of the mine closures. This reconfiguration and "beautification" included closing and demolishing schools and train lines, building tourist attractions, buying up land and facilities, as well as renovating, cleaning, demolishing, rebuilding and installing waterways and amenities around the former mining sites and miners residences. It also included paying off retirement sums, and brand-making efforts for Yūbari's luxury melons (Nakata, 2011). It might seem from this that the city brought the bankruptcy on itself, but the story of the bankruptcy is more contested and complicated than what a list of expenditures can express. The push for tourism in Yūbari has to be connected to the dizzying amount of wealth and speculation generated by the bubble, centered around financial centres like Tokyo. Moreover, this process of reconfiguration and clean-up is still ongoing in many ways at the municipal level: some miners' residences and accident-prone facilities are still being torn down in the name of creating a "compact city". Tourism also still seems to be the main industry to expand: 10 billion yen is to be invested in the buying out, refurbishing and development of Yūbari's ski resort (Sankei News, 2017). It remains unclear what changes this development on behalf of a company mainly dealing with tourists from China will bring, but many residents have expressed concern with busloads of tourists using up infrastructure and disturbing daily life.

A symposium I attended in late August 2016 on re-thinking Yūbari's bankruptcy ten years after its occurrence brought out two lines of discourse about the bankruptcy that complemented the discussions of the bankruptcy I had had with people in Yūbari, and what I had read in books about Yūbari. First, while the central government and Hokkaido prefectural government had knowledge of Yūbari's debts and may have issued some warnings (but took no forward action), people within the municipal government did not know about the extent of Yūbari's debts or the dishonest measures taken to hide them. Yūbari's bankruptcy in 2006 shocked people in Yūbari as well as the rest of Japan. It seemed at least some of the political elite of Yūbari, Hokkaido, and the central government had prior knowledge of the situation. The second argument to come out of the ten year retrospective was that the financial reconstruction plan[17] agreed to between the Internal Affairs Ministry in Tokyo and Yūbari's municipal government was considered punitive and draconian, serving as an example to other municipalities in similar situations (see also Fujikura, 2015; Tamaki, 2013).

While for the rest of Japan, Yūbari's bankruptcy was a shock that continues to tarnish the town's image, for the people of Yūbari, the strictness of the financial reconstruction plan came as an additional shock. The strictness of the initial plan was (and is still) mocked by expressions like 鉛筆一本でも買えない meaning "(so strict) one could not even buy a pencil (without approval from Tokyo)" or calling Yūbari a "colony" (植民地) of the Internal Affairs Ministry. Though the plan has since been amended on several instances to allow citizens of Yūbari to live more decently, work conditions for public employees are low, and the services offered are at the national minimum. Initially, the repayment conditions created various problems for the city and its residents: taxes increased, the prospects of high school students decreased, closing nursing homes as well as cuts to welfare services and snowclearing services created isolation for elderly residents (with the number of older residents dying alone with no one to check on them increasing), and any emergencies like a broken boiler or discharge into the river from a sewage processing plant paralyzed the city (Hokkaido Shinbun, 2009). One of the presenters at the symposium noted that people in Yūbari were in danger of losing the motivation to be proud of and be active in helping the town as a result of the shock of the bankruptcy. Yūbari had become a place without a country (国のない夕張).

[17] (財政再建計画 later renamed 財政再生計画 to reflect changes made to improve quality of life)

Municipal governments have historically been responsible for a wide variety of services, which might lead one to think the political system was decentralized, but many of these duties are not implemented without influence or intervention from the central government (Sato, 2001). Decentralization meant more financial accountability for local governments, but the historical influence of central governments over municipalities persists in the form of dispatched employees, for instance (Ikawa, 2008). From the beginning of decentralization being implemented into law in the 1990s, the neoliberal faction of the political elite advocating for decentralization described by Barrett (2010) worried that devolving responsibility to rural areas would also mean giving them the freedom to go bankrupt[18]. Yūbari's large debt became the example needed to impart those fears onto the rest of Japan, pushing rural areas to be competitive and raise revenues. Other towns in Japan and abroad would make reference to "the Yūbari problem" to make cuts and to take other measures to avoid riding the track to decline (Hiraoka, 2011; Kang, 2008; McNeill, 2008; Okuda, 2008). The two retrospective arguments that dominated the symposium I attended reflect that "decentralization" has meant in some cases an abandonment of rural populations in the name of economic common sense, and that Yūbari's case in particular crystallizes a neoliberal trend of financial responsibilization of rural areas without always being balanced by an accompanying increase in political authority (Ikawa, 2008; Barrett, 2010). As Love (2013) points out, critics of decentralization have described the cuts of financial support by Tokyo as the final cutting off of rural areas from redistributive schemes. Although the comparison is limited by the services and standard of living that are nonetheless available in Yūbari, it may have something in common with "zones of abandonment" in Brazil and Australia, where neoliberal policy has left people to take care of themselves or face a slow and seemingly natural, inevitable death (Biehl, 2005; Love, 2013; Povinelli, 2011).

Despite clearly being a symbol for wider conditions of "decline", Yūbari has come to uniquely represent the future of decline, that is to say it is taken to be demographically and socially where Japan will be in four or five decades. For those outside of Hokkaido who have heard of Yūbari, two things tend to come to mind: Yūbari's prize melons, and Yūbari's bankruptcy. Yūbari was not the first government to come under a financial reconstruction scheme, but the size of its debt and length of its repayment set it apart from all previous cases,

[18] A law on preventing cases like Yūbari to happen again was passed in 2007.

and any other cities in financial trouble since then (Matsushita, 2007). Such is Yūbari's position in the teleology of decline, defined almost exclusively by population, age and standardized measurements of economic health, that the media and high-profile politicians have used it to make the point that the rest of Japan must restore economic and demographic growth before the rest of Japan follows suit (Tokyo MX, 2013). Notably, Otokita Shun, a politician from Tokyo and former consultant for Louis Vuitton noted during his recent, incredibly exhausting 3 day stay that Yūbari was not even able to burn its trash properly like the rest of the country (Otokita, 2015). Many foreign journalists have also come through seemingly for the sole purpose of mocking Yūbari and taking fetishizing pictures of Yūbari's ruined "decay" (Spike Japan, 2010; Huffadine, 2016). The condescension even comes from neighbouring towns where people talk of *going down* to Yūbari even though Yūbari is high up in the mountains. At the same time, there is a certain sense that Tokyo must show some degree of care for Yūbari, if only for the preservation of political capital. The election of the youngest mayor in one of the fastest aging areas in Japan, supported by a controversial hardline nationalist like former Tokyo governor Ishihara is a powerful symbol of national unity for the ruling party (though it does nothing for those who want justice from the central government and mining companies) (Tabuchi, 2012). As I have tried to emphasize in the latter part of this chapter, the story of Yūbari or Japan's "decline" is not new, as Suzanne Culter (1999) named her study of Yūbari during the last days of the mines "Managing Decline". But perhaps it has gained even more urgency lately, as the Masuda Report (Masuda, 2014) warns of towns under 10 000 people disappearing in the next decades, and as the financial loss of the bubble have turned into seemingly endless economic decline due to the lack of any promissory future in sight (Geji, 2016).

The narrative of decline is well-defended. Politicians, media, and well-meaning, critical academics have come to the defence of the idea that all rural areas can do is better manage their decline, however fair or unfair this may be. I hope I have demonstrated, as Culter (1999), Love (2013; 2014) and Allison (2013) do the way this decline is not natural, and is the product of historical inequalities. However, I am compelled by the experiences of people in Yūbari to tell a different story than that of managing inevitable decline, or conversely to retell the story of the valiant pioneers bringing the potential for restoring progress. Rather, along the lines of Tsing (2015) and to some extent Povinelli (2011), this thesis is about the possibility of life within the ruins of capitalism and the decentralization of the state. Following feminist scholars, I aim to

heuristically suspend more critical intervention and labels like “decline” and “neoliberal” that pre-suppose certain kinds of trajectories or possibilities in order to get at what projects in Yūbari might be doing that does not fit within this or that framework of progress, morality or critique (Haraway, 2003; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012; Tsing, 2015). I have failed to fully entangle myself in the more-than-human elements of life in Yūbari, but nonetheless point to ways in which town-building projects, as ways of being, go beyond strict humanist notions. It is with this in mind that I turn to projects of salvage, heritage, and care in the next chapters.

Chapter 2: Ruins or Heritage?

As I waited in the renovated coal miner's housing block for Suzuki-san to finish preparing, Nakamura-san told me about the flowers that were growing outside the window of the soon-to-be-officially-open offices of the Shimizusawa Project. Nakamura-san is an older man who speaks quickly but without flourish, in a friendly tone. Despite having been cutting weeds all morning, his clothes are perfectly clean. He has the air of a retired actor. "That yellow one there is *Ōhangonsō*. It didn't used to exist in Hokkaido." As I scarcely had the time to study the names of flowers in my study of Japanese, I look up the flowers as he names them on my smartphone's dictionary app. The flower he refers to is native to North America and is classified as *Rudbeckia Lasciniata*, a name that means little to me. But its name in Japanese (*Ōhangonsō* or 大反魂草) suggests a plant or weed that calls back the souls of the deceased.

As we talk about Hokkaido's history through the flowers, Suzuki-san, my contact at a local *machizukuri* organization[19] called the Shimizusawa Project, comes through the door of their office, slightly out of breath. She apologizes for the wait as she takes off her boots. She's wearing a T-shirt and light cargo pants with a satchel at her side. She's in her thirties but could pass for much younger, although her glasses, sharp gaze and adventure-ready attire make me feel as though I am just some bumbling tourist and she's the ethnographer. It's not just her fieldwork-ready appearance that leads me to think this way, but the fact that she actually did fieldwork in Yūbari for her masters' degree back in 2006, which she began shortly before the bankruptcy. Her work focused on the area south of the main part of town called Shimizusawa, the site of the deadly mine explosion of 1981 that sounded the death knell for Yūbari's mining industry. She's been involved in Yūbari and the wider Sorachi region for over a decade, while I had only spent a month in Yūbari at that point, and spoke only mediocre Japanese. However, I understand and respond to everything she and Nakamura ask me about Montreal and the goals of my research as Suzuki-san takes a break. This is the first time we meet since I volunteered with a group to install makeshift benches and apply varnish on the wooden stairs of the nearby slag heap (ズリ山 *zuriyama*) a couple of weeks before. When I had asked Suzuki-san for an interview, she also proposed to show me the places her non-profit was currently operating at, which included the former Shimizusawa power plant. As Nakamura-san had also not yet been to see the power plant,

[19] 一般社団法人 or *ippan dantai hōjin*, a type of organization equivalent to a non-profit organization

all three of us got in his car on that hot August day and headed towards the Shimizusawa power plant.

Suzuki-san explains on the way that the site of the former Shimizusawa power plant is not like the *zuriyama*, the slag heaps scattered around Yūbari: the Shimizusawa Project is not in charge of it. Rather, a company specializing in the recycling of industrial waste has taken it over and been dismantling it over a few years. We stop at a small one-floor office building and after speaking briefly with the workers inside, Suzuki-san signs us in as she reads out a long legally-worded "at your own risk" statement she wrote for visitors, laughing intermittently at how thorough it is. I joke that it's as thorough as the consent form for my own research.

The power plant was decidedly not a carefully curated space[20]. Rusted signs and poles, as well as bits of trash lined the gravel road to the power plant. Because of the dangerous objects lying around, uneven roads and dump trucks going to and fro, Suzuki-san says she asks for a contribution to cover insurance and other fees when groups visit. As we get back in the car and drive up to the heart of the site, a large space opens up before us. Most of it is brown-ish dirt with piles of coloured rubble dotting the edges: iron bars the colour of rust, a pile of crushed glass, pale grey cement, a multi-coloured pile of miscellaneous items, and a giant pile of dark dust. Trucks and cranes putter around the piles and the small red huts. What seems to be a large chimney stand on its own near the entrance to the expansive site.

[20] This is in slight contrast to the slag heap maintained by the Shimizusawa Project I deal with in the next chapter.

The Former Hokutan Shimizusawa Power Plant

In the corner furthest from the entrance is what can only be described as a largely intact fraction of a building. Despite being apparently only a quarter or so of its original size, the remains of the former Shimizusawa plant are formidable in size. As we drive by it, the overall size and the giant windows remind me of Montreal's large basilicas and cathedrals. But this place clearly does not receive the same tourism subsidies for its maintenance. As we get out of the car, Nakamura-san calls the place eerie. Suzuki-san agrees, commenting on the weeds growing all around the building, and the glass from the windows strewn all about. She adds that all kinds of animals seem to have made it their home lately as the company is slowly stopping their operations. A nest of birds seems to have been taken down by rocks thrown into the building. Suzuki-san supposes it was done by local teens as some kind of dare since places to hang out are few and far between.

As we enter the power plant through a ramp made of gravel through a large, doorless square opening, Suzuki-san explained bits of the history of the power plant. Nakamura-san and I followed along, asking questions intermittently. The power plant was built by 北炭 (Hokutan), the company that owned the surrounding mines, railways and much of the infrastructure of the area, in 1926. Its ambitious purpose was to consolidate energy production and provide energy for

the company's multiple buildings and mines, and later expanded to providing power to the surrounding towns. To this effect, the power plant used coal to produce power (and hydroelectricity once Hokutan built the accompanying dam in 1940), using the water from the nearby Yūparo river to cool the turbines. While the dam is still providing electricity under the prefectural government's auspices, it is no longer channelled through the plant. The elaborate machines and massive marble dampeners remained as a testimony to Hokutan's great wealth, but stand now as a reminder of the quick end of its operations in Yūbari following the move to oil from the 1960s and the deadly gas explosion in 1981.

Salvaging the Past

When I asked Suzuki-san how the Shimizusawa Project had become involved with this building, I got insight into its afterlife as heritage of the mining industry.

> In 2011, the Shimizusawa Art Project, as it was then called, did an exhibit of modern art here. The NPO I was with at the time was the Organisation for the Promotion of Remembrance of the Mines, *Yama no Kioku*, which became based in Iwamizawa but does town-building activities using and preserving mining heritage sites for the whole Sorachi region. I asked the company operating here if we could use this place, and they allowed us to do the event here.[21]

The president of the company was very impressed by the exhibit and allowed Suzuki-san to use the site for future events. She explained that once the company had finished salvaging what they could from the power plant, they would have to end their lease on its use with the Japanese state, the owner of the land. In the meantime, the Shimizusawa Project, a former offshoot of the ヤマの記憶 (*Yama no Kioku*, or Memory of the Mines) NPO, was using the space in cooperation with other local actors (e.g. tour guides) to allow people to explore the history of key infrastructure in the development of Hokkaido and Japan. Interestingly, rather than there being a confrontational relationship between those seeking to use and preserve this building on the one hand, and those seeking to tear it down on the other, a relationship of compromise and support had emerged.

[21] This is a reconstitution based on my notes of what Suzuki-san said

If Yūbari were still a booming town, the value of the land and the building might have prompted a different outcome. But because the stakes are not high enough for the recycling company to be overly concerned with harvesting every last scrap, and because Suzuki-san is not trying to preserve the building in some kind of pristine state, a compromise was made possible. In addition, there is little reason for the central government to concern itself with what goes on at the site if the renters are still solvable. By operating slightly outside of predicted "interests" according to market principles or logics of conservation, different actors have enabled this space to emerge. It is in between this net of property relationships, that the Shimizusawa Project is able to operate in the Shimizusawa Power plant. Two projects of salvage here occur in seeming opposition in the same space, and yet a certain relaxation afforded by unfavourable economic conditions and the building's ungainly size allows both the company and the Shimizusawa Project to compromise on their respective reasons for salvage (i.e. recycling and re-use) and co-exist.

The Shimizusawa Project also provides the company an important source of legitimacy in the community by virtue of their collaboration. Suzuki-san remarks as we continue further into the power plant that people are generally suspicious of people who deal in managing industrial waste are seen as suspicious or as doing dirty, undesirable work[22]. Add to this the generally negative image of Yūbari, and the importance of the power plant as one of the key remaining sites of Yūbari's proud mining days, and it becomes easy to see how many residents might not appreciate the recycling company's position. Suzuki-san said as much when her and Nakamura-san started discussing another company recycling industrial mining waste that they had seen on TV. The president of the company wanted to improve the image of the company by allowing people to come in and visit the site. Suzuki-san said in reference to the perception of this kind of work as suspect, "地域の人が、理解してもらうために、見学コースを作った。地域と共生っていう形でね," (To have people of the area understand, they created a possibility for people to visit. To coexist with the community). Not only does this kind of scrapping of historically

[22] This kind of judgement on certain lines of work has a long history in Japan, for instance the 部落民 (burakumin). There are echoes of this here, but as it is tangential and my own data on how this plays out in Yūbari is insufficient, I do not elaborate on this history here (Morris-Suzuki, 1997 offers a starting point for some of this anthropological thinking and history on this in English).

meaningful buildings risk offending people or reminding them of the current economic situation, this work is often done behind fences or located out of the way, inspiring some amount of distrust. In Suzuki-san's experience, having people visit the power plant allowed the company to coexist better with its neighbouring community. With Suzuki-san and tour guides serving as a bridge to the wider community, the rubble of the power plant continues to exist both as living heritage and as a salvage effort.

Of course, these more practical considerations alone do not explain why the Shimizusawa Project managed to gain access to use of the power plant: Suzuki-san's work to salvage the power plant also makes people imbue the space with stories and emotional connection through the history of coal production. Suzuki-san's explanations criss-cross time as she leads us into the colossal, warehouse-like main hall, pointing out parts from the 1920s, others added during WWII or during the reconstruction period when coal production was at its highest. She mentions how at its height, this facility connected all the mines in the area and connected to lines that went far into neighbouring areas. The turbines, located in the basement, made this the largest underground power facility in northeast Japan. Using the Ipad to show images comparing how the area looked in the past with how it looks now, the history of the place as presented by Suzuki-san seems quite relevant and alive. The images show the power plant in the days where its other chimneys were intact, the large pile of coal dust threatening to surpass them in height, and the closely-packed residences of the miners. The roads are also haunted by the shape of train lines they once followed, partly visible in a black and white photo Suzuki-san shows us. Our guide takes care to point out what the recycling company has changed, and points to offices left virtually untouched since the sudden end of operations at the power plant following the final methane gas explosion in the mines[23]. Suzuki-san explains things in a way that the pride of Yūbari as a former modernizing metropolis and a unique contributor to the nation's coal production (fossil fuels being in rare supply within Japan) comes through

[23] These kinds of spaces raise again the subject of disaster anthropology in Japan, particularly following the events of 3/11. I personally question the usefulness and ethical commitment of a lot of "disaster anthropology". Not only does the focus on areas in times of crisis often elude the longstanding problems of other areas or life before the disaster, it also often seems to dramatize the events of disaster areas as motors of social change at the exclusion of the exploration of other possibilities. If we take Yūbari as a site of "disaster", either stemming from the end of the mining industry in the 1980s or its bankruptcy in 2006, we find that while these two events, their history, and their immediate consequences are fairly well-documented, we are missing how people in Yūbari are facing the aftermath and how other cities and towns with similar situation are affected by the events in Yūbari.

clearly even to an outsider like myself. This emphasis also makes Yūbari's current situation stand in all the more stark contrast, as the "raw" resources (glass, concrete, wood, water, coal waste) that constituted and flowed through the background of this space now seem come back into the foreground. It is thus not just a convenient assortment of property ties and legitimacy that has produced the current life of this space, but Suzuki-san's work in transforming the space's emotional value by tapping into feelings about progress, Japan, coal, and Yūbari that managed to move the recycling company's executive to allow her to use the space.

At other times, the more difficult sides of the history of the life of the miners of Yūbari came out of exploring the area. Every month, Suzuki-san hosts a walk around a different area of Shimizusawa, sometimes with a local guide, (re)discovering the small charms and treasures in the area. During one of these walks, the history of the 1981 gas explosion at the New Hokutan Mine that effectively ended Yūbari's mining industry became a topic of discussion. The majority of the participants in the walk were people living outside Yūbari but who had participated in these walks before. The area we visited, called Seiryōchō, was located across the river south of the power plant with many two storey buildings and apartment complexes, some of which are in the process of being dismantled. Our guides, Suzuki-san and a young writer for the local newspaper, talked about the stores that have shut down, the nicely-tended school garden, and the local communal bathhouse. As we approached the entrance of the former mine, a person in the group asked if compensation had been payed to the families of the victims, and what had come of the accident. Compensation was paid and a settlement reached before claims of Hokutan's negligence could be attested to in court, but the accident (or incident) itself remained in the consciousness of even people like the local journalist who were very young at the time or those who had seen it covered on the news. Suzuki-san and others had made comments to the effect that safety measures had been clearly ignored in the pursuit of a profitable mine that could support the dying industry. People who had moved out from Yūbari had apparently not forgotten the miners who had died either: next to the entrance was a large memorial stone with offerings fresh from visitors during the celebration of Ōbon. In a context where the people of Yūbari were being forced to pay for a significant

debt, the memory of those who died for the corporate profits of some of the most powerful financial powers in the country persists.

Nonetheless, some histories do not seem to figure within Yūbari's heritage. Through re-use and re-visiting, the various lives and leftovers of places in Yūbari are coming to the fore in this moment of both ongoing deconstruction and attempts at revitalization. But the legacy of Ainu oppression is notably hard to find within the projects aimed at exploring the heritage of the mines. While the former lives of indigenous Ainu people in this specific area is rather hard to know, they did name the river Yūparo (in Ainu meaning place where mineral spring flows) among other places in the area, and were known to have complex relationships with the fauna and the mountains of *Moshir* (the Ainu name for Hokkaido) (Umehara, 2009). Given their knowledge of the land, it is feasible to imagine that the first knowledge the Japanese received of there being gold, and then coal, in the Yūbari area might have come from the two trading posts with the Ainu in the Yūbari area (Umehara, 2009). At the very least, the lives of indigenous people in the Yūbari area gave it its name, and are inseparable from its development into a mineral extraction hub along with much of the Sorachi area. However, the discovery of coal is attributed to the American chief geologist for the Meiji government in Hokkaido, Benjamin Lyman. From there Hokutan and the banking conglomerates turned coal extraction into the primary shape that progress would take in Yūbari's century of explosive growth and decline (Umehara, 2009). Though we might think of this "phase" of the area encompassing the power plant and the surrounding mines as its "real" life, this would be buying into the same ideas of progress that brought the mines, power plants and trains into being and which just as soon left Yūbari to deal with the issues it created.

The fact that this place was being used before, and is being used after the supposed real or historical use of this space as a power plant has ended suggests a different timeline: one that does not end with an ever-upward climb towards some lofty marvel of progress, but one that starts with the fact that this place was (all but) abandoned and dismantled. This abandonment is haunted by a history of indigenous people buried beneath Japanese colonial history, a result of financial elites and people seeking better livelihoods in the frontier of Hokkaido. Stoler (2006) talks about that which haunts as that which frequents,

that which is familiar or occupies invisibly, or again that which possesses with effects that may have no clear name[24]. Hokkaido's development was a cornerstone of Meiji Japan's assuming of the trappings of progress based on notions of economic development as cultural evolution, which ushered in the period of Japanese expansionism, and materialised great but brief, unequal, and unsustained wealth (Morris-Suzuki, 1997). Like most industrial capitalist activity, it also materialised great amounts of leftovers, which we might call rubble, or heritage, or a living space depending on how they are used now and what histories are lived through them (cf. Gordillo, 2014). Ruins involve not just material debris but also "human debris": the lives ruined, the futures broken, the shattered social bonds and subjectivities of imperial formations (Stoler, 2008). The erasure of indigenous people and forced labourers from the history of the mines certainly raises questions about the extent to which the re-use of this space as heritage plays into a kind of imperial nostalgia. But ruins can also offer a means of exhuming things that were assumed buried, and making them part of new becomings and vital reformations, offering a different sense of history that interrupts capitalist boosterism and progress (Foster, 2012; Martin, 2014b; Stoler, 2008). When we begin to view the rubble that makes up the primary material of Suzki-san and others' projects as one of the main products of Yūbari's mining capitalism, *recycling* is not simply the production of capitalist value by interested parties, but an emergent peri-capitalist mode in Yūbari (Tsing, 2015).

The power plant's use by Suzuki-san and the recycling facility marks it as rubble: it is not merely some sacred ruin one can easily label as heritage in the same sense as the temples of Nara or the cultural attractions of Kyoto (Kim, 2008), which point to a distant past more easily romanticized under a nationalist narrative of a longstanding "Japanese" people and state. The ecomuseum approach that was the subject of Suzuki's research for instance places emphasis on the living quality of place, not trying to preserve the dead but rather emphasize the role of places in the lives of people living now. The concept of eco-museum in the literature is also closely tied to the idea of heritage, but emphasizes that this heritage is only called as such because it has meaning in the present (Davis, 2011). What kind of meaning then is there to treat these leftovers in the present as "heritage" or *isan* (遺

[24] Tsing (2015) too uses the metaphor of haunting to describe the lingering effects of destruction (78-79)

産)? The word that Suzuki-san preferred, *isan*, is interesting for the fact that it suggests some form of wealth that is leftover, as in upon someone's death. Like the Japanese term for generic nature (自然), *isan* is also a term that was designated to create an equivalency with corresponding words from Western languages like "heritage" in English and "patrimoine" in French (Marcon, 2015; Morita and Jensen, 2014). The second character 産 is interesting in that it suggests meanings of "wealth" and "production"[25]. The meaning of this character goes much deeper, as it is also used in the Shinto concept of *musubi/musuhi* (産霊) which refers to a quality of generation as creation as well as the connection and succession of life (Tōzawa, 2014). The choice of the word *isan* then is a significant one that lends the weight of national and even international traditions and meanings to the everyday lives and leftover structures of Yūbari. In this sense, "heritage" also fits semiotically with rubble, past lives and recycling. But McMorran (2008; 2014) notes in the context of a town in southern Japan that has tailored itself to fit an idealized aesthetic of rurality for tourism that heritage is primarily a commodity, sold as a means of adapting to the reality of the present. Yet this choice of words also reflects the idea that rural areas are catching up, with successful revitalization being evaluated by economic well-being. If the Shimizusawa Project is re-valuing these sites as heritage, then what kind of meaning does it have now? What kind of space and sense of place[26] is being rebuilt by these activities?

Machizukuri

One of the terms I started using for discussing my research about Yūbari from the very beginning was "revitalization". Throughout my reading, I had encountered the phenomenon of rural revitalization movements in Japan, occurring under various terms, each with their own particular histories and connotations.[27] It is the term *machizukuri* (まちづくり) that I take particular interest in as it receives widespread use among the people I became acquainted with. It also reflects the idea of Yūbari's contemporary situation of being re-made into a town (as implied by the word *machi*) rather than a city (Yūbari is still

[25] For instance the Japanese word for communism is 共産 or *kyōsan*, which we might read as communal production.
[26] This is as much a reference to Feld and Basso (1996) as it is to the title of Davis' (2011) book on ecomuseums.
[27] Among these are 地域おこし (*chiiki okoshi*)、地域再生 (*chiiki saisei*)、地域づくり (chiikizukuri)、村おこし (*mura okoshi*)、ふるさと再生 (*furusato saisei*)、まちづくり (*machizukuri*).

known as 夕張市, Yūbari city). By exploring the history and uses of the term *machizukuri*, I argue that in Yūbari, *machizukuri* efforts often involve translating the heritage and resources within the former city into places that reflect Yūbari's existence as a town. This translation resonates with nationalist discourse of rural hometowns or *furusato* (ふるさと) and widely-held images of rural Japan as the seat of tradition. However, it also offers a means of claiming belonging and stability within a country that has increasingly been devolving responsibility to and enforcing the fiscal independence of rural areas. As Knight (1994) notes, revitalization efforts tend to only happen in places where more traditional means of economic development have failed. As a result, these kinds of revitalization movements (which I deal with here mostly as *machizukuri*) are concerned with stability, and maintaining the existence of a community beyond growth (Matanle and Sato, 2010). *Machizukuri* brings together locally-oriented economic or developmental practices with cultural resources and problems of progress.

According to Wada (2010), *machizukuri* has its origins in the post-war reconstruction period of the 1950s as a form of participatory activity to improve cities and realizing democracy through citizen action. As of the 1970s, *machizukuri* and related initiatives had also taken root in rural areas as they were de-industrialized. By the 1980s, *machizukuri* largely came to replace the more official-sounding *toshikeikaku* (都市計画, equivalent to urban planning) as the name and philosophy for community activities and development, placing emphasis on citizen initiative and private sector activities above top-down government planning. *Machizukuri* is usually written in hiragana rather than Chinese-derived characters lending it a softer image. At the level of the central government in the 1980s, much of this change at the level of popular sentiment was a background concern, overshadowed by the bubble economy (Rozman, 1999). The collapse of the bubble created further incentive for the central government to implement decentralization, shifting responsibilities and financial burden away from the nation and onto local governments and individuals in the name of promoting autonomy (Ertl, 2007; Hashimoto and Sato, 2008). However, the bursting of the bubble economy and the mismanagement of the Kobe earthquake of 1995 have also made *machizukuri* into a means of taking over from an increasingly untrustworthy central government (Sorensen and Funck, 2007: 10).

Kingston (2004) notes that this distrust has produced changes in civil society on a level with the social change of the Meiji restoration, except that top-down forms of social change associated with Meiji modernization and post-war reconstruction no longer seem to satisfy the people. NPOs and various movements around managing lived environments have become a kind of "garbage can" where all kinds of expectations (e.g. expanding welfare services, promoting political reform) have been dumped together and expected to perform cheaply and efficiently (Kingston, 2004). *Machizukuri* movements are historically and geographically diverse, but nonetheless tend to share a concern giving voice to civil society in the management of lived environments where traditional and stronger actors have formerly dominated (Sorensen and Funck, 2007).

Machizukuri is all the more interesting because of its resistance of a settled definition because of its focus shifting according to local circumstances, and its uneasy translation into languages like English (Sorensen and Funck, 2007). However, some common characteristics based on Wada's (2010) reading of the literature and its application to contemporary rural contexts are: residents finding ways to help each other in their everyday living, using latent resources of living spaces and traditions in order to increase economic leeway and autonomy, bring out the marvel in everyday living space, cultivate love and pride for the physical and social environment, as well as preserving local environments and autonomy. Some keywords associated with *machizukuri* efforts are democracy, community, sustainability, local autonomy, and place. Robertson (1988) notes in the context of the related *furusato*-zukuri literature that Japan's old hometowns (*furusato*) are presumed to have existed in harmony and been the object of negative change from external forces (westernization, industrialization, urbanization as indexed by the more passive verb *naru*), with positive change coming from within (Japan) and indexed by the same *tsukuru* verb as in *machizukuri*. Since the use of *–zukuri* as a suffix can be affixed to different locales (e.g. *shimazukuri* for island environments), it is significant that people in Yūbari (including the municipal government) often choose to use *machizukuri* to describe their projects, emphasizing Yūbari as a town building with its own resources.

The literature on rural revitalization and *machizukuri* efforts in Japan has grown rather large over the past three decades as towns have lost their main industries, much of

their population and had their administrations upheaved by decentralization policies (Tsukamoto, 2011). However, *machizukuri* movements in the former *gaichi* (外地 colonial acquisitions first comprising Hokkaido and Okinawa) are still understudied. *Machizukuri* and rural revitalization efforts tend to take place in areas where traditional development efforts have failed (Knight, 1994). One of the notable failures for many rural areas (including Yūbari) was the government-sponsored tourism boom of the 80s and 90s that urged the creation of large resorts and infrastructure for urban visitors, often under the banner of "nostalgia" and returning to the hometown or *furusato* (Kawamori, 2001; Moon, 1989; Robertson, 1988). As post-bubble decentralization devolved responsibility and fiscal burdens from the central government, local communities increasingly turned inward to avoid further risky measures based on urban demand (Dewit and Yamazaki, 2005; Rausch, 2009). Cases of *machizukuri* located inside Japan's main islands (outside the colonial geography of Hokkaido and Okinawa) have been well-documented in English and Japanese (Ertl, 2007; Goto, 1993; Ichihara, 2007; Kato, 2008; Kelly, 1990; Oie 2008; Wakita, Kurotani and Tanaka, 2001). But fewer studies have focused on non-indigenous people in Hokkaido, despite cases of *machizukuri* in Hokkaido providing part of the popular impetus for its spread in the 1980s (Chang, 2015; Wada, 2010).

Furthermore, studies of rural revitalization often treat "rural decline" in terms similar to those set out by media, demographers and government (see Masuda, 2014; Knight, 1994). Even recent studies that draw on the idea of precarity to denaturalize decline still nonetheless assume some form of economic progress as the desirable end of rural revitalization (cf. Love, 2013; Rausch, 2009). Talking about rural decline and unsustainable communities destined for collapse in this literature developed as a way of going against the overwhelming concern for Japan's postwar prosperity (Matanle et al., 2011). However, this kind of discourse is unsettlingly close to that of those who have decided that Yūbari a microcosm of Japan's foremost problems of aging and depopulation, and disparage Yūbari's devolution into an image of Japan's dark future where people cannot even bother to burn their trash like the rest of the country (Tokyo MX, 2013; Otokita, 2015). In other words, the literature on rural decline often substitutes tropes of Showa-era (1920s to late 1980s) prosperity with post-bubble decline, employing similar teleological constructs. The prevalent discourse of decline makes it interesting to take

locally-based activities as an opportunity to inverse commonly-held associations of progress with Tokyo, and decline as associated with Yūbari and other rural areas. In other words, it is not just that the central government's policies focusing on Tokyo's growth at the expense of regions has impeded progress throughout Japan, but rather that rural communities seem to now be increasingly turning away from progress as defined by the period of central government-led high economic growth altogether (Matanle and Sato, 2010).

Suzuki-san's project is thus at once re-valuing particular elements of Yūbari's mining history as heritage, but doing so in ways that are familiar and widespread throughout Japan. It is difficult to generalize about "*machizukuri*" given the diversity of things that happen under this name (not to mention the other names given to similar movements and projects throughout Japan). After all, it was under the banner of *machizukuri* that the big investment into tourism in Yūbari happened in the 1980s (Yūbari City, 2013) There is nothing inherent in *machizukuri* that is opposed to government, modernization or the ideology of progress, even though as noted earlier rural revitalization tends to be promoted in areas left out by growth and progress. *Machizukuri* is perhaps best understood as an orientation towards the local (whether urban or rural), or a set of principles for focusing efforts and resources in order to improve life in a locality (Wada, 2010). *Machizukuri* is good at bringing out the specificities of localities in similar ways, particularly where so-called declining towns are concerned. As pointed out in the previous chapter, though the language of *furusato* is not used by Suzuki-san to describe what she is trying to build, the city uses this term, and in any case it could be argued a certain aesthetic of the *furusato* is at play in both. Both can be argued to be salvaging ubiquitous images of rural Japan into nostalgia-like feeling, promoting a proud and unique image, with the possibility of producing tourism revenue.

However, the scale, assumptions and methods by which Suzuki-san is working are obviously quite different from the creation of massive tourism-oriented infrastructure like the theme park and museum of coal in Yūbari following the decline of mining. Ertl (2007) offers insight into how rural Japan's recent development increasingly follows a logic of securing popular, long-term support on a local and national scale: the creation of tourist-oriented sites aims to foster a recognizable identity not primarily to encourage sojourners to visit, but to

compete for prestige in terms of the most interesting or old community. Competition is framed in the cultural terms of heritage and authenticity rather than the economic terms of financial centres and metropoli, aiming to retain people and businesses as well as stable grants and loans by virtue of this identity. I think this applies to Yūbari as long as we do not assume that people have replaced progress with an acceptance of decline, or with returning to the past as might be interpreted from the common use we make of English words such as "nostalgia" and "heritage". Within the competition for image encouraged by decentralization and decreasing contributions from the central government (Ikawa, 2008), the inconveniences of historical violence are sometimes be excised to better fit the narrative that Yūbari belongs, has contributed, and its residents should be proud. The effort to belong and to improve Yūbari's image is dependent upon there being a heritage to point to: there is some strategic romanticization of Yūbari's history in the re-valuation or salvage of ruins and waste as heritage.

Once again, it is worth interrogating what kind of salvage or value is at stake with this particular site, as it tends to be emblematic of the "heritage" Suzuki-san seeks to re-use. Other groups would want to make this kind of place into world heritage, putting it on a level with "perfect" objects of global heritage in Greece and Rome that rest on the purification of messy networks of belonging, trade and ideas into a singular identity and teleology (Geismar, 2015). While Suzuki-san's project produces its own exclusions by focusing on the lived histories of Japanese people and their continuous existence in Yūbari, it nonetheless rejects the globalizing teleology of world heritage in favour of more local and open-ended forms of being and thinking. Recent studies of heritage have begun to look at it as embodied and contested, not merely fitting within broadly conceived categories of dominant or alternative heritage. Rather, heritage can be simultaneously dominant in its participation in the exclusion of marginalized groups in history and citizenship, but also be subversive in articulating realities that do not fit tropes of rurality as well as in pointing to ongoing processes of ruination than the term "ruin" suggests (Tolia-Kelly et al., 2016). This kind of heritage is acknowledged to exist within a fraught history, one that like the spirits of those that perished in the New Yūbari Mine accident, rests uneasily within the story of the mass middle class led by benevolent corporate-government cooperation and national unity (Meskell, 2011). It is a history that situates Yūbari clearly as unappreciated heritage, whose contributions are not recognized now that time has passed and Yūbari's failures are made to look

like its own. But more than seeking to settle these debts, this heritage is about building something different. At the broadest level, rather than rebuilding Yūbari as a city, Suzuki-san's project aims to make use of local knowledge and dormant resources to form connections that can bridge between generations, neighbouring regions and cut across gender divides to build a more sustainable society where the central government's business as usual has not. This divergence from more universal, market modes of valuation to more locally-oriented ones (although sometimes borrowing more universal images of nostalgia and *furusato*) is where I situate potential for thinking of some *machizukuri* projects as moving beyond simple teleologies of decline or progress: the conditions others define as "decline" become the basis for a different kind of valuation that need not so strictly adhere to or be judged by progress or capitalist value production.

Value

Value, of course, has a fairly long analytic history in anthropology, and more precisely in economically-oriented anthropology. Graeber (2001) outlines three general uses of the word *value* that, while seemingly distant, are still interrelated and at play in this research. Value in the sociological sense refers to what we mean by *having values*, that is morally good, ethical or proper behaviour. Value in the economic sense refers to exchange value, as in how much or what others are willing to give in return for giving something up. The third use of the word *value* outlined by Graeber (2001) comes from Saussurean linguistics, where "value" means "meaningful difference" between any given terms (1-2). Put even more simply, valuing what is *good*, valuing what is *profitable*, and valuing what is *meaningful* are different ways of creating value that are at the same time interrelated. All of these formulations of value combine together in studies of "gift" economies in Melanesia ever since Marcel Mauss' research into the creation of societies around symbols and the creation of social bonds through gifts invested with the self. Mauss' research has been picked up by Christopher Gregory (1997) to demonstrate the inverse logics of gift economies to personify objects and create social debts by giving versus the commodity economy logic of objectifying people and accumulating as much as possible to gain relative advantage over others. It has been used by Annette Weiner (1992) to argue for the idea of inalienable possessions that seemingly defy the idea of "exchange value" precisely because their value comes from not being exchanged.

Value here need not (only) be the capitalist value produced by salvage, but also the value of creating meaningful difference from the official narrative of Yūbari's inevitable decline, and focusing on the moral good that Yūbari-as-rural-town can represent. In another formulation of value reckoning, we might describe this as emphasizing Yūbari's gifts and sacrifices to Japan in order to regain a different kind of social standing. This standing is not predicated on its current productivity, but its status as the living bedrock of the present and the future: for instance, for Suzuki-san the value of the power plant does not come from the exchange of the materials it is made up of, but from its inalienability which requires constant work to keep away less respectful urban explorers and cosplayers (Weiner, 1992). More recent discussions of value point out however that Graeber's conceptualization is limiting in its perpetuation of the division between nature (raw material, use-value) and value (human creation) (Gallagher and DiNovelli-Lang, 2014). Much like Goldstein (2014) discusses the afterlives of disturbed forests in Indonesia, the power plant (and the *zuriyama*, and much of Yūbari's heritage) is waste that is being reimagined as valuable in its current and divested state. Gallagher and DiNovelli-Lang (2014), using Goldstein's example, point to Neil Smith's (1996; 2008) arguments on nature and gentrification to suggest that there may be no *a priori* basis for separating human-made waste from nature (assumed to be the opposite of labour or its products). The power plant itself, as it is no longer being dismantled, is not currently defined by its exchange value, nor is it reducible to the provision of some ecosystem "service". Rather, it becomes a kind of raw material or nature, and the use-values that emerge from its encounter with humans are multiple, and exceed Suzuki-san's use of it as heritage or any easy classification into meaningful, good or profitable value-making (e.g. unaccompanied urban explorers, hypothetical children who throw rocks at it, cosplayers). In the absence of singular, controlled use for exchange value, all kinds of use-values and projects emerge, like what Martin (2014b) describes in the film *Edgelands*: a place that is the opposite of the prescriptive landscapes of contemporary cities. Much like Hutchinson's (1992) study of the use-value of currency, though not entirely out of market or property relations, it seems something like the use-value of the space, the space itself, and the relations that produced it become the grounds for contestations of value: just as cattle obtained through marriage is treated as "cattle of girls", the power plant is either heritage, target or post-apocalyptic background (or even nest for wild animals) according to how beings relate to it.

Perhaps more than creating a tourism industry in the interstices of Yūbari's failed extractive capitalism, Suzuki-san's efforts are succeeding in making places of belonging and connection possible (Davidson and Milligan, 2004). As elsewhere (Matanle, 2006), the priority of *machizukuri* efforts in Yūbari as I experienced them seems to have been creating places of belonging (particularly within national history), co-existence and stability (not to be confused with stagnation) over capitalist exhortations of anything that is not progress and maximized growth (Allison, 2013). While promoting tourism through an appreciation of heritage is one of the Shimizusawa Project's goals[28], the money Suzuki-san receives from the city and donations hardly make the Shimizusawa Project profitable so far. Suzuki-san mentions that for all the visitors, journalists, and students that come through, it has yet to materialize into much money for her organization.

Moreover, rather than merely supporting tourism and visitors coming to Yūbari, the Shimizusawa Project acts as a "gate" to the community, a means of connecting as well as keeping the unwanted disturbances that sometimes come with tourism to a minimum. These goals differentiate the project from massive tourism development: it is a different kind of town-building. While places like the *zuriyama* and the power plant may be considered to only be worth the exchange-value of the raw material they are made of, places of ruination are also peoples' homes, and they have affective value (and potential) that is not so easily liquidated (Mah, 2012). As Suzuki-san said to me in a later conversation, she does not see her project as holding onto things or places if people do not need them anymore, she merely wants to create places of exchange and connection between generations, and between locals and outsiders. To her and many other people I spoke to in Yūbari, it was important to encourage people to remember Shimizusawa's past, treasure their living experience of the town, pass on meaning to further generations and to think actively about what comes next. For instance, a photo exhibit accompanied a "birthday" party for Shimizusawa station, one of the stations on the line that runs the length of Yūbari. As a result of the city's own initiative, Japan Rail Hokkaido (currently

[28] The Yama no Kioku organization discussed previously also has this goal. The difference between the projects can perhaps best be summarized by the different ways they see heritage. The Shimizusawa Project seeks to include the lived experience of people in space as part of heritage, as a growing ecology. The Yama no Kioku project mostly views heritage as leftover buildings of importance, but also "immaterial heritage" like local cooking traditions. Its main goal in the coming years is to apply for World Heritage status for some of the remaining structures of the mines of the Sorachi area, boosting interest and tourism. It would not suffice to say that either project is not trying to making a better life for people in the area, but the ways by which this is imagined to happen are different.

operating at a heavy loss) has accepted to close the line in the next few years. Suzuki-san has long been using the non-staffed station for photo exhibits that have become fairly popular. Suzuki-san used the station's birthday to underline its role as the main road for exporting coal from Yūbari to various locations across eight sets of tracks. Suzuki-san also underlined the role of the station as a place that people have their own personal memories of by asking people of all ages to write something about the station. Though she joked children would often write things like "Thanks for all your hard work" (implying the station was already unused, and that this was more of a funeral than a birthday), many adults, older residents and visitors had heartfelt messages of how the station had helped them stay warm or been a point of connection with other people. Much like with the power plant, though the "original" life of the place seemed unlikely to continue, there was potential to use the space to build a commons there, and perhaps bridge some generational or spatial gaps.

The feeling of pride around coal production and marvel at the technologies of progress that remain reveal a level on which the salvage of the power plant is also tied into a debate about the value of Yūbari and its place in Japan. The fact that the Sorachi area was getting railroads at the same time as Tokyo and Osaka reveals the importance of the area as a resource hub for the development and expansion of Japan. Yūbari's oft-touted high quality of coal was a point of pride. Older residents I spoke to emphasized that this was a point of pride for Yūbari that was unfortunately being too easily forgotten. One of the shared goals of the *Yama no Kioku* and the Shimizusawa Project organizations is to re-attribute value to this history and the heritage of mining. This may at first glance seem like a classic nostalgic project, but Suzuki-san emphasizes that the living and useful quality of the spaces is at the core of the Shimizusawa Project. Where the Shimizusawa Project is concerned, this heritage will otherwise disappear or go to waste if it is not used, notably for education and tourism. Though I will return to the point about nostalgia in the next chapter, I merely want to point out how this use of heritage in order to help better the town's image in the present and help bring in visitors cannot be reduced to a mere nostalgic longing for the mining heyday. The meaning of this heritage in the now serves to dispel the image of Yūbari as a place that failed to stand on its own, and as a condensation of the burdens caused by the issues of rural Japan. Rather, Yūbari's contributions are emphasized and re-valued through heritage: spaces that exceed the meanings placed on them are used to promote an image

of Yūbari as rich, and Japan as being in debt and dependent on Yūbari. Heritage powerfully reverses the narrative of Yūbari's decline and debt as natural or its own fault by pointing to how hard people worked and how much the landscape was transformed in bringing Japan forward.

By pointing to Yūbari's earlier days, and its socio-economic decline, and nonetheless valuing its current state, a different story emerges whereby Yūbari is still a place where people live, has a proud history, and is immersed in natural scenery. This is not the kind of world heritage you can put on a postcard, but it can still be a nexus of meaning to point to a shared past, for instance (Martin, 2014b). Yūbari is no longer a site of great economic growth, as emphasized by Suzuki-san's frank but endearing description of the power plant area through the use of self-deprecating expressions often used for describing Japan's rural areas such as 寂しい環境 (*sabishii kankyō*, forlorn/worn out environment), 古い (*furui*, old), 自然に飲み込まれた (*shizen ni nomikomareta*, swallowed up by nature), and 何もない (*nanimonai*, there's nothing here). Over the course of my fieldwork, I heard these kinds of terms come up to describe Yūbari and other rural areas in an ironic kind of way: making Yūbari seem humble, but cutting this by nonetheless being appreciative of the way it has aged. However, this discourse also points to the past, the value in Yūbari's contribution to the development of the country, and its transition from mining metropolis to its current state as a rural town: in this way, it belongs to Japan and it should not so quickly marginalized. The history that haunts this area as translated through Suzuki-san also prevents me from simply immersing myself in nostalgia for the area's golden days: a sense of injustice or unfairness lingers that justifies Suzuki-san's efforts to make Yūbari into a town that belongs, rather than a city of ruins.

However, still living legacies of colonialism and forced labour are not explicitly translated within this project on the history and heritage of Yūbari. While ownership of the site is loose, there are no overt efforts to acknowledge that the fraught history of this heritage includes forced labourers and displaced indigenous people (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2011). What is left unspoken, hidden in the names of the scenery or drowned out by the destruction of war, in this case speak to a nationalist bent to establishing Yūbari's belonging through value in heritage and tradition. Even if done unwittingly, the issues of indigenous people and forced labour by prisoners of war in Japan's mines are known well enough that omitting them from a re-valuation

of Yūbari's history and heritage suggests that these issues are embarrassing to building Yūbari as a rural Japanese town. Though there is a resistance to the more commodifying discourse of production, resource management and heritage as "Ethnicity Inc." within the Shimizusawa Project, the prioritization of the living memories of the people currently in the neighbourhood erases others (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009).

Ruin

During an event aimed at creating new connections and showing support for Yūbari hosted in collaboration with a young blogger that had previously visited Yūbari, members of the Geek House, and people from the budding Airbnb network of Hokkaido, one of the visitors said something that explained the kind of attitude Suzuki-san was up against. Having come from Tokyo, and without any real prior knowledge of Yūbari, this visitor said "I don't really care if this place falls apart." Yūbari was perhaps good for seeing some ruins and hanging out in the countryside, but it was replaceable, and he would not miss it if he went back to Tokyo and it disappeared: this place was little more than a town of ruins in the former land of Ezo.

The honesty of the comment shocked me, but it put Suzuki-san's efforts into further perspective. When the cosmpolitan visitors that are the usual targets of the global heritage industry are disapproving of or unmoved by a place, it makes it hard to have a space recognized as heritage, or even anything of value, rather than just a ruin (Geismar, 2015). Many of the cosmopolitan visitors of the event seemed to be participants in the re-aestheticization of ruins, wanting to see ruins *as* ruins (Martin, 2014a). Suzuki-san avoids using the term for ruin, *haikyo* (廃墟), because it does not encourage the kind of tourism or town in which everyone wants to become involved and shape. While tropes of heritage, tradition and rurality can be interpreted as a kind of engineered affect manipulated by the elite according to a certain branch of affective geography, this has also been criticized for quickly devolving into arguments about the commodification and imperialism in everything (Barnett, 2008). The Shimizusawa Project salvages the possibility of different ways of being within the ruins of progress and capitalism, perhaps even ones where ruins can serve to reflect the processes of ruination that are producing them as ruins (cf. Gordillo, 2014; Stoler, 2008).

I am reluctant to wholeheartedly theoretically endorse the concept of "ruins" to understand what is left in Yūbari, if only to avoid rolling over the way "heritage" might be interesting to reinterpret in this context. However, the literature on ruins, or perhaps more accurately the afterlife of ruins, offers interesting parallels that convey the potential of these spaces to unsettle progress-oriented imagination. Navaro-Yashin (2009) focuses on ruins in post-war Cyprus, where the houses of displaced people are re-used to house families from the other faction of the war. Navaro-Yashin notes how ruins are simultaneously root-like and rhizomatic: ruins grow in uncontrollable and unforeseen ways, but also are a trace of historical events, and are remembered, lamented, cherished in the lives of those who live near them or in them. This perspective also contributes ruination as a process rather than a pre-defined physical structure: ruination is perhaps closer to the heritage Suzuki-san seeks to build in that it is both the material remains of destruction as well as the subjectivities and affects that accompany it through time (2009). As a project of place-making or *bazukuri*, the Shimizusawa Project asserts the past and current struggles of Yūbari, speaking more directly to its position within the nation while maintaining a certain kind of silence over what or who might not count as heritage, if only as a result of the lack of the living people in Yūbari willing or able to keep those haunting memories alive (Cresswell, 2014).

Ruins and other places of abandonment simultaneously bring together claims of heritage and potential interruptions of progress, but also the spectre of displacement. While there is no real gentrifying move in Yūbari in the sense of wealthy urbanites moving into a previously working class environment, the working class mining history of the town is by some accounts under a similar kind of threat of disappearing. This places these places of ruin *qua* heritage in relation with contexts of gentrification or preservation[29] (Smith, 1996). Many of the terms associated with *machizukuri* that describe rural revitalization such as *saisei* or *kasseika* (再生, 活性化) also speak to the association between revitalization and gentrification, where revitalization can only come about by catering to younger and wealthier individuals (Lees, et al., 2013). In many ways, creating places to live and work for young, well-off families is an important part of the city's master *machizukuri* plan, further connecting Yūbari's context to other de-industrialized

[29] We might include in this salvage anthropology and the entropic view of history that argues history must be preserved or it will entirely fade away (Robertson, 1997).

areas (Yūbari City, 2013). Indeed, these ruins are not like those of war zone, nor are they really a no man's land: life is not dead in Yūbari (cf. Navaro-Yashin, 2003; 2009). Perhaps we can think of Yūbari as what Martin (2014a) calls a "wounded city": a place marked by decades of slow, incessant displacement and destruction that continue to structure current social space as opposed to singular acts of devastation. How people tend to these wounds, trying to repair these decades of destruction as they continue, and create spaces of care in rurality is the subject of the final chapter. The next chapter picks up on themes of salvage, rurality and nostalgia to argue that what gets called nostalgia can also be an attempt to salvage a sense of place, pride, and autonomy for Yūbari as a rural town, extending salvage to other kinds of value-making and translation.

Chapter 3: Salvaging Nostalgia

In this chapter, I explore some of the ways in which salvage operates in the gaps and fissures created by the conditions of so-called decline in Yūbari: the closure of Yūbari's mines, the city's bankruptcy and the outmigration of its denizens. I use Anna Tsing's (2015) concept of salvage to explore some of the ways people are trying to produce capitalist value within the ruins of capitalism, notably by alienating peri-capitalist forms and relationships. That is to say, in this chapter, and throughout this thesis, I am attempting to look at various activities in Yūbari without assuming that they are capitalist or that they will inevitably become capitalist. Even making capitalist value is often patchy, with abandoned assets becoming lively spaces of multicultural and perhaps even multispecies encounter. Perhaps more than Tsing, I am hesitant to stimulate hope in the sense of making *machizukuri* activities in Yūbari out to be the bearer of a world beyond capitalism. While most of the people I introduce here in some way or another are trying in their own way to do something different than the extractive and extravagant development behind Yūbari's boom and bust, I struggle to avoid telling the story of pioneers of a new world amidst the failures of capitalist development. The overarching theme I want to bring out is that ending Yūbari's story with merely delaying decline belittles the way people are beginning to find ways to collaborate and to live with the conditions afforded by demographic and economic "decline".

Along with examining the way various *machizukuri* projects in Yūbari can be seen as capitalist projects of salvage, I also examine the ways they are affect-driven projects reacting to Yūbari's changing environment and finding value in what is left. These projects constitute Yūbari as a rural space in different ways, through the language of civilization, progress and tradition, but in ways that do not conform to merely creating a stronger economic base for debt repayment or bringing progress and economic growth back to Yūbari. These are projects that emerge from, but also betray, the civilizational imperatives that founded Yūbari.

I was originally introduced to the Geek House project in Yūbari by someone I had contacted at Yūbari's city hall. There are many Geek Houses throughout Japan. They are a loose network and growing network of share houses based on bringing together diverse people in a space. While it is difficult to point to guiding principles throughout this network, most Geek Houses value the principle of DIY, using the internet to foster different kinds of cooperation, and

sharing one's skills or resources with people sharing the space and with the wider community. The Geek House in Yūbari was started by a young investor from the main island. He had visited many other towns before coming to Yūbari on something of a whim in late 2015. During his visit, he learned about the history of the town and its bankruptcy, and after a visit to city hall managed to acquire a house that was no longer inhabited by its owner, the man mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. With crowdfunding and help from other people from the "Geek Squad", over several months, the house was renovated to be turned into a share house. It was opened officially just before I arrived.

Though I initially thought of the Geek House as an interesting and affordable place to stay during my visit, it became a significant influence over the course of my research. The Geek House project was different from most *machizukuri*-related activities I participated in: it was framed as a business and while it sought to become part of the community as well as make use of what was at hand, it catered mostly to the needs of visitors from outside Yūbari. I benefitted early on from introductions by the manager of the Geek House, and was able to see more of neighbouring areas of Hokkaido by tagging along on occasional day trips in the Geek Caravan, a car one of the traveling Geek Squad members had outfitted with a wifi hotspot and a solar panel. I was also an occasional house-sitter for the manager, which put me in further contact with visitors from outside Yūbari and their perspectives. In one way or another, all the long-term residents of the Geek House were educated with some amount of disposable time and income that had re-imagined their life towards living outside the city, and away from the office jobs they held in the past. For most, Yūbari represented a place of transition: too far from work or from home, it was a place in between, a place for alternative connections and experiences within Japan's borders. Some guests of the Geek House appreciated Yūbari because of its distance from "civilization" (*bunmei*, 文明)[30], its ruins played into survivalist imaginaries that they associate with the aftermath of 3.11: progress is not abandoned here, but sometimes suspended, or re-enacted by imagining Yūbari as a place of a certain freedom where a do-it-yourself, technologically-oriented imagination of progress can flourish. The Geek House project was an

[30] This is perhaps the most commonly used word as an equivalent for "civilization", and the one most used by the members of the Geek House. This word suggests enlightenment and written civilization, connotations that are all the more interesting in the context of Hokkaido, historically populated by people held to be savage and without culture.

attempt to salvage the low cost of living and the natural environment into a profitable share house that is nonetheless active in building Yūbari as a town far from civilization.

I mean something rather specific when I say "salvage". Anna Tsing (2015) describes the way supply chains rely on "peri-capitalist" relations and processes that can then be alienated from those life patterns to become commodified capitalist value. Examples of salvaged value produced outside of capitalism include the conditions of human and non-human disturbance that produce matsutake mushrooms, or the processes that create coal and oil over millions of years (Tsing, 2015: 63). Tsing emphasizes that a lack of control over the circumstances that enable the production of commodities is a feature of how capitalism works. Mushroom hunters forage in the forests without the security of wage labour, they then have their mushrooms categorized and labelled, removed from their context of production to become capitalist commodities and then become inserted into other peri-capitalist relationships as, for example, expensive gifts used to build relationships. This is the dynamic Tsing uses to describe the way that capitalism operates through "salvage". According to Tsing, modern expectations of progress have shut down the possibilities of noticing other ways of being based on different forms of other-than-capitalist relating. Through the language of salvage, Tsing allows us to examine capitalist value production with an eye on the peri-capitalist forms of labour, and life patterns that conditions it. This is a compelling view of capitalism that allows for complex and critical analysis of the material histories of capitalism and imperialism while also refraining from reducing everything to capitalism and progress, or the failure to materialize it. It is in interrogating the possibilities of life in the ruins of capitalism and finding other stories to tell than decline (as the failure to reproduce progress) that I find Tsing's analysis useful for talking about Yūbari.

Nonetheless, Tsing's focus on a well-developed supply chain that has more or less systematized the alienation of mushrooms from their lifeworlds and her sometimes divergent use of the idea of salvage pose certain problems. In the case of the Geek House, freely given property and the conditions of the environment are turned into conditions for profit by mostly non-local consumers. But as I tried to relate in the introduction, the ideal relations of commodified property with the transfer being finalized without continuing use rights over the garden were not realized. The Geek House eventually stopped operating after a visit from inspectors judging the house not to fulfill the conditions necessary for its operation as a travel

accommodation. These inspectors were not from Yūbari, but rather from the neighbouring town, as Yūbari was outsourcing this part of its functions and had no interest in interfering in the creation of a profitable hub for young, entrepreneuring people. The owner of the Geek House attributed this to sticking out too much, and being featured in the local newspaper months back. In the end, the blank slate and freedom afforded by Yūbari were perhaps less than imagined. In many ways, the "salvage" of the Geek House failed. Was it just because it was shut down? Did it not manage to effectively alienate the property and its surroundings? The Geek House's failure to become a share house made me question what happens when projects of salvage become about something else than producing capitalist value. What other kinds of value can emerge when alienation fails? Tsing (2015) offers largely successful instances of salvage, and mushrooms may be easier to alienate than houses, let alone houses that are given. However, Tsing (2015) sometimes uses "salvage" to mean, for example, the translation of commodified mushrooms into gifts, as opposed to the extraction of capitalist value by alienating and marshalling various different rhythms of life into a reductive form the market can recognize as valuable (123).

For example, salvage is useful for describing how methane gases are planned to be extracted from Yūbari's underground, and why projects like this no longer engender faith in Yūbari's return to a more prosperous past. Yūbari's methane reserves have also recently attracted attention as a potential for salvaged value. Yūbari's methane development project comes in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear crisis and Shinzo Abe's rural revitalization *chiiki sōsei* (地域創生[31]) policy (Sankei News, 2014). During an interview on April 2, 2016, the young mayor of Yūbari describes how even older people who could hardly write were contacting him to voice their support for this venture (Videonews, 2016). The project to survey the gas deposits is funded by the city, through the "hometown tax" or *furusato nōzei* (ふるさと納税)[32] system of donations

[31] The characters of the name of this policy suggest creating anew, not revitalization so much as vitalization. See Mohacsi, 2004.

[32] The *furusato nōzei* system started in the late 2000s is one of the more common instances in which the word *furusato* can be heard. The system allows people to donate money to their hometown or a local government of their choice for a tax break, and depending on the amount of the contribution, a local specialty. It was created as a means of helping cash-strapped municipalities that financially supported and educated people in their youth (presumably before they moved to cities) while encouraging urbanites to connect with the idea of the hometown. As Asahi (2009) notes, while the system creates significant sums for some areas, in most cases the donation system represents a miniscule fraction of city income. Seen as a whole, the system has seen many cases of abuse, competition over local specialties, and deprived other cities of taxable income for infrastructure and normal expenses. In Yūbari, the system

by furniture company Nitori, which had pledged 500 million yen over 3 years. Many people I spoke to were interested in the local uses of the methane gas: the project seemed to be proposed as mainly a means to reduce local heating costs and produce gas for use in farming (Takada, 2016). But no one believed this would bring about great changes. Additionally, no one seemed particularly concerned about this being the same gas that produced deadly accidents in the past, as they were assured any extraction would happen mechanically. One person I interviewed felt it was important for Yūbari to help produce energy for the country in this tumultuous time. Concerned that not all the potential risks had been explained, I offered the example of the Lac Mégantic accident in my home province of Quebec as evidence that even transporting volatile hydrocarbons in large quantities through the town could be dangerous. This comparison seemed to speak to some pre-existing fears for my participant: while everyone seemed to agree the returns for Yūbari were desirable, no one seemed willing to trust developers beyond the next step in the process. As opposed to the symbolic power of the New Yūbari Mine project during the mine closures, Yūbari's denizens are no longer placing their hopes on hydrocarbon extraction, or any other industry, to make Yūbari into a booming town again. This is the case even from a surface analysis of the biggest industries in Yūbari. Melon Bear, the town mascot captures the local tendency of bears (associated with Hokkaido and Ainu culture) to eat Yūbari's melons while appealing to urban youth aesthetics. A large new tourist development re-using Yūbari's massive resort has also begun as of February 2017, but neither of these instances of salvage give the sense of leading the way forward to ever greater prosperity (Sankei News, 2017). The city has recently re-branded itself to taken on "Restart. Challenge More." (in English) as its motto, but this is a campaign aimed precisely at challenging the idea that Yūbari is fallen, is reducible to its melons, or a recluse cluster of elderly people (Yūbari City, 2017a). Mere development no longer seems to satisfy a citizenry betrayed by the promises of government-backed extractive and tourist industries: many are looking to the city's mining past rather than the "future perfect" temporality of modern development for how to make their lives and hometown better (Hetherington, 2016).

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provides the city with some leeway, providing some disposable income outside of the seemingly all-consuming debt repayment plan. Some claim as a result of the *furusato nōzei* system, the principle that citizens pay taxes for municipal services is being distorted, but in Yūbari, where much of peoples' taxes go towards repaying the debt, this principle is already in jeopardy.

Other examples of salvage also seem to brush up against communal resources and memories. One company in Yūbari is currently taking slag, composed of rocks filtered out from coal during the mining period (first by women, then by machines), and combining them with oil to make material for building roads. The rocks that make up the slag were effectively waste to the mining companies that produced them: a fire hazard piled further away from residences. Many of the more burnable stones have either already burned out in occasional fires, or been taken in the past as fuel by women and children as part of household chores. Most of the slag heaps have been overgrown by vegetation in the decades since the closing of the mines. Moreover, many *zuriyama* have been destroyed. This has apparently left only one salvageable site, where a company is taking the scrap of previous work in order to produce a commodity. But perhaps there are other kinds of salvage going on. Ones that, like the Geek House, are less straightforwardly successful in their commodification, and that even in their commodification may be reigniting other kinds of valuations. I will elaborate more on the other kinds of ways *zuriyama* are being re-used.

The other mountain

From the train line that runs the length of Yūbari, or even from the main roads, the slag heaps dotting the landscape are somewhat hard to spot without knowing what one is looking at. Unlike the grooves in the face of the mountains in the former core of mining activity of the north, or the remaining miners' residences built for the last mines to close, the *zuriyama* tend to blend in with the mountainous surroundings. From a distance, many now look like hills with poor soil: dark brown or blackish soil is unevenly covered in opportunistic weeds, brushes and short trees. It is only by getting closer that the black soil's composition of black coal-like rock fragments and burned out pale red rocks becomes clearer. In Hokkaido, these piles of rocks are called *zuriyama* (ズリ山). Interestingly, both *zuriyama* and mines (*tankou* 炭鉱) are *yama*, or mountains. *Yama* is used as slang to mean mine. Where one finds a *zuriyama*, a mine tends to be close by in Yūbari. Nowadays, even covered in vegetation, *zuriyama* are easier to find than the sites of the mines they were produced from. Though the *zuriyama* are mountains of waste, I was surprised by the extent to which visitors and locals alike would find something endearing or charming about these "mountains" and the views they offered. Where the mines have been closed off to the

public, the *zuriyama* have continued to exist, and perhaps in some sense flourish with public use[33], despite capitalism (Tsing, 2015).

From the time I learned of the slag heaps from the kind old man I introduced in the beginning of this chapter, I became interested in them, and what uses people (and plants) were making of these seemingly dangerous or barren spaces. This interest led me to discover the life, or perhaps the afterlife, of slag heaps in other countries as well. In the UK, some movements to preserve slag heaps and turn them into industrial heritage or nature reserves have taken those who see them as waste aback (Hull, 2008; BBC, 2014). In France too, slag heaps are now being touted as industrial heritage rather than waste, and some have taken advantage of the "pioneer" environment of the slag heaps to graze herds or even grow wine (Schofield, 2015). In Yūbari, as I discussed previously, there are businesses looking to recycle slag and turn it into road material[34]. During the mining days, *zuriyama* were created a certain distance from residences to avoid fires from accidentally activated coal reaching the homes of the workforce. Nonetheless, older residents of Yūbari remembered sometimes playing around the *zuriyama*, as it was close to many homes and one of the more open areas of the residential district. Autobiographies from residents of Yūbari also talk about *zuriyama* as a commons of sorts, a place for women and children to gather coal for personal use (Kobayashi, 1983; Yokuyama, n.d.). Use of the *zuriyama* today tends to be recreational or educational: families sometimes spend their day off on the heaps, looking for coal, sometimes happening upon leftover artifacts, or even animal bones. Drone flying enthusiasts also fly their drones above the *zuriyama*, filming the view offered by the heights of the hill. Though the *zuriyama* not in use by the slag recycling company belong to no one (or rather, belong to everyone), some groups are aiming to turn them into industrial heritage and as resources for reconnecting locals and outsiders to the good sides of Yūbari.

I participated in the activities of two groups formed around the promotion of industrial heritage in Yūbari. One is the *Yama no Kioku* NPO, operating throughout the Sorachi area.

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[33] Some *zuriyama* had not been officially recognized as free for public use until 2011, but this has not stopped people from climbing them or using them before the city's approval.

[34] This is part of a larger infrastructural shift happening in Hokkaido, where roads are expanding and train lines are being cut back as Japan Rail Hokkaido operates at a great loss every year (Asahi Shinbun, November 19, 2016). Yūbari City proposed to cut its own train line, to the surprise of many. This would allow Yūbari to save JR money and allow the city to better coordinate its transport infrastructure, among other potential benefits. The connection between slag, roads and rail is sometihng I would like to explore in future research.

Through the kind introduction of Yorozuya-san, a member of *Yama no Kioku*, I was introduced to Suzuki-san, director of the Shimizusawa Project, the second group. I discuss this second group and its connection to the *Yama no Kioku* NPO more in the next chapter. For now, I merely want to begin introducing the respective ways people from these groups envision and transform Yūbari. Both these groups have an eye on valuing the unique and the marvellous in Yūbari, in the hopes of attracting visitors. As McMorran (2008; 2014) notes, elsewhere in Japan, adopting heritage, warm sociality and nostalgic design have sometimes been successful in creating vibrant tourist towns for urban visitors. At the same time, simply commodifying Yūbari's former industrial sites as heritage is difficult, and not consistently the end goal of the members of these groups. Both organizations share an interest in promoting the remembrance of the mines and the lifestyles associated with it. At first, I was not sure what to make of this idea: how does one cultivate this kind of collective memory? Why is this important? It may very well bring in sympathetic and interested tourists, but I wondered what kind of affects are being associated with this kind of place-making (Anderson, 2016; Davidson, Bondi and Smith, 2005; Thien, 2005)? I began to think through this mode of re-attributing value to places written off as a burden to the city as a kind of salvage, albeit one that was even less clearly about participation in a capitalist commodity chain (Tsing, 2015).

Other ethnographers of Japan, both in mining towns and without, have described this kind of *machizukuri* as nostalgic. Allen (1994) describes generally the same kind of environment that I do, but at the other end of Japan: the coalfields of Kyūshū have been shut down, forcing people to find dignity in what is left. The legacy of coal is everywhere, if fading: slagheaps are covered in vegetation, and people living in the miners' residences are being moved to more modern buildings. Economic decline has diversified the economy, but people are not as well off as before. Allen (1994) argues that "decline" and the lack of alternatives comes from the historical disempowerment of the miners (2). Even if decades have passed since Allen's ethnographic description of "revivalists" challenging hegemonic and sanitized accounts of history, it remains extremely relevant for describing the similar groups in Yūbari, as they are also composed of many outsiders, concerned with the intergenerational transmission of knowledge of local mining history, and feel the country owes a certain unpaid debt to the people of the area for

their past contributions[35] (Allen, 1994: 29, 44). Nonetheless, the reality of decline remains rather unquestioned. Like Love's (2013) study of activities aimed at finding local treasures (i.e. things that can be used to revitalize the area from within) in a former copper mining village in northern Japan, and Robertson's (1988; 1997) study of the meanings and aesthetics of *furusato* or "rural hometown", Allen points to the existence of a certain nostalgia amid decline. Love (2013) in particular attributes all local efforts to renew the vitality and viability of their homes to the center devolving responsibility, with nostalgia acting as a kind of opium of the masses: making decline appear to be a bittersweet inevitability as the center grows more powerful[36]. Although using the term less critically, Anna Tsing (2015) in her study of *satoyama* revitalization movements refers to the potential of nostalgia can have against reductive metanarratives of progress. Though I owe debts to these ethnographers for their solid work, I find myself unable to join the more critical chorus on "nostalgia" for describing what is going on in Yūbari. Furthermore, I am not sure that there is sufficient proof that the English word "nostalgia" is sufficient for describing the affect associated with Japanese rurality and *furusato*, for reasons I hope Yorozuya-san and Suzuki-san will make clear in the following paragraphs.

The owner of the Geek House introduced me to Yorozuya-san early in my fieldwork. He is the local repairperson and jack-of-all-trades. Some days he repairs air conditioners or installs televisions. On other days, he drives elderly residents to do their groceries. He finds somewhat regular employment doing set up at a tourist attraction called "Canadian World" in another town. Always ready to give an honest opinion, and often wearing colourful, patterned short-sleeve shirts of a style that reminded me of Hawaiian or Cuban versions of a *guayabera*, any encounter with Yorozuya-san was impactful. Unlike many of the people associated with *machizukuri* efforts I encountered, he was born and raised in Yūbari. Though he himself is a grandfather, he lives with and cares for his elderly mother. Though he says he is not that well-known in Yūbari, he is well-known in the *Yama no Kioku* NPO. It was through these connections that I was invited to help with maintenance on the most actively re-used *zuriyama* in Shimizusawa, in between the former core of mining activity in the north and the farmland of the south. Suzuki-san, introduced

[35] It is somewhat more difficult to identify a consistent official narrative against which Yūbari's revivalists are fighting. For instance, the museum exhibit I discussed in chapter 1 is quite different from the one Allen (1994) describes as a parade of congratulations for mining company, devoid of any deaths, violence or unions (18).
[36] A later article by Love (2014) distinguishes between idealized community solidarity and reactionary nostalgia in rural contexts, calling the former the supple bonds that help various actors generate a future in post-growth Japan.

in the previous chapter, along with art students from Sapporo and their professor led the installation of cubic wooden benches, and signs providing basic information on the *zuriyama*, as well as the replacement of wooden steps on the steep part of the heap. As I, Yorozuya-san, and other volunteers installed the wooden blocks and steps, coating them with varnish that seemed to evaporate instantly in the scorching July sun, Suzuki-san and Nakamura-san from the Shimizusawa Project would talk about the other two harder to access *zuriyama* nearby, including one created across the river using a bridge that was no longer there. Nakamura-san also told us about the paulownias, conifers and katsura that had taken to growing on the *zuriyama*[37], particularly in the last ten years. Suzuki-san welcomed three buses filled with children on a fieldtrip, giving a short presentation on what a *zuriyama* was, and allowing kids to look for coal fragments on the slag heap. People from Yūbari and outside that had come as visitors or as volunteers commented on how great the view was that day, with the sun shining brightly over the lush mountains and the meandering river, with the blue and red roofs of the miners' residences looking freshly painted.

View of Shimizusawa from the Main *Zuriyama*

[37] Other researchers have observed many other opportunistic and invasive plants growing on *zuriyama* and other industrial coal sites in the Sorachi area (Yamada and Masaka, 2007).

When I interviewed Suzuki-san about what exactly had drawn her to Yūbari, she said it was the first time she saw this view from atop the *zuriyama* more than ten years ago that moved her to dedicate herself to the re-use and valuation of Yūbari's industrial heritage. More than her hometown in Kyūshū or her home in Sapporo, the Shimizusawa district captured Suzuki-san's affection and curiosity. Indeed, more than a story of salvage or pioneering into the unknown, Suzuki-san's encounter sounded more like a love story or the encounter of something warm and familiar in a strange place. Though she came to learn the town's history from her studies and efforts to make use of Yūbari's "latent resources" as part of tourism-oriented *machizukuri*, it was the Yūbari just before the bankruptcy but after the closure of the mines that she first encountered and fell in love with. Though Suzuki-san is leading re-use of the *zuriyama* in Shimizusawa, it is hard to qualify this as the kind of alienation and dispossession that characterizes the production of capitalist value through salvage (Tsing, 2015). Though the slag heap is now equipped with minimum amenities, and a sign imposing a short historical narrative onto the slag heap, Suzuki-san is not operating it as a tourist site. When she receives smaller groups on monthly walks around Shimizusawa, she does not position herself as an all-knowing expert, preferring to engage in the same kind of discovery and re-imagining as everyone else, and let local guides tell their own stories. At most, she generates menial revenue from the occasional tour, and is perhaps just as wary of mass tourism as any long-term resident I met. Perhaps then this kind of "salvage" is closer to the other meaning Tsing gives to "salvage": taking this place out of its potential for market circulation and making it a more common space. The Shimizusawa Project proposes that the *zuriyama* can be part of a living museum, a place of exchange between outsiders and locals, and a way to foster pride in the memory, history and continuous life of the area.

Does the focus on taking pride in a certain version of history make this a project of nostalgia? For Suzuki-san, the Shimizusawa project is not about eulogizing the past, or promoting remembrance for its own sake or for some grand ideal. While the *Yama no Kioku* NPO is currently more focused on making heritage sites throughout Sorachi eligible for UNESCO World Heritage, her first commitment is to the people of Shimizusawa, and Yūbari, by extension. Rather than merely remember, she wants to draw in all kinds of people to find treasures in Yūbari and share personal experiences to help dispel Yūbari's bad image: her focus is on a more local heritage that gives voice to the difficulties of life both in the past and in the present and sits uneasily within national narratives of harmony (Allen, 1994). As such, the

heritage she seeks to make known and make use of are also the result of her own sense of attachment, what the local people take pride in, and what visitors like to see. Rather than totally decontextualize practices and places, clouding the relationship between the local and the national, and producing a generic folk tradition that erases the lived history of the area as Kawamori (2001) notes in the case of the *furusato* boom in the 1980s onwards, Suzuki-san creates photo exhibits of peoples' daily lives, and tries to relate history to the present and fraught context in Yūbari. Though Suzuki-san's project began before the bankruptcy, the concern for taking pride in Yūbari as one's hometown has gained prominence since the bankruptcy. Making and experiencing a sense of value about where one comes from, and finding a place in a national history that risks writing off everything about Yūbari as an unsustainable mistake is a contemporary concern: it is not about cherishing a lost past so much as creating a meaningful present and future out of the resources offered by the past. The act of declaring nostalgia, particularly by Western academics, is one that elevates progress and implies backwardness or a lack of what Fabian (2002) calls coevalness.

Nonetheless, perhaps nostalgia is a useful entry point for thinking against tropes of progress, and much like "tradition" is not just the product of some hegemonic force, but also open to all kinds of reuses, and haunted by particular histories (Spear, 2003). As Anna Tsing (2015) says, perhaps what nostalgia can mean is to miss doing things with people, to miss the warm sociality associated with rural towns. Inevitably, trying to recreate or re-value this kind of sociality is not an easy process, with retired mine workers more rarely participating, and with opportunities for exchange happening mostly at the places the Shimizusawa project helps maintain, or during regularly held events like improvised neighbourhood walks and festivals. During these events, people from outside were often surprised by the beauty of the environment, and found the resolve of people in Yūbari impressive, dissolving ideas some had held previously about the hopelessness and gloom for the future crystallized by Yūbari. The question remains of what kind of different possibilities are emerging from *machizukuri* projects like Suzuki-san's, and what kinds of histories they construct. During the maintenance work on the *zuriyama*, Suzuki-san made a passing joke about using everyone as forced labour. Though Yūbari looks like a zone of abandonment, with its own "imperial ruins" (Stoler, 2008), these are not places of "implacable resentment" as opposed to love: though they are what is left of the imperial formations that produced them, Suzuki-san is hoping to use *zuriyama* to cultivate connections

and a sense that there are things in Yūbari worth passing on. However heritage in this sense also excludes certain parts of this lived history that come out mostly in the form of passing jokes, or summer ghost stories. Though I will return to these ideas in the next chapter, it might suffice for now to say that there is no imminent radical alternative here, but that there are vital refigurations of "unfinished histories, not of victimized pasts but consequential histories that open to differential futures" (Stoler, 2008). What is called nostalgia by some could be a mode of salvage, seeking in local history and common images of rurality a future outside the oppressive temporality of the interrupted future that continues to haunt Yūbari (Hetherington, 2016).

Though Suzuki-san contrasts her efforts to nostalgia tourism and never really used the word *furusato*, her experience resonates nonetheless with the kind of commodifying nostalgia and affect for the rural associated with rural revitalization and *furusato*. The view that Suzuki-san pointed to as igniting her passion for Yūbari has many of the elements of the idealized landscape of the *furusato*. Suzuki-san said she could feel the history of the area and there was a scenic beauty to the view: when one climbed the *zuriyama*, one was standing on the coal that built this town, looking down on the miners' residences, with an expansive view on the curving river, the lush forests and the embracing rows of mountains. The natural elements of this scenery resonate strongly with widely-described elements of the traditional *furusato* landscape (Yamada, Tsutsui, and Yamamoto 2003; Tsukamoto et al., 2001 valuing farming in Masters; Robertson, 1988). Robertson (1988) describes the *furusato* boom of the 1980s as a nostalgia for nostalgia: the modernization of Japanese rural areas and urban concentration have produced generations without a rural home to return to. Unable to be nostalgic for a hometown, people from the city sometimes chose hometowns, becoming honorary citizens in exchange for a membership fee. More recently, rural towns have implemented the *furusato* tax system I mentioned earlier, receiving local specialties and the like in return for a donation. In a similar vein, Moon (1989) discusses how rural towns during the tourism boom began to market their natural environments to cities, providing a harmonizing, healing counterpart to their stressful urban lives. Elements of this now ubiquitous idea of the *furusato* resonate with why Suzuki-san and others found their way to Yūbari, and the projects they enact. The concept of *furusato* is an affectively powerful one that defies simple condensation into nostalgia and requires further examination to further understanding the difficulty in commmodifying Yūbari as a seat of tradition.

Furusato and Natsukashii

Roberston investigates the creation of *furusato* as largely post-70s phenomenon in the wake of the urbanization of the countryside: *furusato-zukuri* (*furusato*-making) is the reclamation of the traditional Japanese village and its landscape of nostalgia. At the start of the *furusato* boom, historical ruling party elite Tanaka Kakuei pronounced the age of the rural areas, or *chihou no jidai* (地方の時代), which would restore harmony between the cities and rural peripheries, with everyone taking pride in their hometown (Roberston, 1988; Kweon, 1994:10). Robertson (1988) argues that *furusato* is often the vehicle for an affective nostalgia for past plenitude, the transmission of tradition from generation to generation, rural charm and a quaint, natural landscape. Many of the assets of Yūbari touted by the Shimizusawa Project and the *Yama no Kioku* NPO, and particularly the municipal government draw on the *furusato* as an ideal place or past. A recent tourism promotion video[38] produced by city hall showcases the coal museum, "mining heritage" (including former power plants and the *zuriyama*), and the natural landscape of Yūbari over the four seasons, with a visitor saying that even though it's her first time, she finds the landscape endearing (*natsukashii fukei* 懐かしい風景) (Yūbari City, 2017c). Though this reminded me of Suzuki-san's story, the video is more invested in selling Yūbari as a traditional Japanese town, with the same four seasons as the rest of Japan's other islands as well as its own festivals and hot springs. The "heritage" in the video is not shown to be really part of any living community so much as a ruin for young urban explorers to romanticize.

As Kweon (1994) points out, Robertson (1988; 1997) and others such as Ivy (1995) focus their ethnographic research almost exclusively on urban populations to form their ideas of nostalgia, and tend to assume rural areas are waiting to be revitalized by urban-sourced flows, blindly enacting traditions as they exist in nostalgic imaginations. Robertson generalizes her findings to all Japan although she mostly studied people living in large Japanese cities. Admittedly, ideas of nostalgia or idealized rurality are far from unique to Japanese cities. Elsewhere too, attitudes to the rural tend to oscillate between condescension and romantic sentimentalization, between rurality as the problem of modern development or as its necessary antithesis as the bearer of tradition (Appadurai, 1996; Asad, 2003; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993; Ferguson, 1999). Ironically, early Japanese anthropology may be responsible for some of

[38] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjvzUPY_-0w

the popularized idealizations of Japanese rurality. Kunio Yanagita's[39] work during the Meiji modernization period was formative in situating the traditional Japanese village at the centre of Japanese nationhood (Kawamori, 2001). While his attention to local practices and folklore disrupted modernizing patterns valuing opinions of the powerful and educated, his study of the village of Tono took on a life of its own, becoming a model *furusato*. Yūbari's location in Hokkaido, relatively short history, it having been a booming city, and the extensive transformation of the environment by the mining industry makes Yūbari look less traditional in comparison. Indeed, just as the *furusato* boom began in response to development of the countryside, Yūbari began to de-industrialize, becoming more like a town as it also tried to develop a tourism economy. Perhaps even more than then, since Yūbari has largely given up hopes of soteriological development, the language of *furusato* is useful for improving Yūbari's image and reconciling itself with the nation on its own terms. Counter to what Robertson (1997) tends to argue from her research in Tokyo, Kawamori (2001) and Morris-Suzuki (1997) argue that the local is not passive in being affixed to the national: even an idealized past can be used to counter national exclusion, and even its own affixation into the nation as the comment about Yūbari being a place without a country noted in chapter 1suggests.

Robertson's (1997) study of the discourse of *furusato* nonetheless provides interesting inroads into further unpacking the nexus of deep meaning in between terms like *furusato* and nostalgia. *Furusato* is often given a mother-like quality (Robertson, 1997). This is perhaps not surprising given the seemingly universal tendency to associate women with the maintenance of tradition, with reproduction, and with nature (Ortner, 1972). The *furusato,* like the *satoyama* described by Tsing (2015) and Satsuka (2014), brings to mind images of visiting relatives, fields, dragonflies in the summer, and the miso soup of one's mother or grandmother. Following this line of thinking, if Yūbari was once represented by its tough mining men and production, Yūbari seems to be shifting towards identifying with the *furusato* and the mature woman, doing the work of reproduction and care through nature, warm sociality and a slower pace of life (Moon, 1989). The associations between *furusato*, nostalgia and mother-like qualities come together in another word: "*natsukuashii*"[40] (懐かしい). I mentioned the word previously in this chapter,

[39] I thank Morita Atsuro for pointing me towards Kunio's work.
[40] The most common nominalization of the adjective *natsukashii* would be *natsukashisa* but I have left it in its adjectival form to reduce potential confusion.

when I referred to a recent tourism promotion video by the city of Yūbari. While both nostalgia and *natsukashii* have connotations of longing for a place one has once been to, or something one has experienced at some usually distant point in the past –accurately captured by the young girl in the video saying she thinks of the view as *natsukashii* despite it being her first time there suggesting a home-like attachment– *natsukashii* tends to denote something cherished or endeared more than some past one wishes to return to. That is to say that it can less easily be pinned to the word "nostalgia" or the idea of a return to an idealized and abstracted past, and is more about the evocation of cherished, personal memories: *natsukashii* is said often without sounding sappy as opposed to saying one is nostalgic in many English-speaking contexts (Cohen, 1996; Swale, 2015). The same character 懐 is used for speaking more generally about yearning or objects of affection even in the present, and is used in a word for "mother". Whereas being called a nostalgic might have negative connotations in a world that values progress, *natsukashii* does not seem to have the same connotation, although it seems more popular to use it in a way closer to nostalgia precisely in rural revitalization movements banking on urban nostalgia.

Whereas it might be easier to characterize Yūbari as obsolete if it is widely thought of as a bankrupt former mining town, Yūbari's case becomes harder to dismiss so harshly when it becomes associated with the warm, rural, motherly language of *furusato*. If Yūbari becomes a place like the one one's grandparents might have come from, or where one might have gone during one's childhood summers, then it also gains a less alienable kind of value (Weiner, 1992). There is a kind of parallel to be drawn between the state's relationship to the elderly and that of Japan's cities to its rural areas, where both *traditional* forms of respect and inequalities in capitalist value production come into tension (Moon, 1989; Koyano, 1989). The language of *furusato* can be nostalgic and commodifying, but in Yūbari's case it can also be a means to assert its belonging within Japan in a time where it is being paralyzed and made an example of by the central government. In this sense, nostalgia is a mode of salvage that operates both on the level of translating local assets into the language of feeling *natsukashii* and in making a devalued place into a place of some inalienable value by virtue of its living heritage.

The pertinence of nostalgia to the argument should be clear by now, but I re-iterate for absolute clarity: it is because so much of the discourse on developing rural areas draws from widespread ideas of *furusato* and nostalgic rurality for tourism that a reflection on salvage and

progress must account for the particular expressions and reactions to nostalgia. I argue against an easy equivocation[41] between the English word "nostalgia" and frequently used words like *furusato* and *natsukashii*. While *natsukashii* is often simply translated into nostalgic, the losses in meaning are in this context too great to ignore, even if admittedly the meaning of these words seems to be converging in common use. In particular, the generally negative valence of nostalgia as backwards foisted on the word *natukashii*, with its associations of mother*ness* points to the way assumptions of progress shape conceptualizations of gender, nature, space and time. It should be noted that one native Japanese speaker from Tokyo I spoke to felt that the English word "nostalgia" had more positive connotations in Japanese than *natsukashii*. He reasoned that most English words tend to have a more positive sound than their Japanese equivalents, and that in nostalgia's case, it sounded more universal, conjuring a kind of *Ur* landscape devoid of traces of locality. This discrepancy over the criteria by which people judge what is positive, perhaps this proves my overall point in this section about the meaning of *natsukashii* as opposed to nostalgia. I turn in this last section to perspectives from Yorozuya-san and the *Yama no Kioku* NPO on history and the salvage of what is left in Yūbari with a view on the way they do not fit within nostalgia.

Not Just Nostalgia

As the Farm Café operated by a local organization called Laplace serves as a gathering spot offering all kinds of encounters, I frequented it often, volunteering for events, attending gatherings, conducting interviews or simply getting lunch. The café is located in the cafeteria of the school. The room is the size of a classroom, seating around 35 people. Manga and other books line the shelves of several knee-height rows around the room, with a label indicating that this is Everyone's Library (*minna no toshokan*). Hand-made ceramics by children and artists are on sale near the entrance. Hand-drawn labels indicate the contents of the buffet area. Once people are done eating, they usually give their tray to the staff through a counter. Many people from Yūbari and outside said they were reminded of their youth and school cafeteria when eating there. Visitors from outside and locals would often describe the café as *natsukashii*. "*Natsukashii*" is how Yorozuya-san qualified the setting as we sat down at one of the small wooden tables right

[41] See Viveiros de Castro, 2004; Morita and Jensen, 2014 for discussions of equivocation in anthropology.

before I began my interview with him on a rainy day in mid August 2016. It had been his primary school when he was young, and he was reminded of many days hanging out in the cafeteria. Apparently it had not changed all that much in 40 years. Or at least not to the point that it no longer felt like Yorozuya-san's school cafeteria. People from outside Yūbari who stayed at the Geek House also said it still felt very much like a primary school cafeteria, reminding them of their childhood. This common feeling of the café being *natsukashii* is what gives the space its charm, and allows all kinds of people to feel comfortable there.

Asking what had changed in Yūbari since the bankruptcy, and what people most wanted to change were two of my favourite questions to ask during interviews. As Yorozuya-san and I talked about the various changes in Yūbari over the years, he remarked that while his overall standard of living had not changed significantly since the bankruptcy[42], the way of thinking of older people was the thing that had changed the least. He said their excessive use of public services as largely responsible for the bankruptcy, citing instances of old people calling ambulances to get lifts to the convenience store. Rather than claim Yūbari as a whole was now declining, Yorozuya-san questioned the necessity of cutting so deep into Yūbari's finances and the subsequent impact to public access of different services and employment. While he had respect for his country and the current mayor, he also routinely criticized the mayor and the government for the cuts they continued to implement. Yorozuya-san found it unfortunate that so many things, not just services and jobs, had gotten lost in the flurry of cutting since the bankruptcy. Yorozuya-san expressed some confusion and discomfort with the city's decision to ask JR Hokkaido to abolish the last train line into central Yūbari. "It would have been nice to at least get something better out of the deal. They could have given the city the train cars to make some kind of exhibit. What a waste," he said, noting the small crowds of train enthusiasts making the pilgrimage to Yūbari once the city presented its decision to JR. "What a waste" (*mottainai* もったいない) seemed to have become something of a rallying cry in Yūbari, and perhaps throughout the Sorachi area, where former mining sites in particular are becoming enrolled in projects of re-valuation that exceed mere nostalgic preservation. Like Suzuki-san,

[42] I do not mean to suggest this was the case for everyone else. Others I interviewed noted that as they had grown older and as traffic had dwindled as a result of the bypass, they had been forced to take on road-clearing work in the winter, for instance.

Yorozuya-san had grown to see the marvel in his hometown, and felt there was a need to change the selfish dependence on government to focus on the good of the community.

The *Yama no Kioku* NPO that Yorozuya-san is a member of also looks to make use of waste and remains. The group has existed since the 1990s, and was based in Yūbari. Following the bankruptcy, it grew into an NPO and moved to the neighbouring, larger town of Iwamizawa in 2009 (Yama no Kioku, 2017). The organization's view of Yūbari at face value seems to do little to counter the official narrative of Yūbari's decline. However, we might read into their mission to take the area's "negative legacy" or "negative heritage" (*fu no isan* 負の遺産) and turn this into the means of securing revitalization as a kind of salvage that does more than nostalgize an already idealized past: the very idea that there is a negative legacy suggests a different kind of project. Yorozuya-san says the main priority of the organization in the next two years is to apply for world heritage status for some sites across Sorachi.

What does it mean to take these industrial leftovers and see them as world heritage, as the Yama no Kioku group does? These places do not really conform to perfect, curated, aestheticized "ruins" of Japan's ancient capitals, or the crucibles of "Western civilization": instead, they are closer to "rubble" as Gordillo (2014) calls places that point to capitalist destruction being re-used with little reverence by local people. Indeed, the Yama no Kioku group seems to see salvage potential in these sites as potentially attractive to tourists, but they also have value in helping local people reflect critically on the past that produced this negative heritage. Like other "grassroots" groups in Hokkaido, for the Yama no Kioku group, the kind of progress that has left the Sorachi area in such a state compared to the rest of Japan is hard to simply nostalgize (Horita and Kato, 2011). Instead, the past can be a source of strength and wisdom to face the future in earnest, building through trial and error reasons to live there by valuing things you can only experience in a given place, despite the decline in population and economic depression (Horita and Kato, 2011). What might otherwise be called nostalgia is more of an attempt to translate a devalued past into the basis for more autonomy and recognition for Yūbari.

This last idea comes from a group in Shiretoko (eastern Hokkaido) discussed in an article by Horita Makiko and Kato Yasuko (2011), though it could very well have come from the many

groups in the Sorachi area discussed in the same article. The sentence that presents this idea[43] seems to hint at the same distinction I make between "*natsukashii*" and "nostalgia" above. Interstingly, the project in Shiretoko is called Shiretoko Kaitaku Spirit: "spirit" from English and *kaitaku* as one of the words used for colonial development and land reclamation noted in chapter 1. It aims to dig up the history of people in the interval between the end of WWII and the high-growth period that built their community up by their own hands and knowledge, without help from the prefecture or the central government. The pioneering spirit seems less strong in Yūbari, located in central Hokkaido and mostly populated by miners rather than farmers, historically. Nonetheless, this raises questions about the way independence from powerful state actors does not always mean a disenfranchisement from nationalist sentiment or colonial legacies. In the next chapter I return to Laplace to examine the kinds of networks of care emerging from the depopulated environment, returning also to complicate questions of autonomy, dependence, and salvage.

[43] Here is the original as it appears in Horita and Kato (2011) and my translation of it: "過去は、ただ懐かしむだけのノスタルジーではない。真摯に向き合うことで、現在に生きる私たちが未来へ向かう知恵や力の源にもなる。" (The past is not just something to nostalgize. It can also be a source of strength and wisdom to those of us living in the present to confront the future in earnest.)

Chapter 4: Networks of Care

At the northern end of Yūbari, on the side of Mount Reisui and not far from town hall, is the former Yūbari Primary School (*Kyuu Yūbari Shougakkou* 旧夕張小学校). Some schools and facilities in Yūbari closed as the population decreased through the 80s and 90s, but this school was closed in 2011 along with five others in order to consolidate into one school. When I arrived in Yūbari in July 2016, the outside of the school looked a bit drab, if in better condition than many of the surrounding buildings: the white paint covering the outward face of the three-storey building covered in small streaks of rust-like discoloration, the gymnasium annex almost blending in with the surrounding tall vegetation with its faded brown and green colour tone. But over the course of the summer, the main part of the school's front face had received a fresh coat of paint, and children had covered it with handprints, drawings, and all kinds of imaginative creations painted in bright colours. This was done as part of an event by a young organizer looking to create spaces for children to express themselves and feel belonging within Yūbari by working with the city and foundations like Laplace, which has been granted use of the school by the city.

Café Farm Laplace is the name of the organic farm, café, workspace, daycare centre and all-purpose gathering space operating out of a former primary school. The primary school used by Laplace is one of 8 former schools in the Yūbari area being reused by organizations for people with disabilities, elderly people, nature activities, and childcare (Yūbari City, 2017b) . Laplace was started by Saito-san, who like Suzuki-san was an outsider to Yūbari. His involvement began after and grew out of the conditions of the bankruptcy, but was not motivated by it. In his typically jolly and always-smiling demeanour, he once joked that he randomly decided on Yūbari, pointing at an area of a map of Hokkaido without looking, hardly knowing anything of Yūbari's history. Saito-san was discouraged by his experience working in large, heavily institutionalized welfare facilities around Hokkaido, and was looking to do helpful work in rural areas, convinced that people with disabilities and children should be able to live free, full lives in rural areas too. He had started in 2008 with a bento box preparation and delivery service to the elderly, operating out of a former funeral home that had gone bankrupt. From there it expanded into multiple daycare services open to children with and without disabilities. At several points, Saito-san ran into opposition from some members of some local neighbourhood groups,

but won them over through compromise and persistence. He also encountered people looking to make potentially useful contributions to the farm, but asked them to leave when they began mocking the workers for their speech and movements.

Many people with disabilities and people who had difficulties with the environments of most workplaces work at the farm café because of the particular conditions of the work environment. At the farm café, the hours are kept short on working days (usually from 10AM to 4PM) and breaks can be taken frequently. As Laplace uses facilities that would be a burden for the city to upkeep or find use on its own for, and being in a rural area allows the hours and work conditions to remain feasible without the pressure of intense competition. This is particularly true for the Farm Café, where there is a growing amount of cooperation between local businesses and *machizukuri* groups like Suzuki-san's. Part of the reason these affordances are possible are because of the unused space, shorter hours and low cost of living (municipal taxes aside). But it is also due to the money received from the central government, and under the city's *furusato nouzei* (or *furusato* tax) program, which I mentioned in chapter 3. Saito-san mentions that the city helps many such organizations through the *furusato nouzei*, and as the money comes from donations, this money is used more freely by the city: it does not fall under the control of the Internal Affairs Ministry. Though saying the city uses it more freely is perhaps misleading, as organizations like Saito-san's that are more active and focused on the provisions of services, and developments likely to attract investors (like renewed hydrocarbon extraction) seem to be among the major beneficiaries.

At this point, it would be easy to paint over Laplace's work in Yūbari with claims of neoliberal, private usurpation of public functions and responsibilities. We might also read into the comments of those who call Saito-san a "pioneer" connotations of upheaving incursion and suppression of pre-existing local autonomy. Laplace in some ways fills in for some of the "traditional" role of the municipal government and neighbourhood associations of being responsible for affairs that relate directly to citizens' daily lives and needs (e.g. sanitations, welfare, firefighting services, and schooling) (Ikawa, 2008). Laplace reduces cost by using former public facilities and using volunteers or people whose options of employment are more limited. In this line of thinking, Yūbari's municipal government is effectively outsourcing its responsibilities to others through competition for the use of public funds or resources. But given

the role of Japan's megabanks and government in causing Yūbari's impoverishment, it is hard to direct this kind of critique to organizations like Laplace that are not large, exploitative companies suppressing citizen's groups and disinterested in providing better lives for the people of the area they are based in. Rather, I follow Tsing (2015) and Gibson-Graham (2006) in instead turning my attention to what kind of more caring arrangements or new commons are made possible through Laplace: it is not that Laplace is replacing the municipal government, but rather it is emergent from the same conditions that have weakened the municipal government, and it would be callous to reduce its activities to simple capitalist value production. I examine Laplace and similar organizations in Yūbari as incipient networks of care.

共生(*Kyōsei)*

Encountering a work environment like Laplace and the significant amount of people living with disabilities in Yūbari was a bit surprising to me. What I had been told by most people was that those who could not or did not want to live in Yūbari had already left. Because of the closure of the hospital, the decrease in the availability of health care services following the bankruptcy, and the relatively inconvenient modes of transport available to and from Yūbari, I had assumed that the number of people with disabilities living in Yūbari was very small. What Saito-san's project showed me was not only that people with disabilities could find work in Yūbari, but that along with people rejected by the normal work channels, they could have jobs better suited to their needs that offered a sense of belonging not always available in more institutional settings in Japan (Nakamura, 2013). This aspect of my fieldwork is not one I expected to deal with, but much like the town's mining history, I could not seem to escape it. Being forced to contend with the efforts made to turn Yūbari into a more "barrier-free" space, and the lived experience of people with disabilities outside major cities made me confront some of my own assumptions about the space I was studying. Notably, it was key to making me think about care and what kind of barriers, and benefits, are associated with a place like Yūbari over cities like Sapporo and Tokyo.

However, ethically concerned by the idea of doing interviews with people with disabilities, and bound by an ethics agreement based on my uneducated assumptions, I discuss mainly people without disabilities that head the organizations in Yūbari most closely involved in

creating the possibility of a more "barrier-free" living.It may be mistaken to say that all people with disabilities in Yūbari have come out of pure choice: some may be in the area to be near family, or cannot afford to move to another area. Moreover, the different kinds of disabilities people live with are part of their reasons for and way of being in Yūbari. Saito-san and others tended to use the official classifications of mental, intellectual and physical disability. Although they remained aware of the limits of these terms, they helped to think about how spaces or activities might be accessible for some but not for others: canoeing may be possible for someone in a wheelchair, but someone with a mental disability may have to be accompanied by or have frequent physical contact with someone to be safe, making it difficult to operate a typical canoe. Unfortunately I can only infer in many cases: for many reasons, I did not pry further into the lives of the people I encountered at Laplace's facilities and the various events I attended. As such it is difficult for me to know exactly to what extent these initiatives are transforming the town into a more liveable place for more marginalized groups of people. However, Laplace's facilities, and those of Arisada, the other organization I examine in this chapter, find widespread use by people of all types of disability (Laplace and Arisada both use the new national norm of characterizing disabilities as physical, intellectual and/or psychological) and people of all age groups. Moreover, the idea of making the best of existing circumstances to better the lives of people in the community by focusing on local needs and local assets, which is at the core of a lot of *machizukuri* movements, finds application here too.

One of Saito-san's guiding ideas in his project of re-using buildings to create inclusive places, and a stronger community is *kyōsei* (共生), meaning living together or symbiosis. The full name of the Farm Café is actually *kyōseigata faamu rapurasu* (共生型ファームラプラス): symbiotic-style farm Laplace. When I asked Saito-san what *kyōsei* means to him, he was averse to giving a strong definition, but gave some examples of what it meant in his experience at the various facilities operated by Laplace including Hamanasu (a facility for making bento boxes for elderly living alone and caring for children) and Karakora (a place for children with disabilities): "coexistence between the three generations, collaboration between people based on their abilities, regardless of whether they come from Yūbari or if they have disabilities." Knowing Saito-san to enjoy life outside the city and being something of an outdoor person, I pressed further, by asking if it also meant living together with wild animals in the environment. "That's not what I had in

mind initially, but as we're in Yūbari and surrounded by Nature (大自然), wild animals have kind of become part of the surroundings. They feed on the remains we use to fertilize the plants, or sometimes the plants themselves. When deer and foxes come, they attract some attention, but we mostly try to keep them out." Saito-san's idea of living together meant connections between humans above all, sharing in the struggle and enjoyments of life in a rural area rich in Nature.

Laplace's project of creating inclusive places of care de-emphasizes the influence of wild animals and nature on living together, instead emphasizing the good, moral images of rural life: warm sociality and generational continuity. From my own experience of Laplace's events and being at the Farm Café, it was still a bit uncommon to see visitors of all three generations interacting together at any given time. However, the staff itself had people of all ages. Events involved staff and volunteers of all age groups that would eat together and offer support to one another. Young people would often be unsure of what direction their life was taking. Older people would often worry that their time was up. What was clear from these interactions among generations was not necessarily that the old could teach the young, and that the young could give hope to the old, but that sociality and belonging was not obvious to anyone, and not easily planned and executed across generational lines. If Laplace offered something, it was perhaps a place to share the difficulties of peoples' respective conditions. Care has often been conflated with warm sociality and contact at the expense of economy and technology as Mol et al. (2010) argue, but nonetheless this remains an important side of care in a country known for its harsher working climate[44]. The space itself also had been equipped with a wheelchair ramp, and a nursing station right next to the cafeteria – the main work area. This nursing station was a place people could rest and care for themselves: as Mol et al. (2010) point out, a lot of the work of care is done by people on themselves and involves an endless, patient tinkering between tools and their uses and adapting the wider situation or environment. Saito-san, for instance often emphasized that he did not simply want to give people with disabilities a chance to work, he also wanted to allow the experiences of people with disabilities to affect the public: creating spaces in which people could talk about their disabilities to have the broader public understand, and further recognize that everyone has limitations and dependencies.

[44] Japan's work culture and its image may not need explanation, but in any case even in Yūbari, some jobs or companies are branded as "black" in cases where they do not respect even basic working conditions.

The idea of understanding each others' limitations and dependencies resonates with feminist theories of care (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). In Yūbari, where older people and people with disabilities are in relatively high numbers, conditions of access are a constant concern from the level of the city's "master plan" to the planning of events (Yūbari City, 2013). Networks of care in Yūbari are emerging with the awareness of the demands of the changing makeup of its inhabitants. Whereas modern, humanist social order might assume mobile bodies as a given and build a world that favours certain psychic and somatic conditions while using medicine to restore bodies to a more "whole" state (Imrie, 2000), Saito-san and others have become mediators in using what is left of the city of Yūbari to create a town where people can live "barrier-free". At the level of policy, the projects of organizations like Laplace are condensed to this idea of "barrier-free", but this idea of living barrier-free does not encompass the ways in which lived experiences of people with disabilities has the potential to transform the lives of everyone else. For instance, the idea of making things barrier-free can be useful for organizations like Laplace to make demands for a more accessible public transport system now that the last train line is set to be cut. What is missing from the idea of "barrier-free" alone is the everyday living with everyone's limitations and dependencies, in other words, the actual work of care that Saito-san has been invested in for decades. "Barrier-free" is a policy and design oriented language that seems to have been developing in Japan since the early 2000s (Okabe and Ito, 2002). It is aimed at having a universal design that encompasses the diversity of different limitations people may have. Saito-san instead compared what he was trying to do with the *tomoko* system that existed prior to WWII in the mines: two miners would sign a contract and agree to support one another in times of crisis or death (Fujishima, 1967). But often bonds forged from the *tomoko* system would run deeper than contractual obligations, with support and social networks based on this and one's place of residence being key to making a living wage and caring for families.

Though Saito-san had no knowledge of this history when he first came to Yūbari, he said this kind of relationship was inspiring to him, admiring how people had built relationships based on helping each other out (*tasukeau*, 助け合う). What *tasukeau* represents is people helping each other outside the direct provision of help from government or corporations. Much like back when Yūbari was the forefront of a certain kind of expansionist, modern progress within Hokkaido, Yūbari city documents now urge citizens to end their dependency and help each other in the coming future in which government (and corporations) will no longer –as if they ever

were– able to provide for all (Yūbari City, 2013). The call to reject dependency was the rallying cry for Mayor Fujikura's election campaign following Yūbari's bankruptcy (Fujikura, 2015). This sidestepped issues of the responsibility of the political and corporate elite, instead calling for pursuing the financial reconstruction plan and changing the way of thinking of people in Yūbari away from dependency. Some of the people I spoke to made reference to the way the older generation were passive and resistant to change, reliant on strong leaders and fleeting generosity. Nonetheless, Laplace and other organizations building networks of *entreaide* (as well as the Geek House, and those re-using slag heaps) depend on the free use of facilities owned by the city.

However, simply advocating helping one another ignores the gendered distribution of the work of care that is likely to emerge. Furthermore, advocating helping each other does not foster more thinking on what dependence means or foster recognition of its constitutive role in relationships (Traphagan and Knight, 2004; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012; Ferguson, 2015; Nelms, 2016). Indeed, in modern ideation the work of reproduction and care, by not being recognized as work, made "non-working" family members into "dependents" (Adachi, 2013). Respect for the elderly and relationships between students and teachers include certain expectations that there be unequal relationships and dependence. These more "traditional" social forms of dependence and verticality based on social status and age have been pointed to as the core of Japanese society (Chie, 1970). Nonetheless, given the also well-known phenomenon of elderly living alone and institutionalization, it is clear that people in Japan are not immune to feeling that care can be burdensome, particularly for women (Traphagan and Knight, 2003). The equivalent word for dependence[45], *izon* (依存), has taken on negative connotations associated with the reliance on corporate and political elite in Yūbari. The bankruptcy created opportunities for citizens to voice their grievances to town hall (e.g. the yearly price of childcare costing for some people the same as the highest grade of Yūbari melon, elderly losing support networks by moving into apartments), and forced action to take up issues and tasks that had previously been left to the municipal government (Hokkaido Shinbun, 2016). Saito-san and others working in contexts of direct contact with care providers and receivers created spaces specifically to help address some of the difficulties older people and families faced with the everyday task of checking in, making

[45] It should be noted that this idea of dependence differs from the word used for "dependent" family members, 扶養, which has a meaning closer to being "supported" or "nourished" (which has a more gentle valence).

food, and caring for children. Moreover, rather than stressing relating through dependency, the language of cooperation, connection, and diversity was more commonly used to refer to networks of relating and care.

While the difficulty of getting elderly residents to participate in activities is sometimes noted, the idea that they are all dependent and politically moribund is unwarranted. Sources commenting on the mining period note the atmosphere of complacency with development, with the Communist Party and unions doing little to create effective activism against the mining companies. For example, Fujii's (1981) longitudinal study of Yūbari notes how miners in the 50s and 60s openly admit a disinterest in politics[46], focusing instead of securing stable income for their families as the mines closed, and their relationship to the Communist Party became increasingly distant. The most notable instances of massive, direct confrontation or protest were limited to the ones noted in chapter 1. However, since then, actors outside the control of the workplace, the party or the union have taken action against development projects. Interestingly, heritage factors in here too. In the late 1980s, just as the mining to tourism *machizukuri* policy was in full swing, a ski facility was proposed to be built on Yūbari-dake, a well-known and popular mountain in the area. A 70-year old housewife called Mizuo-san who lived in Yūbari and who ran a theatre group for children on the mountain was contacted by a Sapporo-based photographer who wanted to start a movement to stop this development plan. Mizuo-san initially allied with other housewives and salaried workers in Yūbari, but the men, including her own husband who worked at city hall, gradually bowed out from pressure at their workplaces. In a town where the mayor was the de facto leader of all political life, where the mining companies provided everything from housing to entertainment, and where the survival of the city seemed to hinge on tourism development, this kind of resistance was anomalous in many ways. Rather than an overt resistance to the ski slope, this Yūbari housewife and the environmentalists and others she partnered with prevented the development by making Yūbari a national natural monument (Hagami, 2017). This fascinating story unsettles the *idées fixes* of older residents as conservative curmudgeons or dependents who have retreated from the public sphere. Indeed, being "dependent" as a housewife in one sense allowed her to pursue her project in ways her husband could not.

[46] Some noted a concern with pollution, or *kōgai* (公害), a word with potentially subversive connotations of "harming the Public" through selfishness as noted by Ueno's (2015) discussion of the character 公.

Discussions of dependency, quality of life and the work of care multiplied in the media during my fieldwork, when a mass murder occurred at a facility caring for people with psychiatric disabilities in Sagamihara. The incident was shocking in its violence and as a sign of persisting discrimination against people with disabilities and a social undercurrent of seeing "dependent" bodies as a burden (Hara, 2017; Hayashi and Okuhira, 2010). I asked Saito-san if he thought the Sagamihara incident convinced him places like Laplace were increasingly needed. Saito-san said it was hard to make meaning of such a tragedy, but said that even if it was difficult for him to think this way, he wanted to be able to see how even the murderer was part of the same problem: he clearly had issues that many people around the incident and throughout his life had failed to work through. He emphasized that obviously the main victims were the dead and their families. While reluctant to just blame contemporary society for it all, this incident could also be seen as a kind of symptom of the same kinds of social barriers Saito-san was fighting against in Yūbari. In his experience trying to create more caring environments in his work and in his family life, Saito-san had encountered people that assumed there were no real limitations for people in relation to their environment, or assumed that they themselves could never develop conditions that would make them more overtly dependent on others. Although it was limited to agreements between male labourers, the *tomoko* system seemed to illustrate for him how anyone could be made dependent at the slightest bad luck: social assistance was not just for traditional "dependents", but for everyone (Ferguson, 2015; Nelms, 2016). Yūbari city itself calls the organizations involved in *machizukuri* "the new commons" (Yūbari City, 2013). Saito-san did not deny the importance of state responsibility in matters of healthcare, but it was clear that he and many people with disabilities had found large, institutionalized state settings associated with cities unnecessarily limiting and sometimes actively harmful.

Rural affordances

While Saito-san has in some sense become a spokesperson for people with disabilities in Yūbari, I believe he is not simply appropriating the experiences for arguments he would already have been making. Puig de la Bellacasa (2012) cautions against the forms of care that become *thinking-for*: "appropriating the recipients of 'our' care, instead of relating ourselves to them". There are elements of Saito-san's experience that suggest a bit more of a pre-fabricated becoming: he chose Yūbari at random, and came with the intent of changing it in certain ways.

At times too, people with disabilities are absent from informal meetings about Yūbari's welfare facilities and the welfare needs of people, echoing other cases where people with disabilities risk being treated as a problem by infrastructure management (Blume, Gallis, and Valderrada Pineda, 2014). But nonetheless, by his own admission the ability to make extensive plans was not a strong point: the everyday practice of running Laplace has been guided by the spaces he was given access to as well as his personal and professional experience, letting the shape be guided by the needs of people in the area and his staff as they are discussed at town meetings and issue-focused groups. Questions of access and who gets to speak remain here, and in the way Saito-san uses his position in order to secure the benefits for others. I was never able to attend a meeting where people with disabilities were given space to educate people about their experiences, but Saito-san said he had organized at least one and wanted to create more opportunities for this. Not content to *think-for*, Saito-san's sought to multiply the means of access for people with disabilities, to use the diversity of the personal as a force to care collectively (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). This was not a response to discrimination: he commented that unlike elsewhere he had lived, in a rural area like Yūbari, bullying was extremely rare if there even were any incidents. Certain elements of rural society (*chiiki shakai* 地域社会) presented challenges (e.g. the difficulty in reaching out to everyone outside of city hall's channels, accessible transport), but the idea of warm sociality and stronger interpersonal bonds at the margins of government funding and institutionalization could be built on to create better living.

Arisada, an organization dedicated to hosting sports events for people with disabilities, was another part of the networks of people working to make Yūbari more "barrier-free". I attended events by the organization in connection with one of Yūbari's veteran guides. During these events, groups of students tried out equipment, and learned about the activities of Arisada. It operates out of a former middle school on the southern end of Yūbari, near the main melon-growing area. Arisada receives no funding from the central government, and as it does not have the facilities necessary to house hundreds of people for several days, large sporting events are impossible. Arisada has some sponsors and connections to larger associations that allow them to host local events like the yearly Yūbari Paralympics. Mirroring the disability studies argument that disability is an exclusion based on a difference between attributes and conditions (Imrie, 2000), the representative of Arisada said that the environment and pace of life in Yūbari made it easier on many people with disabilities. His appearance was one that suggested the tough attitude

of a world-weary gym teacher, but like Saito-san, he displayed profound sensitivity. He explained that when he created games for people to play, as part of reducing barriers for people, he would often change up the rules halfway and balance out players to make everyone feel valued, and prevent anyone feeling like they were inadequate. He also spoke about the importance of paying attention to everyday things we assume might not cause anyone emotional stress, like parental advice, but over time may cause great impediments to someone's ability to live well and feel satisfied. This attitude was also significantly different from what people at Arisada saw as the prevalent attitude towards people with disabilities that their disabilities mean they are unsuited to the infrastructure and society built for people who are not them, but that there was little to be done about this.

The guide that was with us on my visit to Arisada added that this organization was also a sign of how Yūbari's citizens' dependence on the government and their way of thinking had changed (echoing the campaign platform of mayor Fujikura following the bankruptcy). While they had become increasingly cut off from large cities, people had found appreciation for life in the remnants of the Mitsubishi group and the surrounding nature. A group of university students from Tokyo I had accompanied at one of these events, some of whom had no previous idea of what Yūbari was like aside from its melons or had only heard of the bankruptcy, were impressed by everything that was going on in this supposedly fallen city. However, our guide also pointed to the difficulty in arguing what is good about the current situation: should the focus on improving quality of life in Yūbari in the wake of the bankruptcy outweigh the diversity of projects people want to start in Yūbari? Building a growing economy to better bargain with the state seemed unlikely to succeed and unlikely to last, but the question of the durability and diversity within what groups are building for themselves remains. This diversity could become the strength of new networks and connections following the demolishing of social ties built around mining residences, cuts to funding, and exodus. Creating a town in which everyone can feel fulfilled[47] rather than just survive long enough to pay off their debts and providing opportunities for expression, relief, and fulfillment for people with disabilities, elderly living alone, as well as families with children are high priorities in the removal of barriers[48]. This work

[47] People often say *manzoku dekiru* or *juujitsu dekiru* 満足・充実できる

[48] Nonetheless both of these sides of what would allow people to feel fulfilled are tied into the idea of rural revitalization (*chiiki saisei* 地域再生*)* as opposed to the fiscal revitalization (*zaisei saisei* 財政再生) being pushed

of care is important because it can be part of make living in Yūbari desirable rather than necessary for the conditions of debt repayment and mere survival (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). In any case, rather than meet these attempts to build a more liveable place in Yūbari with scepticism and confidence in Yūbari's foretold decline and demise, I argue that there are interesting new networks of care being made by humans in Yūbari. In this recuperation of social ties amid neoliberal restructuring, these networks also share something with the work of care by kin and neighbourhood groups in other parts of the world (Garcia, 2010; Han, 2012). Arisada and Laplace may not be engaged in the kind of medical care that remains mostly the domain of the state (if at least nominally and in terms of taxes). Yet as such, these networks develop out of gaps in the remains of state infrastructure to emerge as new liveable possibilities, or at least, as Mol (2008) and Winance (2010) say of care, finding more bearable ways of living and competing ideas of what is good.

These emergent networks of care are nonetheless cut in particular ways (Strathern, 1996). Though we might read into the praise of Yūbari's environment and pace of life a kind of departure from human-centric logics of relating and being, in my experience, non-humans did not figure prominently in the daily activities of Arisada or Laplace. Deer in particular are treated as a nuisance by most people in Yūbari, if not most rural areas of Hokkaido[49]. Though I admit this is something that would require more careful study, the attitudes of people towards non-humans suggests that networks of care and relating are not currently projects of collaborative becoming with animals, nor are Laplace's organic plants attributed much importance. Non-humans are not the only ones that fall outside the network. For all that they do, Laplace and Arisada are not big organizations, and they are bound by the number of staff, volunteers and vehicles they can muster. In a municipality with Yūbari's geography, some of the less populated neighbourhoods fall outside the core of activity of these organizations and many others. Rural living, or in any case living in Yūbari, creates affordances, but also generates limitations. Moreover, some things I wanted to think of as affordances, like the presence of wildlife and the greened environment, tended to be background rather than foregrounded in networks of care.

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by the Internal Affairs Ministry. The city sees its task as bringing balance between these two poles (Hokkaido Shinbun, 2016).

[49] People living in cities may still have the luxury of never having been frustrated by a deer getting in the way of their train or eating their garden plants on a regular basis.

Gifts and relations

Rather than offer some concluding statements on emerging networks of care in Yūbari, I would prefer to explore briefly some of the undercurrents I gestured to above. These are gift, relationality, and affect. I use these terms to try and get at some of the more abstract ramifications of organizations like Laplace bringing new ways of relating. I am also trying to describe what this claim of a new commons might mean for the relationship between rural areas and cities in Japan.

I have tried to bring out in this chapter some of the elements of the political economy of care and everyday care practices, but this remains an overview with a focus on the relevance of these kinds of networks to claims of Yūbari's decline and the value of living and making Yūbari as a town. I would like to examine a bit more how this political economy and everyday practices of volunteers, for instance, relate to wider economic questions. Earlier I described how organizations like Laplace receive money from governments, have sponsors, enlist volunteers, and are given free use of certain facilities. As these are not wages and do not involve any expectation of direct return, we might heuristically qualify these relationships as gift-giving relationships. The point in calling these "gifts" is to emphasize the way these gifts shape identities and relationships, as well as disrupt capitalist common sense (Malinowski, 1922; Tsing, 2015: 122). Following Mauss' (2000) classic study of the gift, there is nonetheless a debt or expectation of reciprocity that comes with gift-giving. Moreover, the ability to give and reciprocate gifts has a direct bearing on one's standing and personhood. The idea of the gift is useful for bringing together two sets of questions in the literature on care: questions of materiality and political economy, and questions of becoming and personhood (Buch, 2015; Fassin and Pandolfi, 2013; Feldman and Ticktin, 2010; Han, 2012; Prasad, 2009; Stevenson, 2014).

The support given to Laplace is done with the expectation that it will relieve the need to maintain, safely demolish or find a use for the space, while also removing some of the pressure to help families with children and people with disabilities (among others). Nonetheless, as one former head of the neighbourhood association noted, there is a perceived as a lack or limit of support from the municipal government now that the bankruptcy has forced it to abandon its role

as the core of all *machizukuri* and welfare activity (Hagami, 2017; Yūbari City, 2013). Even as organizations attempt to reorganize, there appears to be a growing awareness that governments may no longer be able to provide or maintain what is in the public good, particularly as the central government continues to impose punitive debt repayment. People seem increasingly motivated to gift their time and resources to projects of creating what can be public resources, independent of policy-making. If we follow that the work of care is concerned with the "good" and the flourishing of life, it follows that many forms of giving become part of care (Mol, 2008; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012). Older people like Nakamura-san volunteer at the Shimizusawa Project, maintaining social networks built over years. Neighbourhood associations re-build public cabins on Yūbari-dake, a natural heritage site, using wood from closed schools provided by the municipality and funds they gathered themselves (Hagami, 2017). Even strange anthropology students from abroad volunteer for food and conversation. Amidst the projects of revitalizing Yūbari, those who stick out are foreign journalists and the central government, who seem to extract without real interest or involvement in the potential in the everyday giving of residents.

Though I have tried to give what I can during and since my fieldwork, I arrived without any real prior relation to Yūbari, and I am responsible for some amount of violence by barging into the lives of people and writing about it here. Suzuki-san said as much to me (in friendly, but serious terms) as part of a longer conversation on her own fieldwork and coming changes in Yūbari. Suzuki-san and I agreed that presenting my research results was part of what I would do to give back. But this conversation about the debts incurred as a researcher, and the violence associated with this led me to think about what other kinds of debts are being forgotten. Suzuki-san was kind enough to tell me what she expected, though most of what she thought of as giving back was presenting my findings, and some of this bare minimum was already guaranteed by her participation agreement. But had I failed to pick up on ways I could give back to others who had helped me? Were there expectations I was blind to? Despite the ten years that have passed since the bankruptcy, there is perhaps little to show for all the students and researchers that have come through studying Yūbari's bankruptcy and its effects. And with prominent North American anthropologists of Japan carrying out fieldwork, sometimes with graduate students, in areas of disaster seemingly mostly for the purpose of translating the experience of this disaster to

colleagues[50], I am left wondering what my position is and what kind of history I am playing part in. These are important questions that relate back to how we care, and how debts and reparation are reckoned that I continue to struggle with. The current context in Yūbari privileges care for the people left behind by extractive capitalism, deindustrialization and the imposition of cuts to public services. The sacrifices made by Japanese people in Yūbari no longer seem to reach an encompassing society or community that will ensure benefits (Mauss and Herbert, 1964). But how to address debts and violence from colonialism in Japan that also appear to be unsettled, and involve Yūbari but also go beyond it?

These questions about violence and exclusion lead me also to think about the language of relation and sociality in relation to rural areas. The word *kizuna* (絆) meaning relation or social ties came to represent Japan uniting to help the regions affected by the disasters of 3.11. Just the year before, the media had pronounced Japan a society without relationships or *muen shakai* (無縁社会), mourning the loss of relations of place and family as a result of women delaying marriage and the loss of lifetime employment among other social changes (Allison, 2013). Despite its relatively short history, Yūbari is identified by some in more straightforwardly nostalgic terms as part of the rural base of food-producing traditional sociality on the verge of destruction (Tanita, 2007). In Yūbari, the lack of ties or *tsunagari* (繋がり) with Tokyo was blamed by some people as part of why the Internal Affairs Ministry was not acting on complaints by people in Yūbari. Additionally, other researchers have raised the importance of *tsunagari* of young people to their hometown in Yūbari as part of preventing further depopulation[51] (Kubota, 2012). Love (2014) also mentions sustainability activists who see the bonds of fate or *en/yukari* (縁) between people in communities who share a future as well as between people and nature and ancestors as the basis for lives more closely based on local heritage and ecology over the priorities of Western capitalism. The creation of places of cooperation and connection is an

[50] See Bestor, 2013. Though I agree with his analysis, I find his methods ethically wanting. Though he has a history of working in the area, he arrives after the tsunami with a graduate student speaking to people he may or may not have had previous contact with in order to understand the impact of the tsunami on fishing. Ultimately most of the paper is based on media analysis, leaving me wondering if fieldwork was really necessary let alone ethical. But he almost seems to justify this kind of fieldwork by saying that we are all in this problem together (when clearly some people are more affected by this, and he can return to the United States after he is done). Admittedly, I might be wrong in this reading, but I think nonetheless it raises ethical questions about the kind of fieldwork I did and its necessity or benefit. See Stoler (2008) for a similar critique of the states of emergency literature.

[51] Ōkaya (2013) also uses *tsunagari* and the language of helping each other to talk about the aftermath of 3.11, further illustrating how these terms have grown in importance as a result of this event's continuing effects.

important goal to many *machizukuri* groups. Social ties are expressed in different ways, but Allison (2013) is perhaps correct in identifying the lack of ties or a place of belonging as part of how people experience life in contemporary Japan, and by consequence life in both rural and urban areas. In some sense, all the projects I discuss in this thesis are about creating places of belonging and relation outside and from the remains of the city, which represents to some extent alienation, civilization, progress, and competition.[52]

Whereas cities flowing with cheap labour and high competition make it more difficult for people with disabilities to find work suited to their attributes or capacities, Yūbari's in general more relaxed environment and need for workers makes it suitable in this regard for people with disabilities, and other issues that make people less likely to be employed in Sapporo or Tokyo. Moreover, while there is nothing to indicate that rural areas are in general more accepting of people with disabilities, Yūbari has a history of industrial capitalism leaving behind damaged bodies (as indexed by the need for the Tomoko system), and many of the people I spoke to noted how the many people with disabilities in Yūbari could be free from bullying at school, play sports and work. The history of industrial accidents and mine explosions I mentioned in chapter 1 may have helped created a better living space for people with disabilities in present day Yūbari.

In the same way people in Yūbari have been characterized as dependent on the state, towns like Yūbari are characterized as dependent on Tokyo. Though not often addressed in official discourse, we may read this parallel in the comments of those who compare Yūbari to a colony of the Internal Affairs Ministry to use the example from chapter 1. A system of redistribution exists precisely to reattribute tax revenue to rural areas based on population (Ikawa, 2008). For the dominant political party, calling places like Yūbari a burden would risk alienating their older, rural voter base (Coulmas, 2007). But as responsibility for their own future sustainability is delegated to rural areas, dependence is becoming less apt to describe the dynamic between the periphery and the centre. Or at least where *machizukuri* groups are concerned, their orientation towards salvaging what is left from the local environment can help create some measure of autonomy and create affordances for places or people left out by the modern state. As disability studies argues, valuing autonomy in and of itself may be reproducing

[52] This echoes Georg Simmel's (1971) analysis of city life as alienating amidst modernization and loss of connection to the nostalgized countryside.

the way we value everyone else according to their ability to perform a self-contained, rational human being (Imrie, 2000; Kittay, 2005). But in Yūbari's context, autonomy can mean more attentive dependencies and exchanges against the background of the Internal Affairs Ministry's draconian demands. Similarly, the kind of cultural value being salvaged from Yūbari's past through the re-use of slag heaps and former power plants offers a basis upon which to stake a more durable, locally-oriented future less dependent on nostalgia for progress. Town-building activities in Yūbari tend to avoid the more overtly developmental or nostalgic modes that are attributed to revitalization movements elsewhere in Japan (cf. Allen, 1994; Love, 2013). Rather than becoming the anticipatory subjects of the future perfect, or the embodiment of the past perfect of nostalgic tradition, these *machizukuri* projects are trying to build a town for the people living in it in the present (cf. Hetherington, 2016; Povinelli, 2011).

Saito-san is already moving on to his next project of creating a day service for the elderly. His continuous adaptations to the needs of the people in Yūbari reflect what Mol et al. (2010) call the logic of care: adjustment and creating affordances over firm decisions and impartial decisions. However, Saito-san's main concern for the future is the need for human resources: he is already stretched thin between so many things, and his plans to expand to doing more activities, that there may not be enough volunteers or workers to help manage everything, or other people to start their own projects. "I keep moving from project to project, but I find it hard to manage things myself. For instance, I'm responsible for the maintenance of the museum, but I'd like to make it more fun, have activities there that involve the people of Yūbari as well as visitors. But I can't do everything myself, so there's a need to help bring in more people who can step in with their own ideas."

Conclusion

A recent article by entrepreneur Kinoshita Hitoshi (2017) argues that rural areas remain conservative, and exclude the very young people they call on to bring new life to their area. This article condenses a view of Yūbari as declining, and declining because of its ability to import the future of progress. This argument does nothing to criticize the way all future or hope for new vitality is heaped onto young people, simultaneously contributing to the noxious idea that older people cannot learn or change their lives. Moreover, it perpetuates the idea of rural areas as unchanging places of tradition where the people living there do not want anything to change. It is this kind of perspective that I have written against here, instead turning to the ways that people are attempting to salvage from what is left of the mining city the respectability of hometown and of heritage, caring for people and places left behind by the trampling pace of progress.

I began this thesis with the story of how Yūbari became a city of progress, and then a town of decline. Yūbari became a key resource hub in the project of developing Hokkaido and Japan, representing an inexhaustible source of fuel for national expansion. The state's shift to oil effectively ended the national coal industry, giving way to depopulation and failed attempts to create a resort town focused on tourism. The town's bankruptcy created a national shockwave about public finances in rural areas, on top of adding to enduring fears about depopulation, aging and the future of Japanese society without economic growth. Despite this, Yūbari remains, and some efforts are being made to salvage and live better within what is left.

The Shimizusawa Project is one of the groups attempting to turn what are otherwise ruins or negative legacies into heritage. Rather than merely turning places like the former Shimizusawa power plant into objects of preservation for tourist use, the Shimizusawa Project re-uses these places as part of a living museum that values the experiences of local people within the neighbourhood over a commodified experience of traditional rurality. More than the production of capitalist value, this kind of salvage attempts to translate ruins into heritage as the basis for restoring local pride and autonomy similar to other *machizukuri* movements elsewhere in Japan. In any case, this kind of salvage extends beyond the translation of beings or places into commodities regulated by heritage regimes, focusing instead on showing the contributions of Yūbari to Japan and its life beyond mining or mass tourism.

Using slag heaps as a focus, I have examined how groups like the *Yama no Kioku* NPO and the Shimizusawa Project are using ubiquitous images of rurality to salvage a hometown from the former mining city. Rather than nostalgia as a desire for the past, what this affect-infused language brings is a sense of value and autonomy outside capitalist value production. The rural hometown or *furusato* is a role that while potentially commodifying also has an emotional force that can help Yūbari claim belonging on its own terms.

In chapter four, I have engaged with how former schools and other buildings left behind, particularly since the town's bankruptcy, have been salvaged to form networks of care. Often without much help from the state, outsiders and people born in Yūbari are making this into a town where there are less barriers to people with our without disabilities living fulfilled lives together. Organizations that are helping create these networks of care share the concern of other *machizukuri* groups for defying ideas of rural areas as dependent and unsuitable for people with disabilities (themselves often characterized as dependent). These are small projects, but they powerfully confound both tropes of progress and nostalgia in interesting ways. More than managing decline or pacifying nostalgia, *machizukuri* efforts in Yūbari salvage with places and people left behind by progress to build a more locally-oriented, stable future.

In the past few months, a future investment of 10 billion yen in the form of a China-focused tourism company's plans to renovate Yūbari's resort area has created quite a stir (Sankei News, 2017). No one I spoke to seemed to place faith in the idea that this would necessarily help Yūbari overall: learned caution, more than optimism, seems to be the popular reaction to news of such potential developments. Many were worried about the way the everyday lives of people in Yūbari might be intruded upon by the demands of tourism. For instance, the continuing relocation of people within the town haunts the prospect of these developments. For the company, Yūbari may be just another resort to develop, but for the people who have found something else than capital to salvage from Yūbari, this development brings new challenges.

The writing of this thesis has left me with many questions, some of which I hope to explore in future research. It seems to me that there is much in the history of Hokkaido before it became known as "Hokkaido" that would be worth exploring in further detail. Moreover, how indigenous activists amongst others refuse or are refused participation in rural revitalization movements is worth further consideration in discussing how certain versions of history and

images of Japanese rurality continue to be reproduced. If I have used the analytic language of haunting to describe the influence of people absent from the focus of my ethnography, it is to reflect on this conspicuous absence. Also haunting (and thus absent from) the end product of this thesis are in-depth discussions of nature and life in Yūbari. Ideas about nature and life figure relatively prominently in this thesis, yet lack the attention reserved for heritage, care or nostalgia: they are the "ruins" of this thesis, lacking upkeep and careful attention, but full of life to those who notice. These ruins can serve as guideposts for questions I hope to ask in the future. Lastly, there is much to be said about the relationship between materiality, infrastructure, energy, and time. If power plants and coal mines were to build a future based on progress, creating a world with its own sense of time, then what sense of time is there to be found in the life of the ruins of progress?

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