Recovery and Reinvention: Lessons for Tōhoku Communities from *Furusato-zukuri* Elsewhere in Japan

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Introduction: Keeping Rural Japan Alive
We must ask not only **how** to recover or restore, but also **what** to recover or restore. What was the situation as of March 10, 2011? And is that the situation residents want to restore?
Many of the rural communities on Japan’s northeast coast were already suffering from challenges as of March 10, 2011. Should plans for recovery and restoration include plans to address those pre-existing problems?
Many of those pre-3/11 problems were shared with rural areas throughout Japan: • farming, fishing, forestry, mining, and smokestack industries becoming marginalized in an increasingly high-tech, service economy • aging population, young people leaving
Introduction: Keeping Rural Japan Alive

Rural areas struggled to redefine themselves, keep their young people, preserve buildings and places with special meaning, and reorient their economies. They called these efforts furusato-zukuri (“home town-building”) or machi-zukuri (“town-building”). Other terms:

- machi-sodate
- chiiki-zukuri
- mura-okosshi
- kasseika
Introduction: Keeping Rural Japan Alive

Most studies of furusato-zukuri/machi-zukuri have focused on urban areas and attempts by organized citizens to have a voice in planning. For more information on this topic, see André Sorenson and Carolin Funck, eds., *Living Cities in Japan: Citizens’ Movements, Machizukuri, and Local Environments* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).
Introduction: Keeping Rural Japan Alive

Most studies of furusato-zukuri/machi-zukuri have focused on urban areas and attempts by organized citizens to have a voice in planning. I focus here instead on four cases of furusato-zukuri in rural areas, outside of Tōhoku, and ask what lessons, if any, they might offer as Tōhoku’s communities rebuild, redefine themselves, and attempt to survive.
Introduction: Keeping Rural Japan Alive

My discussion of these four places today is based on my essay entitled “Furusato-zukuri: Saving Home Towns by Reinventing Them,” in Christopher Gerteis and Timothy S. George, eds., Japan since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble (forthcoming in January 2013 from Bloomsbury Publishers).
Japan since 1945
From postwar to post-bubble

edited by Christopher Gerteis
edited by Timothy S. George

Examines the social, cultural, and political underpinnings of Japan’s postwar and post-industrial trajectories.

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Description

Does Japan really matter anymore? The challenges of recent Japanese history have led some pundits and scholars to publicly wonder whether Japan’s significance is starting to wane. The multidisciplinary essays that comprise Japan Since 1945 demonstrate its ongoing importance and relevance. Examining the historical context to the social, cultural, and political underpinnings of Japan’s postwar development, the contributors re-engage earlier discourses and introduce new veins of research.

Japan Since 1945 provides a much needed update to existing scholarly work on the history of contemporary Japan. It moves beyond the ‘lost decade’ and ‘terrible devastation’ frameworks that have thus far defined too much of the discussion, offering a more nuanced picture of the nation’s postwar development.
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Attempts to recover from the tragic mercury poisoning that made it the ultimate symbol of the dark side of Japan’s high growth and also the symbol of the rise of the citizens’ movement. For more background on this, see my book on Minamata: Timothy S. George, *Minamata: Pollution and the Struggle for Democracy in Postwar Japan* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).
Nearly forty years after the outbreak of the "Minamata Disease," it remains one of the most horrific examples of environmental poisoning. Based on primary documents and interviews, this book describes three rounds of responses to this incidence of mercury poisoning, focusing on the efforts of its victims and their supporters, particularly the activities of grassroots movements and popular campaigns, to secure redress. George argues that Japan’s postwar democracy is ad hoc, fragile, and dependent on definition through citizen action and that the redress effort is exemplary of the great changes in the second and third postwar decades that redefined democracy in Japan.
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Minamata, in addition to dealing with the persistent legacies of a long-term industrial pollution disaster, was responding to many of the sorts of problems common to many other areas throughout Japan.
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

- Chisso Corp. chemical factory built 1908
- From village, to town, to city of 50,000 by 1956
- Chisso fell from leading edge of technology; 5,000 workers in 1950, 2,000 in 1970, 680 in 1994
- Population down to 30,000 by 1990
- 5% of population over 65 in 1955, over 30% now
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

mercury poisoning
discovered in 1956
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Four “solutions” to the Minamata disease problem:
- 1959
- 1973
- 1995-96
- 2010
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Furusato-zukuri in Minamata:
• Minamata Disease Center Sōshisha
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Minamata disease patients at the Minamata Disease Center Sōshisha
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata:

- Minamata Disease Center Sōshisha
- ways for patients to make a living
- moyainaoshi movement
Minamata disease patient Hamamoto Tsuginori tells his story at the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Mayor Yoshii Masazumi apologizes to Minamata disease victims and calls for moyainaoshi reconciliation
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

a meeting of the Minamata Study Group
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Furusato-zukuri in Minamata:
• Minamata Disease Center Sōshisha
• ways for patients to make a living
• moyainaoshi movement
• Yoshimoto Tetsurō’s jimotogaku
• city policies and goals: “zero garbage city”
• links with other victims
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Minamata disease patient with a citizens’ group leader in Soweto, South Africa
Furusato-zukuri in Minamata

Can Minamata’s *furusato-zukuri/machizukuri* be a model?
Tsumago: Historic Townscape Preservation

One of the best-known cases of *furusato-zukuri*.

- **Goal**: make Tsumago look and feel as it did in the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), when it was a post station on the Nakasendō, the inland route along which feudal lords passed on their way to and from Edo (now Tokyo).
Tsumago: Historic Townscape Preservation

When you come here, you can return to the Japan of 300 years ago.

Welcome to Tsumago Website.
We hope you enjoy them!
Tsumago: Historic Townscape Preservation
Tsumago: Historic Townscape Preservation

One of the best-known cases of furusato-zukuri.
- Goal: make Tsumago look and feel as it did in the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), when it was a post station on the Nakasendō, the inland route along which feudal lords passed on their way to and from Edo (now Tokyo).
- Campaign launched in 1968, for centennial of Meiji Restoration.
- To preserve, restore, attract tourists to revitalize the economy.
- “Do not sell, do not rent, do not tear down.”
Otaru: Preserving a 20th Century Cityscape
Otaru: Preserving a 20th Century Cityscape

First major movement to preserve a 20th century townscape.
- Population greater than Sapporo’s until 1920s.
- Major trading port with many banks: “the Wall Street of the north.”
Otaru: Preserving a 20th Century Cityscape

the Otaru branch of the Bank of Japan built 1912 and designed by Tatsuno Kingo
Otaru: Preserving a 20th Century Cityscape

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- Major trading port with many banks, “Wall Street of the north.”
- Canal built in center of city, 1914-1923, so barges could dock at downtown warehouses.
- City declined after the Asia-Pacific War; planners decided to pave over the canal.
- Citizens’ movement began in 1973, to protect canal and warehouses to protect Otaru’s identity.
Otaru: Preserving a 20th Century Cityscape

First major movement to preserve a 20th century townscape.

- Concerns about “rootless,” “souvenir-oriented” tourism with little benefit for Otaru.
Otaru: Preserving a 20th Century Cityscape

tourists visiting the canal and warehouses in Otaru

Wednesday, May 23, 12
First major movement to preserve a 20th century townscape.

- Concerns about “rootless,” “souvenir-oriented” tourism with little benefit for Otaru.
- Communities as meaningful “place” (ba/basho), not just “space” (kūkan).
- “An old town for a new society.”
Uwa: A More Typical Furusato-zukuri?
Gail Bernstein lived with the Utsunomiya family for her research in the 1970s; I stayed with them in 2008.
Uwa: A More Typical Furusato-zukuri?

Utsunomiya Shōichi:
Uwa: A More Typical *Furusato-zukuri*?
Utsunomiya Shōichi:
• Reorganized rice fields in early 1970s after studying U.S. farming in 1950s.
• Served as mayor from 1982 to 2004.
• Education and economic changes -> fears that young people would reject farming and leave.
• Strategy: get funding from national and prefectural governments, but focus on projects providing necessary services and many jobs, and encouraging young people to stay or return.
Uwa: A More Typical *Furusato-zukuri*?
The Rice Museum

The museum displays a wide array of tools, maps, and other items. The museum explains the history of rice farming in Uwa, the wide selection of strains of rice available to the modern rice farmer all over the world, and the future of rice farming. The strains of rice on display range from those that were farmed in ancient times in Japan to modern strains grown in an experimental rice field.

Built in 1928, the building that now houses Uwa’s Rice Museum used to house the Uwa elementary school. It’s 109 metre-long hallway is reputed to be the longest school building hallway in all of Japan. This makes it quite the popular attraction, understandably.
Uwa: A More Typical Furusato-zukuri?
preserved buildings in Uwa
Ine Kusumoto was Siebold's daughter. She was born in Nagasaki Prefecture in 1827, only two years before her father was to be forever exiled from Japan. Ine was brought to Uwa town at the age of 14 and was looked after by Siebold's good friend and former pupil, Keisaku Ninomiya. Ninomiya not only looked after Ine, but also taught her the medicine that he had learned from her father years before.

Ine Kusumoto went on to become the first German female doctor in Japan, and later became an obstetrician for Japan's Imperial Household Agency.
Uwa: A More Typical Furusato-zukuri?
Lessons for Tōhoku?
Lessons for Tōhoku?

• Before 3/11, rural areas and regional cities drew relatively little attention in English-language scholarship on postwar Japan. Only 4.9% of Japan’s workers in 1996 were farmers.

• Since 3/11, the fact that most of the areas severely affected by the earthquake, tsunami, and radiation leaks were rural, and were already struggling with the same sorts of difficulties as other rural areas, makes a strong case for looking to see what might be learned from those areas.
Lessons for Tōhoku?

Minamata:
• importance of broad-based study groups representing different types of stakeholders
• benefits of links with other disaster victims in other parts of Japan and the world
Lessons for Tōhoku?

Tsumago:
- importance of plans and principles agreed to by residents
Lessons for Tōhoku?

Minamata and Uwa:
• importance and difficulty of job creation
Lessons for Tōhoku?

Otaru:

- importance of local control and local economic benefit from tourism