Local Art Festivals and Local Culture Tourism:
Is Local Art ‘indigenized’ as local culture?

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Abstract: This paper examines the phenomenon of local art festivals in the Japanese hinterland, which have been subject to various degrees of promotion and support under the Kankō Machi-tsukuri programmes (community development through tourism). The paper focuses specifically on two significant local art festivals in Japan: the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (Daichi no Geijutsusai) in Niigata Prefecture and the Setouchi International Art Festival in Kagawa and Okayama prefectures. With reference to Actor-network theory, this paper shows how extraneous cultural elements and ideas are adopted by mostly elderly communities, leading to the rejuvenation of these communities and successful tourism development. The artworks and sites themselves are agents in these relationships of cultural exchange and localization.

Keywords: local culture tourism, local art festivals, community development through tourism, actor-network theory

Introduction

Since 2000, local art festivals (or art projects) have been a common phenomenon in Japan. Likewise has been the discussion and promotion of Kankō Machi-tsukuri (community development through tourism). Local art festivals are introduced into locales from outside, and the residents in the area cooperate and support them in a manner consistent with Kankō Machi-tsukuri. Art festivals and Kankō Machi-tsukuri together may be used to revitalize communities. In this paper, I focus on two significant local art festivals in Japan: the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (Daichi no Geijutsusai) in Niigata Prefecture and the Setouchi International Art Festival in Kagawa and Okayama prefectures.
Art projects such as these can be said to occasion collaborations amongst artists, volunteers and local residents. This is to speak however of only human actors, such as local governments, producers, directors, artists, local residents, volunteers etc. Non-human agencies also need to be considered as part of these networks, such as technologies, materials, relational practices and stories. Perhaps most obviously artworks themselves in local art festivals are agents, affecting traffic and the flow of people, the sites of exhibition, other artworks and artists, local residents and the tourists and art aficionados who attend. Although it might be difficult for local residents to understand and explain the complex meanings and purposes of contemporary art, individual works of art may nevertheless have the capacity to act on the recipients emotionally (Gell 2013). In relational materiality, art makes humans feel, think, and move.

Actors are perceived as a network effects, and unconceivable without relations. Agency is not strictly a human affair. All actors are hybrids and so is agency, spun between different actors in networks. Agency thus comes to represent a collective capacity for action by humans and non-humans (Jóhannesson 2005, p. 139).

The first Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in 2000 attracted 162,800 visitors, the 4th festival in 2009 attracted 375,311 visitors, and in 2015 the 5th festival drew 488,848 visitors. The Setouchi International Art Festival in 2016 attracted more than 1 million visitors. In this paper I would like to consider whether such local art festivals can function as *Kankō Machi-tsukuri*; whether they exemplify ‘local culture tourism’, and whether local arts can be understood to constitute ‘local cultures’. Most local art festivals are held in areas that are depopulated, or consist of rapidly aging communities. Thus, if festivals do function as ‘local culture tourism’, they may contribute to a revitalization of these communities.

Here I define ‘local culture tourism’ as a form of tourism that is operated by local people to present ‘local culture’ to tourists. This culture, which is profoundly related to locality, is not only traditionally inherited but also discovered or created, and fostered by the local people. Additionally, extraneous elements (local art festivals) may be localized (or indigenized) and become part of a community’s self-identity. I describe this form of human and non-human interaction as ‘local culture tourism’.
Theoretical Background and Perspective

Actor-Network Theory

Firstly, from the perspective of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), I would like to clarify why these art festivals attract large numbers of visitors or ‘appreciator-tourists’ (art enthusiasts, art tourists and casual tourists), what kinds of relations exist among non-human elements, and how multiple relational orderings are constructed among different actors.

To arrive at such an understanding, the totality of tourism beyond the narrow field of applied business management needs to be considered. The focus has always been on human actors, especially from the perspective of Machi-tsukuri (community development). However, here I aim to focus on non-human actors. “To insist on the principle of symmetry ‘is to assert that everything, more particularly, that everything you seek to explain or describe should be approached in the same way” (Law 1994, p. 9-10; Van der Duim 2007, p. 963). “It thus erodes distinctions (as between global and local, those that drive and the driven, macro and micro, people and things) that are said to reside in the nature of things, and instead asks how they got to be that way as a product or effect of processes of ordering” (ibid, p. 12). “Tourism studies should come down to following the actors as they stitch networks together and one should observe the trail of associations between heterogeneous elements” (Van der Duim 2007, p. 962).

A network is imagined as a medium or channel between nodes that transports messages without deforming them. For ANT, the emphasis is on the work inherent in networks. Hence, ANT’s understanding of network is highlighted with the concept of translation” (Jóhannesson 2005, p. 135). Humans and non-humans are involved in processes of translation where actors bring together quite different entities. “Through translation, associations with other actors and actor-networks are established and stabilized. Translation builds actor-networks from entities (Van der Duim 2007, p. 966).

Humans and non-humans alike are treated as possible actors and are ascribed agency. Tourist destinations have often been treated as more or less territorially bounded destinations with the focus laid on organizational and marketing strategies. The destination is seen as a container of attractions and
necessary facilities, such as transport, accommodation and catering services, and in the case of the subjects of this study, artworks. These can affect the traffic, the flow of people, the art sites and the residents, the artists and the ‘appreciator-tourists’.

**Local Culture Tourism**

*Kankō Machi-tsukuri* (community development through tourism) focuses on ‘local culture’ that people have constructed, discovered or created (or even appropriated) by themselves, and the commodification and marketing of this culture for the tourist industry. Local culture and locality have emerged in the face of globalization, which attempts to impose uniformity on them. Locality is an inherently fragile social achievement. “Even in the most intimate, spatially confined, geographically isolated situations, locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds” (Appadurai 1996, p. 179). Moreover, “it is ephemeral unless hard and regular work is undertaken to produce and maintain its materiality” (Appadurai 1996, p. 180-181). “Locality for the modern nation-state is either a site of nationally appropriated nostalgias, celebrations, and commemorations or a necessary condition of the production of nationals. Neighborhoods as social formations represent anxieties for the nation-state, as they usually contain large or residual spaces where the techniques of nationhood are likely to be either weak or contested” (Appadurai 1999, p. 190). “The work of producing neighborhoods — life-worlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories, and by collectively traversed and legible spaces and places — is often at odds with the projects of the nation-state. This is partly because the commitments and attachments (sometimes mislabeled “primordial”) that characterize local subjectivities are more pressing, more continuous, and sometimes more distracting than the nation-state can afford. It is also because the memories and attachments that local subjects have of and to their shop signs and street names, their favorite walkways and streetscapes, their times and places for congregating and escaping are often at odds with the needs of the nation-state for regulated public life” (Appadurai 1996, p. 191).

The creation of locality is subject to suppressions by the nation-state or the movements of residents. The authenticity of locality is also questioned at various stages of *Kankō Machi-tsukuri*. Locality needs to be understood in reference to Gellner’s nationalism. “Nationalism uses the pre-existing,
historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth, though it uses them very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically. Dead languages can be revived, traditions invented, quite fictitious pristine purities restored. The cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old shred and patch would have served as well” (Gellner 1983, p. 55-56). Thus locality has fabricated tradition.

In many cases, Kankō Machi-tsukuri has fabricated tradition by using “the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth.” It also invented traditions or borrowed the traditions of others. In this paper I will focus on two such cases: Yufuin in Kyūshū where their traditions have been invented, and “Yosakoi Sōran Festival” in Hokkaidō, which was borrowed from the “Yosakoi Festival” in Kōchi Prefecture.

(a) Yufuin

In the 1970s, Yufuin in Ōita Prefecture launched a new campaign to attract tourists. After the 1976 earthquake, although officials and hoteliers managed to contain the negative publicity caused by the earthquake, the prefecture had no campaign funds for newspaper advertisements. However, they had built a four-wheeled, one-horse carriage to transport tourists between the station and their hotels, which received some newspaper coverage. Yufuin recovered its visitors through newspaper articles such as this communicated the wellbeing of the destination as meta-level information. Subsequently, Yufuin established a diversity of festivals and events (music festival, film festival, shouting game and so on), without any budget or advertising funds. This exemplifies ‘local culture tourism’, in which local people create, foster, and promote the cultural resources of the locality. Until recently, most tourist destinations attempted to attract tourists by creating new events, but only a few succeeded. Yufuin is an exception, and an example of ‘local culture tourism’ that was created by the local people themselves.

(b) Yosakoi Sōran Festival in Hokkaidō

In 1954, the Yosakoi (dance) Festival was created and established in a commercial district of Kōchi Prefecture for the purpose of restoration and reconstruction. The dance teams have increased in numbers over the years – in 2016, 200 teams and 19,000 participants performed dances, wearing costume and heavy make-up (atsugeshō).
In 1991, a university student from Hokkaidō who observed the Yosakoi Festival was deeply moved by the performances. He proposed conducting a similar festival in Sapporo, and thus began the “Yosakoi Sōran Festival,” which he localized with the inclusion of the Sōran Bushi (a folk song of Hokkaidō). In 2016, 280 teams and 28,000 dancers performed before an audience of 2 million at this festival.

This exemplifies the process of creating a new festival based on locality. The organizers of the Yosakoi Sōran Festival appropriated the Yosakoi Festival from Kōchi, and fostered their own festival by including something unique. Since its inception, all the participants have fostered and promoted the Yosakoi Sōran (now larger than the original Yosakoi Festival) as their own ‘local culture’.

**Localization and indigenization of a culture**

In the first stage of adoption and adaptation, local people who are either residents or provincials not living in their home village, adopt an extraneous cultural element, in this case contemporary art. The next stage is that of localization, where most of the materials, the participants, and the volunteers at the event come from the locality itself. The final stage is that of indigenization, where any external management is replaced by local people. In actuality, the artists and their work originate from outside the area where these local art festivals are held. Therefore, it is important to gauge the stage at which these festivals are at in this process. I believe they are now in the process of ‘localization’, and have not yet reached the stage of ‘indigenization’.

It will be helpful to look briefly at ‘indigenization’ in another context: that of Christianity and the game of rugby in Fiji. The process of Fiji’s modernization displays the indigenization of Christianity, modern sports and political character (Fijian democracy, political parties, administration etc). Christianity was indigenized, and today it can be called “Fijian Christianity.” Fijian Christians pray not only to God, but also to their ancestral gods for protection. They say, “Lotu lako vata na vanua” (Christianity goes with our tradition). They have the same passion for rugby and Christianity. In their narrative, Fijian Christianity and rugby are considered the basis of their “Fijianness” or Fijian identity (Hashimoto 2001, p. 1).
At the first stage, the indigenous people adopted the sport of rugby. At the second stage, they localized it by playing it themselves, but without seeking to control the Rugby Union or other regulatory institutions. In the final stage, they indigenized it by taking control of all the agents and institutions of the sport; players, coaches, judges and the union; and making it the national sport. Consolidating this indigenization, the Fiji national rugby team won the first Gold Medal of the Rugby Sevens at the 2016 Olympics.

**Local Art Festivals in Japan**

The sites of the two art festivals under discussion are located in areas consisting of depopulated and rapidly aging communities. The founders of the two festivals were both deeply concerned about their communities, which they sought to revitalize through contemporary art. Fram Kitagawa, born in Niigata Prefecture, is the General Director of the two festivals and Sōichirō Fukutake (Chairperson of Benesse Corporation, born in Okayama Prefecture), is General Producer.

In Japan, since the 1970s, exhibitions of art objects have been held in open-air spaces or in facilities other than museums. In the 1980s, the concept of ‘site-specific art’ took root, and the government established the Art Culture Promotion Fund. During the Japanese bubble economy, under the guise of ‘mecenat’, many companies sponsored cultural events in response to the governor's prompts to do so. The 1990s were an embryonic phase for art projects in Japan, and in 2001, national and local governments established the Basic Law for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts. Thus, administrative policy changed from focusing on the construction of public buildings to focusing on culture, and after the great Hanshin Earthquake Disaster of 1995, artists began to connect more meaningfully with society. This represented a movement toward increasing social interaction, in which the artists collaborate in commissioning and presenting new performances, installations and events, by creating art in direct communion with place and society.

**Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (in Niigata Prefecture)**

Approximately 200 works of art by artists from all over the world are dotted across the 760-km² area of the Echigo-Tsumari art field. The Echigo-Tsumari
Art Triennale is one of the largest art festivals in the world, held once every three years, and approaching its sixth incarnation. “This Art Triennale has been described as unique in its quality and scale by media abroad and highly regarded as a new model of art festival. Community building through art has drawn attention as the “Tsumari Approach” and it has been referred to by curators and people in the art industry in the US, Europe and Asia as well as by delegations of local governments, international conferences and symposiums” (Echigo-Tsumari Art Field 2018).

The homepage continues, “Art has become a catalyst for connecting people with people, and people to places. Through networks of supporters, volunteers and private sponsors built up over many years, the festival provides a platform for exchange between the region and the city, complementing one another.” Cooperation between generations, regions, and genres has been successfully operationalized. In Echigo-Tsumari, artists are required to create their artwork on someone else’s land, requiring interaction with the locals. The artists’ passion and openness to learning influences local people, and they engage with artworks not as spectators, but as collaborators.

The Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale has welcomed many young volunteers from cities. They call themselves the kohebi-tai (little snake gang), and have been involved with many different projects. “The encounter between the old who have spent their entire lives on farming thinly populated lands, and students who don’t have a clear purpose in their city lives, resulted in collision and confusions at first, but this transformed into appreciation and cooperation, leading to an opening up of the region through the initiative of these young people” (Echigo-Tsumari Art Field 2018).

After the Chūetsu earthquake in 2004, the Daichi no otetsudai (Help the Land) project was initiated in which artists and volunteers from the cities actively engaged with and helped those affected by the earthquake. They undertook tasks such as reconstruction work and snow removal, despite continuous heavy snowfall for two winters. “Through such activities, it has become apparent that Echigo-Tsumari has become a place for hope for those living in the cities.” Young people, as well as those with more experience, jointly participated in building a ‘new hometown’. The Echigo-Tsumari effort in community building has been acknowledged beyond the framework of art as a new model of communitarianism. It has earned the Furusato Event Award by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Tokyo Creation Award, and
tsukuri Commendation by the General Affairs Minister. This approach to community building through culture and art has drawn great attention under the rubric of ‘creative city’, and Echigo-Tsumari has influenced other community-based projects in Tokushima, Ibaraki, Niigata, Osaka, and Setouchi. I will now introduce some artworks with stories from the communities.

**Hachi and Seizo Tashima Museum of Picture Book Art**

The location is an abandoned Sanada Primary School. “The main characters are the three students who were the last to attend the school, and the space is used as if part of a picture book. The objects that can be found in the school building are objects of nature that have been painted, including driftwood and nuts collected from around the seashore of the Izu Peninsula and the Sea of Japan. At the entrance of the building is an enormous bamboo fountain run by water that is shaped like a locust. This provides power to run the objects inside. The artist attempts to recreate the once vibrant life in the school of students, teachers, and even ghosts’ (Echigo-Tsumari Art Field 2018).

![Figure 1. Goat and Ghost, Ghost (Toperatoto), and Driftwood from the sea](Source: the author.)

These are important stories about the last three students playing in the abandoned school building, and about the ‘memory eater’ (*toperatoto*) and the ‘pondering goat’. The artist Tashima had learned about the situation of the community, and created this work of art in 2009. He now raises goats together with the Hachi villagers. The residents were so moved by the artist’s
materialization of their memories of the abandoned school and its students, and by the artist’s passion, that they themselves joined in creating the artworks as collaborators. They are now so attached to this art installation that they have opened a community-run restaurant to attract more visitors to the site.

**Figure 2.** Goat Yard, Students, and Hachi Cafe
Source: the author.

**The Rice Field (2000, by Ilya & Emilia Kabakov, Russia)**

When viewed from the Nō Butai, one can see sculptures in the site’s terraced rice fields combined with poems. This work of art brings together poetry, landscape, and sculpture. The poetry describes traditional agriculture, while the sculptures of rice farmers are placed on the opposite bank. Seen from the viewing platform on Nō Butai, both text and sculpture seem to form a single painting.

**Figure 3.** The Rice Field 1, The Rice Field 2, and The Arch of Life
Source: the author.

Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, the artists who created “The Rice Field”, will shortly present a new artwork called “The Arch of Life”, consisting of five statues. Each statue represents different stages of life, starting from a human
being with an egg-shaped head, a boy crawling on the ground, a man carrying a box emitting light, a man trying to climb a wall, or an ‘eternal exile’, and a worn-out man at the end of life.

In the Fine Art Biblio (Fine Art Biblio n.d.), the artists explained these sculptures. The height of the nearest sculpture is 280 cm, and the farthest is 300 cm. They are made out of semi-transparent fiberglass. The sculptures are not round, but rather almost flat. The production cycle of rice served as the subject of the sculptures: 1. tilling the land; 2. planting the seed; 3. planting of seedlings; 4. weeding; 5. gathering the harvest. The figures, clothing of the peasants, and their working instruments – all of these are of a traditional nature.

After a meeting with residents, they learned about the realities of the location. “It was the month of March, everything all around us was covered with snow, and we felt as though we had entered into the wintry landscapes of Utamaro and had become one of his figures. But from the organizers of the program as well as after our meeting with the town mayor, Mr. Tatsuji Sekiya, what was revealed to us was another, more prosaic, real side of this place: we learned and were shown in one of the museums just how difficult the life and work of the people living here are and how hard and what expenditures of labor the production of rice demands. We also learned of the hardships this region is experiencing at the present time – the new generation is not remaining in these places, it is leaving here, because the supremely difficult, many months of manual labor is ceasing to be attractive” (ibid).

The farmer who owned this rice field had no successor and was advancing in age, and had thus decided to discontinue cultivating the field. However, whilst observing the creative process of the artwork on his land he began rethinking the meaning of farming, and finally decided to continue growing rice for several more years. Since his death, volunteers from the festival have cultivated the rice field. The artists explained the site as follows:

“The ‘cultural zone’ around the ‘palace’ and the actual, difficult production on the other side of the river should be, in our opinion, connected in such a way that for the visitors of the palace, for the residents of this region, the lofty significance of this production, of the traditional wealth of this place, becomes clear, and that is why it became the subject of artistic depiction. For the visiting tourists
it should be clear that this production and the labor of these people deserves to have its own monument, a group of monuments visible from any place and from any, even the greatest, distance – and this monument is not to heroes, but rather to simple people who have labored in these fields for centuries” (ibid).

Potemkin (Architectural Office Casagrande & Rintala)

The creator of this artwork is quoted as saying,
For me Potemkin is the starting point of revolution. I am continuing mentally attached with Potemkin and seeing where the revolution is taking me. Potemkin stands in the crossroads where the modern man has to define his relationship with the nature. We have all the tools needed for a sustainable solution of human existence in the technological world. Now we also have all the tools to destroy the world. Architects, artists, urban planners, environmental planners and humanists must find their position and responsibility in this turning point. Potemkin stands as an Acropolis to be the post-industrial temple to think of the connection between the modern man and nature. I see Potemkin as a cultivated junk yard situated between the ancient rice fields and river with a straight axis to the Shintō temple (Echigo-Tsumari Art Field 2018).

![Figure 4. Potemkin 1, and Potemkin 2. Source: the author.](image)

This sculpture is installed along the river near some rice fields, at a spot which used to be an illegal garbage dump. The artist used discarded construction machines and tires for this work of art. The construction of
Potemkin influenced the residents to stop dumping garbage there and better maintain the riverside. Today, visitors can enjoy the artwork in the comfort of clean surroundings.

**Setouchi International Art Festival**

From July to October 2010, the first “Setouchi Triennale” (the inaugural edition of the international contemporary art festival) based on the theme “Restoration of the Sea,” was organized in collaboration with Kagawa Prefecture. It was held across seven islands in the Setouchi area (Naoshima, Teshima, Megijima, Ogijima, Shōdoshima, Ōshima, and Inujima), and Takamatsu Port. The festival aimed to celebrate or revive traditions that were specific to each island, focusing on the lives and history of the islands’ inhabitants. The Teshima Art Museum was created in the corner of a rice terrace, with sweeping views over the Seto Inland Sea by the architect Ryue Nishizawa and the artist Rei Naito specifically for this festival. “The paddy fields around the museum were restored in collaboration with the inhabitants of the area. The art museum represents a symbol of the restoration of Teshima, creating a boundless harmony between nature, art and architecture” (Art setouchi n.d.).

The second Festival (March to November 2013)- “Setouchi Triennale 2013” - was held in collaboration with Kagawa Prefecture. The sessions were divided across a total of 108 days, into spring, summer and fall, so that visitors could experience the seasons of the Seto Inland Sea. In addition to the seven islands who hosted the inaugural edition of the Triennale in 2010, the event was further expanded to include five additional islands — Shamijima, Honjima, Takamijima, Awashima, and Ibukijima — constituting a total of 12 islands, apart from the areas around Takamatsu Port and Uno Port. Recently, in 2016, the third edition of the international contemporary art festival was also held across 12 islands. The Triennale was organized through intensive collaboration with local inhabitants and the festival’s Executive Committee by creating strong bonds with the local communities, in particular through the Food Project, which focused on cuisine unique to the islands.

In conjunction with the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale in Niigata Prefecture, the first Setouchi International Art Festival (Triennale) began in 2010. In
1985, 25 years before this festival, a meeting was held between the President and Founder of Fukutake Publishing, and the Mayor of Naoshima. The meeting resulted in the mutual agreement to initiate a series of developments around Naoshima. Benesse House was inaugurated in July 1992, as a facility that integrated a museum and a hotel. It commenced operations under the name of Naoshima Contemporary Art Museum, holding temporary exhibitions between 1992 and 1995. The exhibition of artwork displayed outside the museum was based on the idea that “the power of contemporary art is heightened when surrounded by a rich natural environment. The exhibition became an important step leading to the commissioning of site specific works later on.” Yayoi Kusama’s “Pumpkin” is still a symbol of Naoshima at Miyanoura harbor.

![Figure 5. Teshima Art Museum, and Yayoi Kusama’s Pumpkin](image)

Source: the author.

Artists were invited to create artworks that were unique to Naoshima and their focus turned toward commission-based site-specific works. Meanwhile, the completed pieces began to be exhibited as permanent displays inside and outside the Benesse House Museum. In 1998, the Art House Project, which began in the Honmura District of Naoshima, obtained and restored old houses that artists converted into works of art. The first work of this project, Kadoya, was opened to the public in 1998. This became a great opportunity for expanding the area dedicated to art projects, reaching out from the Benesse House Museum toward the local town and its inhabitants, and engaging with their daily routines, including areas such as the Miyanoura District, the Mitsubishi Materials District and the Honmura District.
The Naoshima Fukutake Art Foundation established in 2004, later changed to the Fukutake Foundation in 2012, aimed “to create significant spaces by bringing contemporary art and architecture in resonance with the pristine nature of the Seto Inland Sea, a landscape with a rich cultural and historical fabric.” (Fukutake and Ando 2011, p. 5-6) In all their ongoing activities, they are “committed to foster a relationship of mutual growth between art and the region, aiming to make a positive contribution to the local communities” (ibid).

I will now introduce some artwork and stories from this project with reference to their website.

**Shima Kitchen by Ryo Abe in Teshima**

Designed by Ryo Abe, “the restaurant’s large roof wraps around tables providing seating in an airy, semi-outdoor space. Local women have collaborated with chefs from the Marunouchi Hotel to develop an original menu of delicious cuisine based on local fish and produce, while the terrace area is frequently used for music, dance and other events and workshops. Shima Kitchen has established itself as a real local platform, bringing people together through art and food” (Art setouchi n.d.).

Recently, Teshima became the center of a major scandal involving the worst case of illegal dumping of industrial waste in Japan. A decades-long grassroots movement pushed the nation to enforce tighter environmental standards, and the hazardous waste, consisting mainly of shredded byproducts from automobile manufacturing, is being recycled into slag in a special plant on Naoshima. In tackling the industrial waste issue, the remarkable differences of opinion within the communities between the older generation and the young, and various external influences prevented the islanders from arriving at a consensus.

However, when the “Shima Kitchen” was constructed in a vacant house and its yard, some women became involved in the project to provide tourists a feast from local cuisine. The general director, Kitagawa, says that this was the starting point for rebuilding solidarity in the community. Since then, the local women and volunteers have organized a birthday party every month. Four days before the day, they visit all the 800 villagers from 270 families...
individually and invite them to the party, where all the volunteers and villagers gather to dance and sing songs. Thus it has become a community festival (Kitagawa 2015, p. 169-170).

**Figure 6.** Shima Kitchen.
Source: the author.

*Dream of Olive by Wang Wen Chih in Shōdoshima*

A massive dome constructed from over 4,000 pieces of locally-grown bamboo becomes a stage for the third time, this time on the theme of olives. The interior becomes a stage on which visitors can wander around. The dome’s presence transforms the feel of the surrounding landscape.

*Regent in Olives Hisakazu Shimizu by in Shōdoshima*

**Figure 7.** Dream of Olive, and Regent in Olives.
Source: the author.

An olive-shaped head topped by a pompadour hairstyle sits in the middle of an olive orchard. It looks like a sculpture, but it is actually also an
unmanned stall, with a hollow area created to lay out vegetables and fruit. The piece is an experiment in using an object to connect people and generate communication.

Artworks (ii) and (iii) are installed in Shōdoshima, which is the second largest island in the Seto Inland Sea with a population of 30,000. The climate and stunning setting coupled with a thriving olive industry are reminiscent of the Mediterranean. Local industries were developed in harmony with nature, and retain time-honored traditions. Shōdoshima was the first place in Japan to cultivate olives successfully about 100 years ago, while local soy sauce manufacturers still use production techniques dating back four centuries. Other specialty products include sesame oil and somen noodles. In addition, Shōdoshima has a rich history and tradition. Rural kabuki thrived here for several centuries, with 30 theaters during its heyday. While only two remain, the traditional thatched-roofed structures continue to host annual performances staged by the local community.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 8. Rural Kabuki theater and Important tangible cultural property.
Source: the author.

It is not easy for visitors to access “Dream of Olive”, which is constructed at the bottom of a terraced paddy field. After walking down the steep slope from the nearby bus stop situated at the top of the terrace among rice fields, there is a bamboo walkway along a stream. At the end of the walkway, stands a high oval construction of bamboo. The interior becomes a stage on which dozens of visitors can wander around, or lie down with a comfortable feeling of being in the middle of nature.
Firstly in 2010, seven islands in the Seto Inland Sea hosted the Setouchi International Art Festival, and many other collaborative art projects. Then in 2013, twelve islands were participating. The communities were all scarcely populated and rapidly aging. The projects, artworks and their stories have significantly affected both human and non-human actors alike, revitalizing many communities. In summary, local art festivals have in this case proven to be a successful vehicle for *Kankō Machi-tsukuri* (community development through tourism).

**Discussion**

I would now like to discuss the three points in detail: the importance of story and translation in ANT, Local Culture Tourism and Local Art Festivals, and the issue of whether localization or indigenization better describe the subjects of this study.

**Importance of Story and Translation in ANT**

Emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of story and translation in ANT. Symmetry is one of the most distinctive features of ANT, and humans and non-humans should be approached in the same way. In the cases described above, the actors can be seen either as ‘patients’ or as ‘agents’ (Gell 2013, p. 24). Thus in relational materiality, art makes humans (residents, tourists and artists) feel, think, and move. In fact, many older women in the area worked voluntarily on ‘vacant house projects’ with the artists. The elderly helped the artists in residence, and interacted with them.
Here, agency is not strictly a human affair. The vacant houses in the area, the materials (marking pins, black strings for spider web) used for the works of art, and their stories, all affect the elderly residents emotionally. In this paper, I have related many stories about places, (abandoned school, terraced rice field), materials (olives, vacant houses, refuse), and humans (students, farmers, mothers and older women). I want to reiterate the importance of story, as it is the story that is able to move actors emotionally.

In the case of “Hachi & Seizo Tashima Museum of Picture Book Art”, the stories about the abandoned primary school, the last three students, and the space itself, all affected the artist to attempt to recreate the once vibrant life in the school through students, teachers and ghosts (toperatoto). The artist had learned about the situation in the community, the stories of the abandoned school and its last students. The residents were so moved by their own memories of the school and its students, and also by the artist’s depth of engagement, that they involved themselves in the artwork as collaborators. These stories also emotionally affect the tourists who visit the site and its contents, forming connections between the communities and their visitors.

Translation functions when artists meet locals, and locals meet tourists, artists, producers, and art project volunteers. They communicate with each other differently. For example, when a contemporary artist met a farmer or fisherman from the community, initially, the local would have difficulty understanding the intentions and ideas of the artist, neither could the artist understand the circumstances and cultural values of the local. When an artist or art director surveyed a region and found a desirable vacant house for the art project, the owner would not rent the house to a stranger with an arcane-sounding purpose. Here translation was required. The art director and a volunteer from the kohebi-tai (little snake gang) would then visit the owner regularly, to explain or translate the purpose of the project. This kind of translation would not be impersonal, but an emotional experience through which both parties became familiar with each other. After connecting with the personalities of the strangers, the owner would in many cases offer them the use of the vacant house despite any enduring confusion about the artist’s intentions.

At the next stage, one or a group of artists would stay in the village and carry out their creative activities. This phase again required translation. For
example, during the process of creating “House Memory” in a vacant house in Echigo-Tsumari, some local residents helped the artist weave spider webs with acrylic fibers all over the house. Here, an artistic understanding was translated into a communal meaning. The vacant house became a place to have a pleasant conversation with the artist and their neighbors. During the art festival, the local residents explained the creative process of this artwork to visitors. In this instance, translation occurred between the community and the ‘appreciator-tourists’.

**Figure 10.** House Memory (Chiharu Shiota Y-072). Source: the author.

*Local Culture Tourism, Local Art Festivals and Kankō Machi-tsukuri*

*Kankō Machi-tsukuri* (community development through tourism) always focuses on local culture, which local people have constructed, discovered or created, or even appropriated, on the basis of ‘locality”. In this case, enthusiasts of the area, *kohebi-tai* (little snake gang at Echigo-Tsumari) and *koebi-tai* (little shrimp gang at Setouchi) are included among the local people as well.

Fram Kitagawa from Niigata Prefecture and Sōichirō Fukutake from Okayama created these art festivals. Thus, in some sense, they are also locals. However, the question is whether the residents of these places consider these ‘local arts’ to be ‘local’ or not. In what scenario would local residents consider an artwork created by a foreign artist to be their own? As part of both of these festivals, many artists spent extended periods of time in the locations, learned the circumstances or stories of the community to gain inspiration, and created artworks in collaboration with the residents. This is a process of localization
of extraneous elements, which I will discuss in more detail below. If the artists do not communicate familiarly with the locals, nor study the circumstances of the community, they will not gain any inspiration from the local stories and their artwork will remain extraneous, similar to what is in a museum, and will never be localized. Fortunately, since most of the artists at the Echigo-Tsumari Triennale and Setouchi Art Triennale were well selected under the policy of the general director and the general producer, their artwork was accepted and highly esteemed by the local people.

In this discussion of local culture tourism, local people produce their own tourism commodities, somehow inscribed with the ‘locality’ or its identity that they have discovered, created or appropriated. The artists, being outsiders or not locals, come to stay and create art for several months in the location. If the artists in residence develop some connection with the area, they are recognized as locals, and local residents are proud to present their artwork to appreciator-tourists as their own culture. This is a perfect model for local culture tourism. On the other hand, the locals could consider themselves to be exploited by the artists or the producer of the festivals, and the artwork might be deemed as foreign to their culture. Local culture and locality as a material reality have emerged here in the form of art projects or local art festivals.

The authenticity of locality is questioned at various stages of Kankō Machi-tsukuri. In many cases, it has been noted that Kankō Machi-tsukuri fabricated traditions by using “the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth” (Gellner 1983, p. 55). They also invented traditions or borrowed the traditions of others. However I would rather call these activities ‘local culture tourism’, because the local people create, foster, and promote the cultural resources of their community and its locality. As I mentioned above, Yufuin is an exceptional and special example of local culture tourism that was created by the local people themselves.

Just as the Yosakoi Sōran Festival was modeled on the Yosakoi Festival in Kōchi out of a sense of respect, and has been promoted as a festival of Hokkaidō, local art festivals have an opportunity to be localized or accepted by the residents as their own culture.
Localization or Indigenization?

Are the contemporary arts localized or indigenized in our two subject localities? Initially, especially at Echigo-Tsumari, the art project was strongly opposed by the residents of the town of Tōkamachi, which is now the main stage of the festival. They were hostile to contemporary art generally and skeptical that the art project might revitalize their depopulated community. However, villagers in depopulated and rapidly aging mountainous areas were more amenable to the art project in spite of not understanding it completely. They realized that there was no other way to revitalize their villages, since it was the art project that was bringing newcomers to their community.

For instance, “The Rice Field” (2000) by Ilya and Emilia Kabakov was composed of sculptures, poems and landscape. The poetry described traditional agriculture, while the sculptures of traditional rice farmers were placed in the terraced rice fields. As mentioned earlier, the farmer who owned this rice field, having no successor and being too old, had decided not to continue cultivating the field. However, observing the creative process of the artwork on his land, he recognized value enough to continue farming for several more years. Since his death, the volunteers have cultivated his rice field. I would describe this as the localization of an extraneous art project.

“Ubusuna House” organizes events to enjoy freshly harvested rice and tea ceremonies. It is a minka house (Japanese-style house) built in 1924 that has been refurbished as a part of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale 2006. A team of local women runs a restaurant serving food on the ceramic dishes made by the artists.

The village around Ubusuna House was extremely conservative and the village women always stayed in the background and never came out in public. The arrival of artists changed the village. The women worked for the restaurant, talked with the guests, and made a profit of 20 million yen during one summer alone. They created and served original dishes to the tourists, using locally produced fresh ingredients, in collaboration with the ceramic artists. The men of village recognized the value of the women’s activities and appreciated the results. The women have since found voice to express their opinions, and have become influential in the village. Would we describe this as localization or indigenization?
To answer this question we must consider the various stages in the indigenizing process. The first stage is constituted by the adoption by local people of an extraneous cultural element, in this case contemporary art. The second stage is that of localization described above, and the third stage is that of full indigenization, in which local people replace all the external management staff, and the contemporary art festivals are under the full control of local people, who create and present all aspects of material culture that the festival involves. In actuality, since the artists and their works come from outside the areas where these festivals are held, these examples are still at the stage of localization. Nevertheless, in some areas local women began producing their original ceramic dishes – a kind of artwork – and also took over management of the restaurants Shima Kitchen and Ubusuna House. This represents the beginning of indigenization.

Conclusion

In ANT, humans and non-humans alike are treated as possible actors and are ascribed agency within a series of connected and overlapping networks. Many works of art from the two festivals under discussion have been affected by stories connected to the physicality of places, and the activities of the communities that live there. The agency of local arts and narratives has affected the flow of people and traffic, the physical sites themselves, the residents, the artists and the visitors. Although it is still difficult for some the residents to relate to contemporary art, nevertheless, it has acted on most of them emotionally. Thus, in terms of relational materiality, art has made humans (residents, tourists and artists) feel, think, and move.

The two local art festivals have functioned efficiently as Kankō Machi-tsukuri. Initially, most Tōkamachi citizens were decidedly opposed to the art project. However, since recognizing how effective the project is as a strategy for revitalizing their communities, they have supported it whole-heartedly. At the office of tourism, an officer in charge of the art festival explained the content and promotion of activities as a city project, and said that some staff had been so impressed by the art festival that they had applied for a position at the office. The residents around the Potemkin keep the site clean along the riversides, which used to function as an informal refuse dump. The art festivals have given courage, confidence, and pride to many local people, and have also attracted migrants from big cities.
The local art festivals can be recognized as an instance of local culture tourism because of the degree to which they have become localized. They were introduced from outside, but the local people accepted, promoted, and presented them to visitors in collaboration with the artists. In that sense, the artworks have now become the communal wealth of these communities. Many artists who learned about the community, and were affected by various stories, material items, individuals and places have become ‘locals’, so to speak. Thus, the artworks created by ‘locals’ have become local culture; inscribed with the locality in which they were produced.

Nevertheless, most areas are still in the process of localization rather than indigenization. Except for some projects like Shima-Kitchen and Ubusuna House, the locals have not created and presented any products or artwork of their own. There is no educational institution for fostering artists here, and no indigenous artists have emerged in these areas. In fact, the local community does not financially manage these art projects and festivals yet. It is very difficult for locals to control and organize such a large-scale event, but they can participate in the formulation of plans. Thus, extraneous elements are localized or partially indigenized as local culture, and now the local people proudly consider these works of art as their own cultural wealth.

Notes

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