Revitalising the Rural in Japan

Working through the Power of Place

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Abstract

Japan's rural regions are facing a number of difficulties, the greatest of them being a dramatically decreasing and ageing population which has led to, in extreme cases, the desertion of entire villages. In this context there has been the promotion of self-help rural revitalisation organisations and activities by academics, activists and politicians across the political spectrum.Drawing on data collected from a larger research project, this paper examines the way in which the members of one local development organisation, *Green-Matsutani,* are seeking to revitalise their local area. This paper shows that in an era where local government finances are becoming increasingly constrained, *Green-Matsutani* has become a key agent in a broad range of self-help revitalisation activities including the delivery of low-cost services. Drawing on a governmentality framework and recent work on affect, we argue that central to the work of *Green-Matsutani* is an attempt to foster and harness affectual attachments to place as it is thought that these affectual attachments are the key vectors through which rural revitalisation may be borne. We further argue that the attempts to foster forms of self-help rural revitalisation activity through affect is characteristic of advanced liberal forms of governance.

Keywords: Rural Revitalisation Japan, Affect, Government, Apparatus, Governmentality.

Introduction

There is a burgeoning volume of English-language scholarly work focused on rural areas in Japan which has, in particular, examined the many difficulties that these areas are facing, and the ways in which these difficulties are being addressed (see for example: Kitano 2009; Matanle and Rausch 2011). Some of the key issues these studies have highlighted are related to the demographic shifts that many rural areas in Japan are undergoing. One of the greatest of these shifts has been the fall in the rural population, with some rural areas experiencing population declines of up to 20% in recent years (Nikkei Shinbun 2014). The decline in the number of those living in rural areas is linked partly to the low birth-rate in Japan as a whole as well as the continuing trend of out-migration among rural youth. These two factors have contributed not only to sharply falling populations, but also the emergence of a greatly aged population which is increasingly unable to undertake the social and economic roles it once played. This decline in and ageing of the rural population has had further impacts in terms of decreasing local tax returns, an increasing expenditure on care services for the elderly and is also linked to a host of other problems including an increase in abandoned farmland and housing, closure of schools and difficulties in maintaining infrastructure, local citizen centres, and other public facilities (Matanle and Sato 2010).

The Japanese government has instigated a number of measures including a process of town and village mergers, or *gappei* (Rausch 2006; 2008; Social Science Japan 2007), as part of an effort to address both the difficulties rural areas are facing and Japan's soaring level of debt at both the national and municipal level (Pempel 2010; Mantle and

Rausch 2011). These mergers have sought to reduce the number of municipalities and consolidate the administrative functions of local governing bodies and thereby cut the administrative costs of rural areas (Rausch 2006). The most recent mergers have also been accompanied by a trinity of structural reforms carried out under the Koizumi administration, which transferred tax-raising powers to local municipalities while reducing the funds transferred from central to local government. Together, proponents have argued that these reforms will promote larger, more efficient and effective municipalities while enhancing local autonomy and self-determination by dissolving the hierarchy between central and local government (Maeda 2012: p. 344). Running concurrently to these structural changes, there has been an increasing promotion of locally based citizen "self-help" style initiatives and organisations by activists, academics and bureaucrats across the political spectrum within Japan (Song 2015: p.144; Love 2013). While themes of rural self-revitalisation are not new to Japan (Francks 2006: p.261), the names given to contemporary revitalisation movements are diverse and include: regional revitalisation (*chiikiokoshi*), regional place-making (*chiikizukuri*); village making (*muratsukuri*) (see for example: Evans, 2002; Love, 2007). Couched in terms of increased autonomy, self-determination and the enhancement of local democracy (Sorensen and Funck 2007: p. 80; see also: Bosman 2007; Avene 2009) and under the promotion of central government, these type of movements have grown, and in many areas of rural Japan one might find a diverse array of developmental groups, Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) and other third sector organisations focused around the development of specific economic, social or cultural aspects of their local area.

While these developments may be understood on the level of the material, concurrent with these changes is a shift in the way in which the rural is understood and conceptualised in Japan which Moon (2002) has documented in her examination of one particular self-help style movement—*muraokoshi*. Moon (2002) splits the conceptualisation of rural Japan into two different perspectives. The first of these ideational models put forward by Moon is linked to the language of modernisation prominent in the post-war decades. Here, in juxtaposition with the city, the rural is constructed as "backwards, poor, illiterate, feudal, superstitious and irrational" (p. 240)—a place of ignorance and stifling tradition. However, during the '70s, '80s and '90s, Moon (2002) points to a shift in the discourse surrounding the rural, and a move towards an idealisation of the countryside. Here, the city is increasingly rendered as a site corrupted by western influence and a domain of the materialistic, inauthentic, alien and, in contrast, a narrative of the rural as a place of native belonging (*furusato*)—Japaneseness, tradition, nature, authenticity and communal belonging—began to emerge. While the travel promotions of Japan railways, large department store events and the work of poets (Creighton 1997) has been linked to this shift in the ideational element of the rural, the rural as *furusato*—authenticity and belonging—has also been promulgated by government agents, academics and a whole host of self-help organisations focused around rural revitalisation, particularly those organisations marketing rural areas to urban tourists (Robertson 1988; Knight 1994; Schnell 2005).

Critiquing Rural Development in Japan

The shifts in the administration of rural area has, of course, been the subject of critique, one strand of which has focused on the ways in which the structural reforms carried out under Koizumi have shifted responsibility for local well-being from central government to already moribund and crisis ridden local rural municipalities (Manatle and Rausch 2011; Love 2013; Iba and Sakamoto, 2014; Song 2015). Indeed, it has been argued that the reforms carried out amount to nothing more than a "cutting off and throwing away" of rural areas in Japan (Nakajima 2010 cited by Love 2013: p. 114). Furthermore, for Love (2013) the shifting rhetoric surrounding the rural—the re-envisioning of the rural as *furusato*—"should be understood as a conceptual framework deployed by officials, academics and even rural inhabitants to make agreeable sense of the persistent downward spiral of villages and towns" (Love 2013: p. 115). In this sense, it appears that the rendering of the rural as *furusato* is part of an attempt to lessen the blow of central government institutions passing responsibility for rural vitality to local government and residents.

While Love (2013) is correct in her assertion of the importance of the role of academics and officials in the dissemination of the discourse of *furusato,* what her analysis misses is that *furusato* is not just a means to lessen the psychological impact of the increasing moribund state of many rural areas; but rather the mobilisation of the discourse of *furusato* is, as Robertson (1988: p. 505) touches on, part of a broader attempt to foster, conscript and modify affectin the name of rural development.[1] This attempt to mobilise affect is in response to a key problematic now faced in rural areas: notably, once granted increased autonomy and freedom from central government, how can

rural subjects be made governable and orientated to the ends of the state? More specifically, what we mean here is that the discourse of *furusato* is tied into a triad of affects:affectual attachment to place, a sense of belonging, and pride *(aichaku, kizokuishiki and hokori),* a triad of affects that are, within government circles, academia and the offices and meeting rooms of 'self-help' style development associations across Japan, coming to be seen as the key means through which to mobilise rural subjects. This mobilisation and targeting of affect can be understood to be strategic in the sense that it is part of an effort to create a paradoxical situation in which the contemporary autonomous rural subject is made free and at the same time deeply tied to the objectives of the state through the very core of their subjectivity.

Although not focused on affect, previous studies of rural areas in the UK and Australia have examined the ways in which rural subjects, under conditions of advanced liberal mentalities of government, have been freed from the constraints of the state, yet enticed to enact their new found freedom in state sanctioned ways while simultaneously being made responsible for their own development (Ward and McNicholas 1998; Herbert-Cheshire 2000; Herbert-Cheshire and Higgins 2004). In Japan, similarly, although not confined to rural areas, there have been a number of analyses which have focused on the shifts in state-society relations that have accompanied neoliberal forms of government restructurings. These studies have examined the increasing visibility of volunteer and self-help style groups and organisations, and have also centred around questions relating to the extent to which self-help style organisations and movements are starting to represent the "shadow state" despite the rhetorical commitment to autonomy and empowerment accompanying recent state reforms (Ogawa 2004: p. 344; Bosman 2007; Avenell 2009; Nihei 2010; Maeda 2012).

While, as pointed out by Maeda (2012), the strategies of deregulation, liberalisation and decentralisation, as well as the increasing promotion of third sector self-help groups seen in Japan, could be understood as congruent with a shift to neoliberal forms of government, we do not wish to reaffirm previous analyses unproblematically. Indeed, heeding Tickell and Peck's (2002) call not to view neoliberalism as monolithic and omnipresent, we seek to understand the ways in which the current dominant rural development paradigm in Japan is both broadly resonant with approaches found in other advanced liberal nations (Dean 2010) while at the same time expressing its own particularities. What we mean here is that while the broad shifts in the ways that rural areas are being administered may well be congruent with those found in rural areas of the UK and Australia, the discourse of *furusato* and the mobilisation of affectualaffinities seems particular to Japan and worth investigation in its own right.

Governmentality and Affect: A Brief Review

As with other studies examining shifts in the administration of rural areas in Japan and abroad, we will draw on Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality, a concept that has been extended since Foucault's death. Using this framework, a number of scholars have suggested that within an era of advanced liberalism the formal and coercive powers of the state have been rolled back on the suspicion that there can be "too much" government (Foucault 2000: p. 74) while at the same time there has been an increasing emphasis placed on personal freedom, autonomy, and self-responsibility. Here; however, Burchell (1993) argues that a key problematic for modern governments is how to ensure that autonomous, free subjects enact their freedom in the correct manner, without destroying the very freedom and autonomy of these subjects. In this way, Burchell (1993) argues, rather than relying on formal and coercive mechanisms of control, the state increasingly uses indirect mechanisms which seek to tie an individual's very subjectivity to the aims of the state; hence, the state has not become less powerful, just powerful in different ways. In this regard, one recent focus of scholarly work has been the relationship between affect and politics, or more precisely, the way in which affect is mobilised for political ends (see for example: Thrift 2008) and it is to this work we turn next.

There has been a burgeoning volume of research in geography and elsewhere, although some antithetical to the work of Foucault, that has sought to examine the role of affect within everyday life and politics. The exact status of affectis hotly debated, but Pile (2010) has provided a useful summary of some common renderings of the ontological status of affect. Firstly, affect refers to the capacity of a body to induce and undergo qualitative changes of different intensities (Massumi (2002: p. 25); changes that results in a "continuous variation of the power of acting" of the affected body (Deleuze 1978: unpaginated). These qualitative changes are understood to take place within a

relational nexus of affecting and affected bodies, broadly understood as other human corporeal assemblages, objects, temporal and spatial circumstances (Saldanha 2010: p. 2414). In this regards, and more specifically, a human body enters into a mutually affecting-affected relationship with other bodies, conditions and objects through its "inevitable sensory and proprioceptive embedding in the world" (Saldanha 2010: p. 2414) through which the capacity and potentiality of the body to act is modified.[2] It is important to note that affect does not produce certain forms of behaviour, or that behaviour is reducible to affect; rather, affect can be said to induce a set of action tendencies (Solomon 1998). Secondly, although often used interchangeably, affect is not coterminous with emotion; words like hate, fear, and happiness are culturally instituted terms used to try to capture the nature and intensity of the corporeal change undergone (Andreson 2016a: p. 83). And yet, affect often escapes the ability of language to describe it (Shouse 2005: p. 1). This links to the third and fourth aspect of affect. Third, affect is often described as non-representational, in the sense that while the idea of a triangle represents a triangle, a felt corporeal change or intensitydescribed as 'love' "represents nothing, strictly nothing" (Deleuze 1978: unpaginated). Furthermore, affectis understood to relate to the neurological and biochemical processes of the body that are temporally prior to the cognitive realm of reasoning, intention and ideology (Anderson 2016a: p. 86). In this sense, and fourthly, affectis described as "autonomous" (Massumi 2002) in that affect, qualitative changes to the body,are thought to operate below, or prior to consciousness and cognition (Massumi 2002; McCormack 2003; Shouse 2005; Thrift 2004; 2008).[3]

One specific focus of studies of affect has been to seek to understand the role of affect in politics, a sphere of life often conceptualised as the domain of rationality (see for example: Marcus 2002). Here there has been an examination of the ways in which affect can be understood as an object of political power (Anderson 2016a) and an emergent "stratum of power and knowledge" (Thrift 2008: p. 185). Clough (2007: p. 19), for example, has her own particular take on this targeting of affect when she suggests that there is a discernible shift from a disciplinary society to a society of control in which power is less reliant "on ideological interpellation of the subject" (Clough 2007: p. 20), and instead power is now increasingly exercised through a "never-ending modulation of moods, capacities, [and] affects" (ibid: p. 19). Resonating with this analysis, Nolan (1998) has suggested that an affectual motif is increasingly inflecting the activities of the state and its agencies, including those aimed at punishment and rehabilitation. This is witnessed in the way in which agents of the state are enticing and in some cases coercing, through such mechanisms as court imposed counselling, treatment, and sensitivity training, citizens to understand themselves, and their behaviours, in terms of problematic emotional processes that need to be scrutinised, worked on, and modified (Nolan 1998: p. 307). Similarly, Isin (2004) has argued that the modern subject is increasingly addressed, and understands itself, not as a calculating, rational being, but rather as an affectual life form, a life form that is neurotic, anxious, and under stress. This neurotic subject, Isin (2004) suggests, is the target of an emerging set of practices that seek to govern through neurosis via the promise that the subjects will be able to secure tranquillity and serenity, a respite from their anxieties, if they work upon their bodies and their conduct.

The work on affect has been controversial especially in relation to the assertion in a number of studies that affect can be understood as working at a level below cognition (see for example: Leys (2011); Hemmings (2005); and Tyler (2008)) and that affect could be mobilised for progressive political ends (see Barnett 2008; Thrift 2008). However, we do not have space to engage in debates related to the exact relation between affect and cognition/representation.[4] Yet, in some regards this debate can be sidestepped if we take Anderson's (2016a: p. 59) assertion that we need to "reject any simple separation between representation and affect… [as this would] postulate a gap to be bridged between an ontologically distinct realm of flowing intensities and practices of representing." Indeed, the focus of this paper is not to interrogate the relation between affect and cognition, but instead to examine how affect has become an object-target within efforts to revitalise Japanese rural areas. In this regards, Anderson's work (2012; 2016a; 2016b) and his notion of "apparatus" provides a useful analytical approach. For Anderson (2016a: p. 31-37; see also Anderson 2016b) an apparatus is composed of a set of heterogeneous discursive and non-discursive elements that target and produce specific versions of affect.[5] These apparatuses make as their object both collectives and individual bodies by either addressing individuals directly or through manipulation of the environmental factors that are thought to impinge upon affect (Anderson 2012; 2016a). In this way, apparatuses both target, produce and modify affect at the level of the individual body—as seen in Abu Ghraib where an apparatus targeting a suspect's body had as its objective "debility, dependency and dread"—or an apparatus can be oriented towards a collective ambience, as discernible in the efforts to mobilise morale during the Second World War (Anderson 2016a). For Anderson (2016a: p. 75) the key questions that emerge in interrogating the targeting of affect are to understand: 1)

how apparatuses are constructed, what elements combine and which "versions" of affect are the object[tive] of these apparatus; 2) what is the strategic intent animating these apparatus; and 3) the modes of government implicit within these apparatuses.

Using these three questions as a form of analytics, the remainder of this paper will focus on one particular case, the case of *Matsutani,*[6] and more specifically focus on the work of a local developmental third sector organisation —*Green-Matsutani*. We will show that although this Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) is both providing vital services for those living in the area of *Matsutani* and is looking for ways to revitalise the area, central to these activities has been the attempted modulation and production of affectual affinities to place. Indeed, we will argue that by examining *Matsutani* it is possible to discern a broader apparatus that has as its object-target people's affectual attachments to place, sense of pride, and belonging as it is thought that these are the key modalities through which rural revitalisation may be borne. However, before we do so, we would like briefly to turn to a question of method, before giving an overview of *Matsutani*.

A Question of Method

This paper is based upon work carried out over a period of five years as members of a rural development group based in Japan. As members of this group, we have worked extensively alongside prominent agents in the field of rural development, and we have been able both to visit the UK and a variety of different rural areas throughout Japan as part of a collaborative research project. In this sense being members of this group has allowed an insight into the ways in which rural problems are being understood, framed, and addressed in policy circles, academia, as well as 'on the ground' in Japan. While this paper does not draw directly on the full extent of this experience, it is this broad experience that forms the background to this paper and has been instrumental in developing the main thrust of this paper's argument. However, in order to make the argument in this paper more concrete, this paper draws upon one particular area in Japan: *Matsutani*. In specific terms, the research in *Matsutnai* has involved a number of visits to the area over the period of a year, both as part of a team and individually. During the early visits to *Matsutani*, we were able to conduct a number of interviews with local leaders, with the interviews focusing on some of the broader issues that *Matsutani* faces and how these are being tackled at the local level. Later, in August of 2016, two of the authors participated in a student exchange scheme alongside a number of university students during which we spent a week in *Matsutani* witnessing and taking part in the activities of the local NPO, *Green-Matsutani,* as well as conducting informal interviews with local residents. Indeed, as part of this exchange scheme, we had the opportunity to stay at the homes of the members of the NPO and conduct informal interviews, interviews that predominantly focused on the work of the NPO and the rationales for the various activities which it conducted.

While the week spent as part of the student exchange in *Matsutani* was instrumental in understanding the work of the NPO, and allowed for a glimpse into the everyday lives of some of those who lived in the area, we felt that what we had witnessed had been engineered to some degree for the benefit of the students, perhaps to paint a more rosy view of rural life. Subsequently, following participation on this scheme, one of the authors returned to *Matsutani* twice more for a total of a week. On these final visits, however, we were interested in trying to find out about the more mundane aspects of the work of the NPO, and partake in some of the organisation's more prosaic activities. In this regard, on the final visit to *Matsutani* one of the authors participated in the clearing of weeds from a local park, the delivery of packaged meals to the elderly, transport of elderly people to the local community hall, and an elderly day-care event. Part of the rationale for this, as mentioned, was to try to understand the day-to-day activities of the NPO, and secondly, we were in agreement with Fetterman's argument that researchers often take up a lot of people's time "and they owe something in return" (1998: 143); hence by participating in these activities we hoped to be able to contribute in some small way.

During the research carried out in *Matsutani*, as we were often engaged in a range of activities, conducting formal interviews was often difficult; hence notes were made during informal interviews, and yet on occasion, when possible, a number of interviews were audio recorded. Detailed notes recording our experiences—what we had seen and heard, the activities that we had taken part in, who had been present during particular activities or events—were also made throughout our time in *Matsutani*. We also collected a variety of texts, documents and other media from a variety of sources and took pictures to act as an *aide memoir*. In this sense, the data corpus for this research was

composed of a heterogeneous array of notebooks, documents, audio recordings, transcripts, and photographs which were subsequently analysed alongside relevant literature in a low-tech and iterative manner, with emergent themes leading to further avenues of questioning.

Matsutani

Matsutani is situated in the southern area of the main island of Japan. It consists of an area of around 51 square kilometres with the main settlement following the course of a number of valleys situated between low lying hills. The area is relatively sparsely populated, with a population of around 1000 people; and like many rural areas in Japan, a large proportion of the level ground between hills is dedicated to growing rice in paddy fields or vegetables in small plots next to houses. *Matsutani* today is now part of the larger *Morizumi* city, the result of a merger between *Matsutani* and three other townships in 1954. Despite the merger, *Matsutani* has not escaped the problems facing many areas of rural Japan today, with the population decreasing 24% from 2005 to 2015. The area also has an increasingly aged population with 48% of the residents being 65 or over while those aged 0-15 make up only 7% of the population. This declining and ageing population has led to houses and farmland being abandoned, and most recently in 2016 the local junior high school closed its doors with the students relocated to another school in a more populated area.

Matsutani itself is made up of ten *shūraku*—or villages—which follow the contours of the streams and rivers that flow between the low hills. The size of each *shūraku* varies significantly, from the smallest comprising of 22 households with a population of 52, to the largest central *shūraku* which consists of some 157 households with a total of 338 inhabitants. The central largest *shūraku, Yugawa,* consists of a number of *onsen*, tourist accommodations, and small shops. However, it is apparent that *Yugawa* has seen better times, with the main street consisting of a number of closed and deteriorating *onsen*, lodgings, and shops. These old and dilapidated buildings stand in stark contrast to *Satoyama Base*, a building that is the locus for the activities of the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) *Green-Matsutani.*

Green-Matsutani was founded in 2009 and describes it activities "as making an area that people want to live." To this end, *Green-Matsutani* itself is involved in a broad range of activities including elderly day care, a meals-on-wheels service for the elderly five times a week, providing lunches for the local kindergarten, maintaining and running a local multi-purpose sports ground, helping with the maintenance of local roads and the surrounding environment, maintenance of a local outdoor pool in the summer, as well as running a number of so called "green tourism" events and activities.

For funding *Green-Matsuntani* generates a substantial amount of income through its various activities, some of which comes from municipal sources, and it also receives some funds for costs from the local government. Indeed, *Satoyama Base*, the building in which *Green-Matsutani* is located, was built by the local municipal government, and every year the NPO is paid nearly 20,000 US dollars for costs. Yet, this money is substantially less than the yearly costs of running the building, and before the building was built, it was made clear that the NPO would be responsible for the building and its upkeep. While there are paid employees who work in administrative roles, and a number of staff involved in the making of lunches for both the elderly and the kindergarten students, the operation of *Green-Matsutani* relies heavily on volunteers to carry out many of its activities and generate income. This centrality of the volunteers is seen at a number of the activities carried out by the NPO, from the maintenance of the municipal roads to the up-keep and running of the outdoor pool in the summer. The activities of the NPO, however, do not only help local residents, they are also of instrumental benefit for the local municipal government.

The local municipal government, like those in many rural areas, has been faced with a decreasing income stream and has seen its general accounts income fall from just over 23 billion yen to just over 21 billion yen in 2013 with a concurrent decrease in special accounts funding from 19 billion to 11 billion yen. The understanding in *Matsutani* was that the local government's finances were severe; and because of this severe funding situation, G*reen-Matsutani* had been asked to 'help' the municipal government on a number of occasions.[7] During a discussion with one of the members of *Green-Matsutani* it was noted that:

> From the view of the city [municipal government], the city is very grateful because the NPO is providing the maintenance for lots of services (Mr. Nakamura, 15.08.2016: Author's notes).

Yet, from the view of those heavily involved in *Green-Matsutani*, the need to provide services raises the problem of "man-power," specifically encouraging and mobilising the residents of M*atsutani* to volunteer for the various activities. This in part relates to a broader issues of the structure of rural areas in Japan and specifically the *shūraku*. *Shūraku* is a term that can be translated into 'farming village' or 'rural community',[8] and in many places across Japan the *shūraku* playeda historically important role in the lives of rural people, a role that in some regards continues today (see MAFF 2010). The *shūraku* is a small settlement that consists, on average, of 20-100 households (Goda 2008) and these settlements were, and still are in many cases, sites of mutual assistance where collective tasks, such as the organisation of local festivals, maintenance of common resources, water ways, and farm roads, to name a few, are managed through a village committee consisting of a committee head and the heads of the households of each member family (Mulgan, 2000). Membership in the village assembly is still to this day often quasi-obligatory, and membership also entails monthly payments to the committee to cover the costs of various tasks.

In this sense working for the collective good within rural areas in Japan is by no means an alien concept and indeed, looking at the *shūraku,* one can see a history of common resource management. Yet, the presence of the 10 different *shūraku* within *Matsutani* complicates the process of fostering volunteer activity and encouraging revitalisation activities within the area*;* a problem highlighted by Mr. Hashimoto:

> some of the older people from the [other] *shūraku* would ask 'why should I volunteer for this event? If the event is a *Yugawa* event then the *Yugawa* people should do the work' … there is still a *shūraku* type of thinking (Mr. Hashimoto, 06.11.2016: Author's notes).

Constructing, Modifying and Harnessing Affect in Matsutani

One of the objectives of G*reen-Matsutani*, then, is to move away from this "*shūraku* type thinking" and promote engagement with the volunteer and revitalisation activities undertaken by *Green-Matsutani* for the good of *Matsutani* as a whole, rather than that solely of the *shūraku* (see also Knight 1994).[9] Moreover, the social acts carried out by the volunteers of *Matsutani* would differ from the social acts carried out as a member of the s*hūraku*. Here, the *shūraku* was historically a site of social work that evolved out of a basic need for farming communities to work together; in other words, historically "it was understood that community members would help one another when there was a need; this was a duty to be fulfilled and had little of the self-initiative that the word voluntarism implies" (Nakata 1996; cited in Rausch 1998: p. 4). Hence, for the members of *Green-Matsutani*, mobilising the volunteers was to mobilise a subjectivity who, on his or her own volition, undertook work for the good of *Matsutani* as a whole, separate and outside the *shūraku's* structures of obligation and duty.

However, it was not only the s*hūraku* system that was seen as a block to mobilising the residents of *Matsutani*. A further critical barrier to fostering revitalisation activity was understood to be a sense that the countryside was backwards, and had nothing to offer. In this sense the key problem that was identified was a lack of affection for and pride in the local area, and hence it was thought that if affection for place was engendered, local revitalisation activity would be borne. In fact, it was suggested that if an affinity to place was felt by local people then

> they would want to [volunteer to] change it [their local area] (Mr. Hashimoto, 06.11.2016: Author's notes).

Indeed, attempts to foster forms of attachment to place and the people, an attachment to *Matsutani*, is seen in many of the activities that *Green-Matsutani* undertakes. The activities undertaken by *Green-Matsutani,* then, often serve a dual purpose: they serve a utilitarian function that meets the needs of particular groups, but these activities were also rationalised in terms of their ability actively to strengthen, foster, and produce affectual affinities to place. One of these activities was the maintenance of the free-to-use local outdoor swimming pool by a rotating group of volunteers who had been enrolled through each of the s*hūraku*. The key rationales for maintaining this pool were to

provide a leisure activity for local children but also to attract visitors from nearby urban areas. Attracting outside visitors to *Matsutani,* of course, potentially had a financial benefit, as visitors would often spend money in *Matsutani* itself;yet a further aim was to generate a feeling of pride in the local area:

> As it is part of our everyday life, we don't normally think that having a pool is anything special but if, for example, someone from Tokyo said "*Matsutani* has a free, beautiful pool" we would be happy because [*Matsutani*] is our birthplace; I think we would start to have pride [in our area] (Mr. Hashimoto, 26.03.2017: Interview).

The attempts to foster pride in and a love of place can also be seen in the exchange activities undertaken by *Green-Matsutani*. These exchange activities included a Student Internship, in which students of all ages would come and stay in *Matsutani* for two weeks in order to learn about the *Matsutani* area, rural life more broadly, and the activities of *Green-Matsutani*. During the two weeks, students would take part in festivals, local activities (including pool maintenance), and would stay with local residents in their houses. One of the primary goals of this internship and other exchange activities carried by the NPO was to re-establish a sense of worth within the local area, to move away from the conceptualisation of the rural as backwards. In this regard, the bringing of young people into the area, it was hoped, would demonstrate to local residents that *Matsutani* was an area of interest and value in the eyes of the visitors. As Odagiri (2011: p. 35) argues, "[w]hen… exchange activities [are] carried out systematically and deliberately, rural people can see the value in their area through the eyes of urban people, [complimentary comments] may help rural people discover new merit in their own area." In this way, it was hoped that by undertaking exchange activities, a new sense of pride in *Matsutani* would be fostered, and once fostered, a new vitality and sense of energy would be born amongst the residence of *Matsutani* leading to a virtuous circle of revitalisation activities and increased pride.

The exchange activities undertaken by *Green-Matsutani* had a further aim. Part of the hope driving these exchange activities was that some of those who had participated in the exchange activities would return to *Matsutani* over the years and then eventually settle down in *Matsutani* itself. While it was suggested that the percentage of those who participated in the exchange activities and who would eventually move to *Matsutani* was small, it was hoped at least one day some of those who had experienced rural *Matsutani* would settle. This rationale was linked into the concept that through participation in the exchange activities and other visits, eventually a form of affinity to place would be born, and a bonding of outsiders to *Matsutani* would take place. This, it was hoped, could lead to a process of in-migration which, in turn, would bring new human resources and vitality to the area. This rationale for exchange activities is not, however, confined only to *Matsutani*. Indeed, one can commonly find this linkage between exchange activities, a fostering of place-attachment and pride, and the eventual settlement of incomers (see for example: Kojima, 2010: p. 75; Furusatozukuri yūshikisha kaigi, 2015). Yet, while a participant in the exchange activities has yet to settle in *Matsutani,* for the members of *Green-Matsutani* the fact that there are now a number of new incomers into the area, including incomers with young families, gives them hope that the exchange activities may bear fruit in the future.[10]

In this sense, part of the intent behind the exchange activities, and other initiatives of *Green-Matsutani,* is the harnessing, modifying and inducing of particular qualitative corporeal shifts and changes within the residents, and potential residents, of *Matsutani* in order to induce a set of particular "action tendencies" (Solomon, 1998: p. 4) and new forms of bodily vitality and energy that were orientated towards self-help style revitalisation activities. Yet, as the following sections argue, the attempt to harness affect is not confined to *Matsutani*; rather what is witnessed in this particular area can be understood as part of a broader apparatus that has as its objective the fostering and modification of affectual affinities to place.

New Diagrams of Power

As the previous section has shown, in the context of the increasingly moribund state of the local government's finances, *Green-Matsutani* has sought to play a critical role in stemming the perceived decline of the area, and has sought to engage with and promote activities aimed at revitalising *Matsutani*. Yet, the activities of *Green-Matsutani* have not sought to fulfil a purely utilitarian goal, as core to many of the activities carried out by *Green-Matsutani* has

been an attempt to reframe the rural, and *Matsutani,* as a place of belonging and pride. More than this, central to the activities and rationale of *Green-Matsutani* has been an attempt to foster, harness, and inculcate forms of affectual affinity to place. The relation forged between the notion of place attachment, local pride, and the revitalisation of rural areas is not isolated to, of course, *Matsutani*. In a number of academic texts, the re-imagining of the rural as place of value and belonging has been seen as central to the re-energising and activation of rural people, and crucial to a process whereby "residents in a locality become conscious of taking on responsibility for their concerns and dealing progressively and cooperatively with the task of securing their common future" (Odagiri 2011: p. 25). In this regard, in much the same way as *Matsutani*, in many rural areas in Japan today, as part of a broader revitalisation strategy, one may find a number of activities which are purported to re-establish a sense of value and pride in the rural, including rural and urban exchanges (Thompson 2004; Odagiri 2011), community mapping (Love 2013), and the One-Village One-Product movement (Kuswidiati 2008; Nam 2010; Kemavuthanon 2014).

One can also find this relation between belonging, pride, and action within the publications of the Japanese government where it is noted that once "feelings of pride and attachment to the local area are awakened… local vitality will be born" (Ministry of the Environment 2011: p. 3). Indeed, this forging of a relation between affection and pride for the local area and local vitality is an important element of the central government's discourse not only in relation to rural revitalisation, but also the prosperity of Japan as a whole (see: Abe 2015;[11] see also: Love 2013). The question becomes, how does this narrative find itself replicated at the level of the local; and the answer, it is suggested, is found in the tutelage of rural development experts, scholars and officials.[12] Indeed, on examining *Green-Matsutani,* we find a number of ex- and current government officials in its leadership, as well as instances where rural development scholars and practitioners have come to *Matsutani* and recommended a number of courses of action, including the establishment of student internships, and other forms of rural-urban exchange. In this way these experts and officials can be understood as carriers of a discourse, one that brings together the notions of belonging, attachment to place, pride and local revitalisation activity. And yet, more than this, these experts, officials, and development specialists not only bring with them this discourse, but are central to the development of schemes and initiatives which actively seek to foster, mobilise, and harness affectualaffinities to place to produce active subjects who take on the role of revitalising their own area.

Conclusion

We would argue that what we are able to discern in *Matsutani* is the outline of an apparatus that has as its object-target a triad of affects: affectual attachment to place, a sense of belonging, and pride *(aichaku, kizokuishiki and hokori)*. This apparatus, a broad and heterogeneous array of human and non-human actors, government documents, material objects, initiatives, and sets of utterances, is, furthermore, animated by a strategic intent oriented towards the fostering of forms of self-initiated, self-help citizen action. Set against a backdrop of a rhetorical commitment to increased autonomy and freedom, as well as reference to 'necessity' in the context of the increasingly moribund financial situation in many rural areas of Japan, this self-help style action has come to be promoted as central to, if not the revitalisation, certainly a halting of a decline of rural areas any further. Furthermore, the forms of self-help activities witnessed in *Matsutani* can be differentiated from those of more 'traditional' forms of co-operative resource management that is associated with the *shūraku*. In this sense, this apparatus has as its strategic intent a new form of self-help activity that is more in line with the concept of 'voluntarism'; yet a voluntarism that is "administratively generated" (Rausch 1998: p. 1; see also: Ogawa, 2004) through harnessing, modifying and fostering of affect.

What we argue is that the coming together of this apparatus can be understood with reference to advanced liberal forms of government where, couched in terms of freeing the social from the constraints of government, and the promotion of autonomous localities and communities to manage their own affairs, the provision of state services and formal forms of state intervention have been rolled backed. Yet, paradoxically, the state has not become less powerful; rather, instead of relying on the formal mechanisms of state control, the state now uses "new tools and techniques to steer and guide" (Stoker 1998: p. 18) and looks for new diffuse mechanisms through which to achieve its ends (Rose and Miller 2010). We would argue that we see similar shifts in rural Japan, the withdrawal of the state from rural service provision and direct intervention justified in terms of increased autonomy of local people, and yet

the state has not sought to relinquish control. Indeed, we would suggest that in the context of rural revitalisation in Japan we are seeing a new diagram of state power whereby affectual affinities to place are the key modalities through which the ends of the government are sought. In other words, if local self-initiated volunteer activity aimed at providing services and revitalising rural areas of Japan is one of the goals of the state, affect is seen as one of the main vectors through which this activity can be fostered. Critical to this new diffuse diagram of power are intermediaries: NPOs, rural development experts, local government officials, and other development specialists who instigate and recommend a number of schemes and initiatives which actively seek to foster, mobilise, and harness affect to produce active subjects who take on the responsibility of revitalising the rural. In this sense, these intermediaries form part of a broad apparatus that connects the offices of central government to the micro-level of people's lives, and which attempts to intervene "all the way down" and tie people's very affectual relations with place to the ends of the state (Anderson 2012: p. 37).

In this way the apparatus outlined here seeks to work at a level that is "more than rational" (Whitehead, Jones and Pykett 2011: p. 2819) and insert particular (state sanctioned) dispositions and postures towards the world by targeting the "soft tissues of affect" (Connolly 2005, p. 873). This apparatus does not, for example, seek to mobilise political campaigning subjects, but rather active citizen-subjects who take on responsibility for the vitality of the rural. Furthermore, by framing the problems of rural areas in terms of affect, or a lack thereof (see for example: Odagiri 2007), it veils from view the larger structural and demographic factors that pattern the outcomes of rural areas—a lack of good schooling and employment opportunities as well as the low birth-rate in Japan—factors that arguably have a greater impact on the vitality of rural areas, and that require broader state-level solutions. In this sense, emphasising affect, or lack thereof, rather than these broader structural issues when discussing the problems of Japanese rural areas, leads to a misidentification of the root cause of a lack of vitality. Indeed, going further, as Odagiri (2011: p. 32) notes, "pride cannot… be formed without some kind of basis" and hence it is arguably only by tackling these broader structural issues that rural people's pride in and affection for the rural may be restored.

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Notes

[1] Robertson (1988) highlights the affective nature of concept of *furusato*, and mentions that governments have sought to utilise the affective potential of *furusato,* yet she leaves this theme under-developed.

[2] Deleuze (1978: unpaginated) gives the simple example of two people: Pierre and Paul. If Paul brings me joy, while Pierre brings me sadness, then I can say that after meeting Paul "my power of acting is increased or improved… [if] I then see someone who makes me sad [Pierre], I say that my power of acting is inhibited or obstructed.

[3] For Solomon (1998) part of the appeal of studying affect is the way it short-circuits the mind-body Cartesian dualism, as attention to affect re-orientates attention to both mind and the body. Indeed, Sedgwick and Frank (1995) see an attention to affect as a way to bring back consideration of the body and the biological; a task that is crucial for contemporary theory that has come to revolve around a "hypervigilant antiessentialism and antinaturalism" (p. 17) that sacrifices a sensitivity to qualitative difference and leaves it unable to engage with, transmit and address a set of "crucial knowledges". Relatedly, for McCormack (2007: p. 372-373), it is precisely the corporeal and molecular nature of affect that forces a transversal engagement with the multiple epistemologies and ontologies of the natural and social sciences; and is part of a move towards "taking seriously" processes that are in excess and resistant to codification in the "discursive terms of much critical inquiry" (ibid: p. 373). Yet, for others including Leys (2011), Hemmings (2005), Wetherell (2013) and Tyler (2008) this notion that affect can be understood as operating in excess of social or cultural meaning is problematic, or more precisely these authors problematize the separation of affectand the symbolic or social meaning found within a number of works in cultural studies. This is not; however, the place to go into a detailed discussion relating to the exact status of affect, nor indeed its relation to cognition or social meaning.

[4] If we understand affect in terms of the body "infolding contexts" (Massumi 1996: p. 223) through sensory and proprioceptive input—and vision/sound/language can be understood as sensory input—then it seems to me that it is impossible to separate out the discursive/non-discursive, especially if we consider the role of memory and past events in encounters between bodies. As Anderson (2016: p. 89) notes: "material perception is provisionally and partially organised through what Connolly (2011: p. 49) terms a 'history of inter-involvement' involving 'embodiment, movement, body image, touch, sight, smell, language' …". In this way particular *affects* can become linked to certain bodies as Saldanha (2010: p. 2414) notes: "[h]uman affects invariably implicate (enfold) configurations of gender, age, class, and race—mostly unconsciously, but possibly consciously". Leavitt (1996: p. 527) also makes a similar point when he argues that "affective or felt associations, like semantic ones are collective as well as individual; they operate through common or similar experience among members of a group living in similar circumstances, through cultural stereotyping of experience, and through shared expectations, memories and fantasies" (see also: Ahmed 2004; 2010). In this way affect/discourse is part of a "complex pattern of entries and multiple feed-back loops [that] blends layers of past experience into current encounters, carrying both into future action" (Connolly 2006: p. 71).

[5] An apparatus is defined as including "institutions, materialities, techniques, people and much more" (Anderson 2016a: p. 33). In this sense an apparatus can consist of sets of knoweldges (ways of knowing affect); techniques for producing and measuring affect and acting on it; people and a whole host of other material and non-material elements.

[6] All names have been fictionalised to protect the identities of respondents.

[7] *Green-Matsutani* for example had taken over the cutting of the grass on the verges of some of the local roads, a role that had previously been the responsibility of the local city office as had the maintenance of the local outdoor pool. The meals on wheels service and elderly day service, while subsidized by the local government, are crucial services that were also primarily provided by the NPO.

[8] The *shūraku* has been officially defined by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as "naturally occurring regional societies, in which house-holds are linked by locality and by blood, and which are the fundamental regional units of social activities that have formed around all types of groups and social relations" (*Poketto* 1997, cited in Mulgan 2000: p. 748).

[9] The sense that each *shūraku* was a separate entity was reinforced during a small local festival celebrating the produce and culture of the area. During one of the main performances the more senior, and elderly, members of each *shūraku* sat together at separate tables, with the names of each *shūraku* prominently displayed in the centre of each table.

[10] This attraction of incomers into *Matsutani* was also the objective of the next stage of the work of *Green-Matsutani*. This next stage revolved around taking over the running of the local kindergarten situated some 100 meters from *Green-Matsutani*'s main offices. The idea behind taking over the kindergarten was that if children were taught to love their local area at a young age, then this love and pride would stay with them into adulthood and subsequently as adults or retirees, they would move back to *Matsutani* bringing energy, vitality and skills with them. While yet to be formalised, this scheme was seen to have real potential as it was suggested that it was often too late to foster a love of place amongst elementary and junior high school students as a negative image of the rural had already been solidified to such a degree as to be difficult to change. Relatedly, students at the local elementary school had been encouraged to draw on simple maps of "Our *Matsutani*" and highlight the places and areas that they took "pride in" thus arguably revealing to the students, through their own actions, the positive aspects of *Matsutani*. However, some seem to have misread the intent behind this activity, and rather than highlighting the particular natural or cultural aspects of *Matsutani*, instead choose to highlight the new LED powered traffic signal and a number of vending machines.

[11] Indeed, the Prime Minister Shinzō Abe (2015: unpaginated) argues that "by fostering a feeling of love for one's *furusato*, not only will the solidarity of local communities grow… but I also believe that it is connected to a growth in the prosperity of our country".

[12] This is not to suggest that this attempt to mobilise affect is a purely top-down initiative; as Robertson (1998) notes, the concept of *furusato* was appropriated by the central government only after witnessing its affective, symbolic and rhetorical usefulness at the local level. Yet, arguably the ubiquity of the discourse of *furusato* and initiatives which mobilise this discourse and its affective potential—"green-tourism" and the One-Village One-Product, for example—has much to do with its active promotion by central government (see for example: Arlt (2006); Hashimoto and Telfer (2010)).

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