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Island Revitalization and the Setouchi Triennale: Ethnographic Reflection on Three Local Events

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Abstract

Since the twenty-first century, Japan has seen the emergence of hundreds of contemporary art projects and festivals in rural regions. These initiatives aim at revitalizing the severely depopulated communities by attracting visitors and media exposure in the hope of attracting young migrants to ameliorate the demographic crisis. Inaugurated in 2010, the Setouchi Triennale in Kagawa and Okayama Prefectures is one of the famous showcases. Taking place within twelve island communities in the Seto Inland Sea, each edition of the Triennale reportedly received approximately one million visitors and generated tens of billions of yen of economic ripple effects. This paper adopts Akira Ōno's concept of "marginal village" and examines the Triennale's contribution to the survival of these communities. Shifting the focus away from the Triennale, this paper investigates the continuation of community functions by comparing ethnographic cases of local festive events on the islands of Teshima, Ogijima, and Inujima. By doing so, this paper demonstrates the potentials and limitations of the Triennale in helping depopulated communities to survive.

Keywords

Matsuri, regional revitalization, art festivals, rural Japan, Setouchi Triennale

Introduction

Inaugurated in 2010, the Setouchi Triennale is a large-scale contemporary art festival organized by a public-private partnership between Kagawa Prefecture, Fukutake Foundation, and several municipal governments within the Japanese prefectures of Kagawa and Okayama. Once every three years, the art festival takes place on twelve outlying islands (*ritō* 離島) in the Seto Inland Sea as well as the Uno Port on the Okayama front, and Takamatsu Port on the Kagawa front.¹ The Setouchi Triennale is one of the many Japanese art

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projects and festivals that emerged since the 2000s that aim to revitalize depopulated, very often rural, regions using contemporary art. Among these Japanese art projects and festivals, the Setouchi Triennale is famous for its popularity: from 2010 to 2019, each Triennale edition has reported approximately one million visitors and generated tens of billions of yen of economic ripple effects (Setouchi International Art Festival Executive Committee 2010; 2013; 2017; 2020). Apart from Japanese tourists, the Triennale has drawn international attention (*New York Times* 2019; *National Geographic* 2019) and attracted over a thousand international volunteers to gain firsthand experience in delivering an art festival (*Asahi Shimbun* 2019). Back in 1934, the Inland Sea region was designated as Japan's first national park—the Setonaikai National Park, notwithstanding the fact that its coastal areas have been characterized by development of heavy industries and environmental problems in the 1960s (Nishida 1999, 228–30). Many factories are still operating in some parts of the region today, yet the Inland Sea has also been transformed into an international art site of the twenty-first century.

Against this context, however, outlying islands in the Setouchi region remain severely depopulated. As shown in table 1, most island communities that host the Setouchi Triennale have only a small population of a few hundreds, if not dozens of, residents. Many of these communities also have a high percentage of senior residents aged sixty-five or above. In other words, although the visitor numbers reported by the Triennale look staggering, many communities that host the art festival are facing existential crises. As the sociologist Akira Ōno (2005, 16–23) points out, a community where over half of its population is aged sixty-five or above would face difficulties to continue its key functions, such as the maintenance of infrastructure and the continuation of community associations and rituals; he coins the term “marginal villages” (*genkai shūraku* 限界集落) to describe communities that face such a crisis.² Most island communities that host the Setouchi Triennale fulfil Ōno's definition of marginal villages. Whereas the Triennale has reported staggering visitor numbers and economic figures, how can we examine the effects of the art festival in helping the survival of these marginal villages? While it remains to be seen if the art festival will bring about long-term positive changes to the demographics across the island communities, I suggest that an investigation of community activities is useful in revealing the challenges in a community's survival and the Triennale's qualitative effects upon a community's social dynamics. A local festive event (*matsuri* 祭り) is one such example that demonstrates how a community in concern continues its functions.

TABLE 1. Area and Population of Setouchi Triennale Venues

	Area	Population (2015)	Percentage of Population Aged 65 or Above (2015)
Naoshima	7.83 km ²	3,105	34.6%
Teshima	14.5 km ²	867	50.3%
Shodoshima	153.33 km ²	27,927	39.4%
Oshima	0.62 km ²	68	100%
Ogijima	1.37 km ²	148	63.5%
Megijima	2.67 km ²	136	75%
Inujima	0.54 km ²	44	72.7%
Shamijima	0.28 km ²	94	39.4%
Honjima	6.77 km ²	396	59.8%
Takamijima	2.33 km ²	27	77.8%
Awashima	3.68 km ²	216	82.9%
Ibukijima	1.05 km ²	400	52.3%

Note: Demographic data on Oshima, Inujima, and Shamijima are derived from publicly available information published by Takamatsu City, Okayama City, and Sakate City, respectively. Demographic data on other islands are based on the 2015 population census of Japan, made available by the Statistics Bureau. At the time of writing, data on Japan's 2020 population census at the community level is not yet available.

In this paper, I focus on the three islands of Teshima, Ogijima, and Inujima (fig. 1) for discussion. As I shall introduce below, these three islands differ in size, population, the extent of tourism development, and the trend of in-migration. They demonstrate the varying forms and degrees of revitalization effects prompted by the Setouchi Triennale. A comparative study on the local festive events of these islands will offer us insights into how the Triennale influences social dynamics at the community level and suggests the potential and limitations of the art festival in facilitating the continuation of community functions.



FIGURE 1. Map of some Setouchi Triennale venues. Created by the author based on Google Maps.

Geographical Description

The Setouchi Triennale is held in the Bizen Seto area of the Seto Inland Sea. Takamatsu City, the administrative hub of the Triennale, is the prefectural capital of Kagawa in Shikoku—the smallest of the four main Japanese islands (Hokkaidō, Honshū, Kyūshū, Shikoku). Opposite to Takamatsu across the Inland Sea, Uno is a small port situated on Honshū. Roughly speaking, of the twelve outlying islands where the Triennale takes place, seven are situated between the eastern parts of Kagawa and Okayama, and the remaining five islands are in the western part of Kagawa Prefecture, distant from Takamatsu. Orijima, Teshima, and Inujima belong to the former group.

The twelve island communities that have hosted the Triennale vary in size and population. As table 1 indicates, Shodoshima stands out given its vast land area and much larger population; most of the other islands cover less than 10 km² each and have a small population of hundreds, if not dozens of, residents. The ratios of senior residents (i.e., aged sixty-five or above) in many of these island communities generally reach 50% or above of the total population. Of the twelve islands, Teshima can be categorized as medium-sized and fairly depopulated; in 2015, this island had 867 residents, and 50.3% of them were aged sixty-five or above. In contrast, Inujima is one of the smallest and least

populous islands, with only forty-four residents and 72.7% of them were aged sixty-five or above in 2015. Ogijima, with a population of 148 in 2015 and a ratio of senior residents at 63.5%, can be considered in the middle ground between Teshima and Inujima. In other words, the case studies I shall introduce in this paper reflect the situation of outlying islands of medium to small sizes that face fair to severe levels of depopulation.

Literature Review

The mushrooming of Japanese art projects and festivals since the inauguration of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale (ETAT) in Niigata Prefecture in 2000, a predecessor of the Setouchi Triennale, has drawn considerable scholarly attention across academic disciplines. Early quantitative research on ETAT (Katsumura et al. 2008) and the Setouchi Triennale (Muroi 2012; 2013) suggest the correlation between local participation and satisfaction. That is, the more active a community participates in the making of the respective art festival, the more satisfied residents are found to be with the festival. Muroi's research, which compares four island venues of the Setouchi Triennale, further points out the absence of causal relation between objective outcomes of the art festival, such as economic benefits, and the subjective satisfaction of local residents. Whereas Muroi's findings are important in untying the subjective views from quantifiable results, I find that this quantitative research fails to capture the qualitative changes prompted by art festivals that the local communities have experienced. Another significant branch of research addresses this issue. Citing Putnam's (1993; 2000) definition of social capital, some scholars seek to examine the "bonding social capital" and "bridging social capital"³ in local communities engendered by Japanese art festivals. This research includes Sumi (2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2013; 2014), who utilizes survey data collected from ETAT venues, argues that the increase of "bridging social capital" was found as a positive outcome from the art festival while the increase of "bonding social capital" was not. Yoshida (2014), based on his qualitative research on a rural hamlet that participated in ETAT, points out that "bonding social capital" has been formed whereas "bridging social capital" is yet to be actualized. Although the contradictory findings demonstrated by Sumi and Yoshida seem to reflect both the strengths and limitations of quantitative and qualitative methods on the subject matter,⁴ I recognize their significance in raising our attention to the transformation of social relations prompted by Japanese art festivals at the community level. As Klien (2010) points out as well, we need to consider the bleak reality of depopulated hamlets amidst the romanticized and nostalgic discourses on rural Japan. In other words, it is imperative for researchers to acknowledge the objective conditions and subjective perceptions of a locale and scrutinize the social relations and individual meanings actualized through the course of revitalization-oriented art festivals.

Meanwhile, some scholars take theoretical approaches and analyze the relations between artwork, local residents, and customs in Japanese art festivals. These studies include Hashimoto (2018), who employs the actor-network theory (Latour 2005), Miya-

moto (2018), who works on her theory of landscape, and Suwa (2020), who utilizes the concept of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Whereas these authors have offered innovative insights into the creation of artistic meanings and sensory experiences in local contexts, I agree with Qu (2020, 261) that an outsider's interpretation on local culture could be disagreed with by local residents; I also agree with the same author (2020, 254) that discussion on artistic theories often overlooks the social outcomes of art projects and festivals.⁵

Following the approach of multi-sited comparison demonstrated in Muroi (2012; 2013) and Qu, McCormick, and Funck (2020) on the Setouchi Triennale, and Yoshida (2019) on multiple cases of Japanese art festivals, this paper draws three ethnographic vignettes I observed within three different island communities participated in the Setouchi Triennale—all qualified as marginal villages according to Ōno's definition—to discuss the changes of social dynamics brought about by the art festival. In particular, I employ cases of local festive events (*matsuri*) as the lens for examination and investigate the relationship between the continuation of community functions and the social consequences that resulted from the Triennale. I perceive each local festival as a festival system that embodies specific social ties and cultural idioms (Ashkenazi 1993, 127–31). Exploring local festive events in these communities is useful since they may reflect social changes propelled by the development of tourism (Moon 1989, 153–71) and negotiations between natives and newcomers in a community (Robertson 1991, 38–71). In the three ethnographic cases, I pay attention to the cooperative relations between native residents, newcomers, and individuals affiliated with the Setouchi Triennale. This helps us understand the social dynamics behind the continuation of community activities.

Methodology

My engagement in the Setouchi Triennale began in 2013, when I conducted research for my master's thesis. After a two-month employment period with a nonprofit organization associated with the said Triennale in summer 2016, I conducted my doctoral fieldwork on Japanese art festivals in the summer of 2017, and from June 2018 to August 2019. Approximately one and a half years in length, I had the chance to perform participant observation in the process of art production as a volunteer and also at numerous formal and informal events. My participant observation generated some tens of thousands of words in the form of field notes. In addition, I conducted 158 interviews. Sixty-seven interviews were conducted with local residents, aged from early forties to mid-eighties. Eighteen interviews were conducted with in-migrants, generally aged from their twenties to forties, while one informant was aged seventy-five at the time of interview. Other interviewees included artists, volunteers, government officials, and other supporting staff members of Japanese art festivals. All interviews were digitally taped, and over thirty of these interview recordings were manually transcribed. Whereas local festive events per se was not the main focus of my doctoral research, for this paper I draw the threads together

by reexamining my field data and ethnographic experiences that suggest the significance of local festive events as case studies in scrutinizing the social dynamics at a community level.

Case Study One: Summer Festival on Teshima Island, 2017

On August 13, 2017, the annual summer festival of Teshima island (*Teshima natsuri* 豊島夏まつり) took place in a public open space near Ieura Port, the major port for the island's traffic. As the event's poster illustrates (fig. 2), the festival started at six o'clock in the evening, when patrons could purchase snacks from food stalls operated by several local restaurants: Shima Kitchen and Umi no Restaurant, which were related to the Setouchi Triennale,⁶ and Shokudou 101 and Ichigoya, which were opened by newcomers and found to be popular among visitors. It was also the time when pre-registered participants enjoyed their karaoke singing. At seven o'clock, participants could enjoy a performance given by Teshima Reinbō Doramu Chīmu (literally Teshima Rainbow Drum Team; see below), and Koebi Kandadan.⁷ The *bon* dance (盆踊り) started at 8:15 p.m., before fireworks were set off at nine o'clock as a splendid coda to the annual festival. The summer festival was organized by the Teshima Federation of Neighborhood Associations (*Teshima jichi rengōkai* 豊島自治連合会).⁸



FIGURE 2. Poster of Teshima Summer Festival. Photo by the author, August 9, 2017.

At 5:20 p.m. on the day of event, I arrived at the festival venue and found different parties busying themselves in preparation for the event. The main stage was a low platform extended from the back of Teshima Exchange Center, a two-story building serving as the ticket office for ferries departing from the Iemura Port. On the left, three temporary tents were set up, under which a small group of middle-aged men was handling the karaoke machine and other audio equipment. Several younger people in their thirties, including representatives from Shima Kitchen, Shokudou 101, and other newcomers' initiatives, worked together to warm up a huge cast iron pan using charcoals, before using the pan to prepare a large portion of paella, assisted by a chef from Tokyo. Across the open space, three more tents were set up: one was to be filled by local dignitaries, with rows of seats prearranged, and another one was to be used by staff from Umi no Restaurant to sell glasses of wine. In between, however, was the popular and busy stall manned by the Koe-bitai, where children queued up for the yo-yo balloon game (*yōyō tsumi* ヨーヨー釣り). Before the stall started operations, I saw a group of university students from Kansai, led by a professor in geography,⁹ who were helping fill water into the balloons. In the middle of the open space, there was a small, square stage (*yagura*) wrapped in red and white, a typical installation in Japanese *bon* dances. Participants, old and young, gradually arrived when the sky turned darker and darker. After a short welcome speech given by a representative of the organizer, a group of female university students took the stage, enlivening the atmosphere by dancing and singing several popular tunes. Among the group of young women on stage was a female former staff member of the NPO Setouchi Koebi Network, Kako (pseudonym), who had previously worked closely with the Teshima communities. Kako later performed a short, humorous act to entertain the audience and also claimed the duty of emcee to introduce each stall at the venue.

Subsequently, pre-registered participants started taking turns singing their chosen tunes on stage; among several women of middle-to-senior age, a unit resembling a grandfather and his granddaughter performed a children's song together. Off stage, people talked, laughed, and enjoyed the moment with food and drinks. I estimate that there were over three hundred of them. Meanwhile, another group of university students busied themselves by keeping an eye on the trash bins. After the karaoke session, a group of approximately seven local schoolboys, led by their teacher, entered the open space and gave a *taiko* drum performance; they were the Teshima Reinbō Doramu Chīmu advertised on the event's poster. Afterwards, a group of eight Koebi Kandadan members entered the scene, parading off-stage while playing a cheerful tune; these musicians played instruments such as a piccolo, clarinet, trumpet, tuba, keyboard harmonica, and snare drum. The musicians subsequently went on stage to join Kako. With the musicians accompanying her, Kako performed a few songs on the theme of Setouchi and Teshima, with some stanzas altered to fit in lyrics about the Setouchi Triennale. After the applause, members of the audience were ready to dance among themselves. On the square stage in the middle of the open space, a senior man started singing the *ondō* (音頭) folk tune while a young man was playing the *taiko* drum to set the tempo and rhythm. A third, middle-aged man

stood beside the pair and sometimes acted as an emcee. Over a hundred people, old and young, residents and visitors, made a circle and enjoyed dancing for thirty minutes or so before it was announced that the fireworks display was going to start soon. The fireworks display, though less than ten minutes in length, was splendid, and spectators could not withhold their exclamations: “wow” and “ah.” At the end of the event, the emcee asked participants who had energy left to stay behind and help tidy up. Many university students and Koebitai volunteers promptly answered the call.

Case Study Two: Grand Festival on Ogijima Island, 2018

Different from the summer festival of Teshima, the grand festival (*taisai* 大祭) of Ogijima, which takes place once every two years, has a strong religious significance. The local folklorist Katsushige Nakayama (2013, 135–37) believes that the history of local festivals can be traced back to the emergence of local shrines, which means the Muromachi Period¹⁰ in the case of Ogijima. He further points out that during the Edo Period (1603–1868), the local festival gradually thrived with entertainment elements, and in the late Edo Period, the locals would pray for bountiful fishery yields during the festival. Nakayama also recollects that, when the local population reached its peak in the Showa Period,¹¹ the island community would be separated into two teams for competitive performances during the festival, a practice which has been discontinued due to population decline (Nakayama 2013).

The grand festival of Ogijima is divided into two sessions: the festival eve (*yoimiya* 宵宮) on the first day and the festival morning (*asamiya* 朝宮) on the second day. The festival eve, which is held at the local Kamo Shrine (加茂神社), begins well after the last ferry service has departed from the island; it is thus more private in nature. By contrast, the festival morning, held at the local Toyotama-hime Shrine (豊玉姫神社), attracts attention from media and visitors. This section is primarily based on my ethnographic observation during the festival morning on August 5, 2018, with additional data drawn from the festival morning on August 7, 2016. Whereas in 2016 the festival lasted for approximately two and a half hours from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., in 2018 it ran from approximately 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., an hour of time shortened in length. As I was told by a participant in 2018, the organizers¹² decided to have the festival simplified in order to escape the extreme summer heat.

The festival morning generally consists of four parts. The first is the ceremonial dance (*urayasu no mai* 浦安の舞): inside the shrine, a pair of young women in shrine maiden dresses perform a dance inside the shrine while a group of traditionally-dressed participants sit and attend the performance. After the ceremony indoors is over, the festival continues in the small open space with the three remaining parts.¹³ The second part is the lion dance (*shishimai* 獅子舞). Each lion dance unit is formed of three people. Two young men put on the lion masks and costumes to emulate the lion, and a boy stands in front of them and performs a ritual to drive away evil spirits. In 2016, there were two of these

units, but in 2018, there was only one. The third part is the carrying of a portable shrine (*mikoshi dogyo* 神輿渡御). Led by a leader, eight young to middle-aged men enter the open space shouldering the portable shrine, swing it, and turn around. Then, the leader gives a signal to the members to raise up the shrine and asks spectators to walk underneath for purification. Shrine representatives also offer spectators small amounts of sake wine and rice. The fourth part is the presentation of float (*yatai hōnō* 屋台奉納). The float is a rectangular frame wrapped in colorful cloths and chenille stems. Inside, two bars are placed in the middle to divide the float into halves. Two small drums are installed at the front and a pair of small gongs (*dora* 銅鑼) are set in the middle. These percussion instruments are played by young girls. Two adult women play shamisen (a stringed instrument) and sing along behind the girls. Whereas the six female musicians are performing while walking inside the float, four men are holding the frame outside. Additional musicians also play outside of the frame. Intertwined in this section is a series of short performances (*dashimono* 出し物). During the shortened version in 2018, for example, a local woman presented a traditional song, three young women—a former Koebitai staff member and two prefectural officials handling the Setouchi Triennale—gave a short musical and dance performance, and three teachers from a local school also performed a song. In 2016, the abovementioned Koebi Kandadan gave a more substantial musical performance, and a female member danced in the costume of a sea woman (*ama* 海女).

The festival typically ends with a group photo session for participants who have performed in the series of rituals. In both 2016 and 2018, I counted over forty people in the pictures. Approximately one-third of those in the pictures are elderly residents of the island. Others include relatives of the locals, newcomers, and individuals who have close relationships to the Setouchi Triennale. In both years, the festival also attracted several dozen curious spectators.

Case Study Three: *Bon* Dance on Inujima Island, 2018

As introduced above, Inujima is one of the least populous islands among the venues of the Setouchi Triennale. In spite of this challenging demographic background, the Fukutake Foundation has significant investments in art facilities on the island, which include the Inujima Seirenscho Art Museum (since 2008) and the Inujima “Art House Project” (since 2010). Visitors to the island may instantly find the contrast between the colorful artwork and the dilapidated houses.

Compared to Teshima or Ogijima, the small community of Inujima does not organize local festivals of a substantial scale. The annual Inuishi Matsuri (犬石祭 literally “dog’s stone festival”), traditionally held on the neighboring island of Inunojima,¹⁴ was discontinued in 2019. Having said that, when I conducted fieldwork on Inujima in August 2018, I learned from a local paper (fig. 3) about the upcoming *bon* dance event on the fourteenth day of the month. The ethnographic description below is based on my observation during the event.



FIGURE 3. The August 2018 issue of *Inujima Shimbun*. Photo by the author, August 13, 2018.

As the paper suggested, the event was scheduled at seven o'clock in the evening. The venue was a rectangular open ground adjacent to a grocery store, which I never found open during my five-day visit. On one side of the open ground, four long tables had been set, and from these tables, participants could take food for free: rice balls, Japanese omelettes, sausages, and watermelon slices. One of these tables served as a garbage collection point. The tables were staffed by a dozen young men and women and a middle-aged woman whom I could identify as a local. On the fences behind these tables, six pieces of paper were displayed on top, indicating six donors to the event. Whereas the food items were donated by local residents, the local ferry company and Fukutake Foundation, among others, donated unspecified amount of money. On another side of the open ground, several seats, benches, and two tables had been set, where a dozen people were chatting, relaxing, and enjoying the food. Beside the open ground, a design professor from Kyoto and two students of his were preparing to film the event. As the professor told me, he had been conducting research about the island for design inspiration.

More people arrived as the night curtain drew. Before the dance started, participants gathered at 7:20 p.m. for a group photo session. There were over forty people in the picture; a dozen of them were residents, from middle-aged through seniors, and another dozen were young staff members of the Fukutake Foundation who were to leave the island after the event by chartered boat service. Others included relatives of local families

and non-local proprietors and staff of a few shops on the islands. A woman from a theatre troupe that was preparing for a performance to be staged on the island at a later time of the year told me that she came to the island just for the *bon* dance event. A young female staff member of the Fukutake Foundation, who was assigned to handle artistic matters on the island, filled the role of photographer during the photo session.

There was no central stage or *taiko* drum in the open ground. Instead, a black loudspeaker was placed at the middle. When the *bon* dance started, a pre-recorded *ondō* folk tune was played through the loudspeaker and participants formed a circle around the speaker. I saw one of my informants, a local woman in her eighties, proactively teaching the others and demonstrating the proper steps, and young participants looked happy to learn from her. Three hippy-looking men, who were the proprietor and his staff of a café that was open irregularly, played their African drums along the pre-recorded music. They told me that it was an improvised act. The *bon* dance was separated into sessions with pauses in between, but whenever the dance restarted, fewer people stood up to join. Some senior residents soon retired and opted to sit and chat instead while other participants tried to continue for a longer time. After an hour, the dance was terminated as all participants simply chatted among themselves. The gathering ended at nine o'clock, and subsequently the world of silence returned to the island.

On the following day, I asked two other local informants, women in their sixties and seventies respectively, for the reason why they did not attend the *bon* dance event. As they explained, the local neighborhood association had initially decided not to hold the *bon* dance event owing to the danger of heatstroke. One of them said: “The elderly felt relieved after this decision.” According to them, however, young staff members from the Fukutake Foundation insisted on organizing the event, resulting in the simplified version of the *bon* dance the previous night. Not agreeing with this move, the two informants decided not to attend.

Discussion

In this paper, I introduced the concept of “marginal villages” (Ōno 2005) to describe the predicaments of three island communities—Teshima, Ogijima, and Inujima—that host the Setouchi Triennale. Even though these islands have become tourist destinations, the local communities face severe depopulation, and in 2015, over half the population on these islands were aged sixty-five or above. To examine how the Triennale has contributed to the continuation of these communities, I suggest that it is useful to investigate the social dynamics demonstrated in local festive events for clues. In particular, by examining the collaborations between native residents, newcomers, local and non-local businesses, and organizations associated to the Triennale in these events, we can understand to what extent the Triennale may have supported the survival of these “marginal villages.” Before committing to further analysis, it is necessary to introduce the background behind the three case studies.

Teshima, where the Teshima Art Museum and other art facilities are located, had been transformed into a popular tourist destination in the decade before the Covid-19 pandemic. Reportedly, the Teshima Art Museum attracted 59,136 visitors in the non-Triennale year of 2018, and the figure jumped to 100,405 in 2019, a Triennale year (Fukutake Public Interest Foundation 2019; 2020). Although these figures look very modest in comparison with the visitor numbers of major museums of international fame, they are significant for a small island community of eight hundred residents. Whereas the island has been victimized by the problem of illegal waste dumping, which was exposed in the 1990s, the development of art tourism has helped create a new imagery for the island and bring new business opportunities for both native residents and newcomers. Reportedly, the municipal government of Tonosho Town (to which Teshima administratively belongs) claims that approximately sixty people have migrated to the island since 2010 (*Sanyo Shimibun* 2018). Although not all in-migrants are attracted by art tourism per se, undoubtedly tourism contributes to one of the pull factors of the island.

In this context, the summer festival of Teshima demonstrates the social dynamics among different stakeholders on the island. Newcomers and outsiders, such as restaurant proprietors and staff, university students, and Koebitai volunteers, contributed to the appearance of the festival by providing entertainment and serving food and drinks. Meanwhile, at the time of my research, the local neighborhood associations on Teshima were overseen by native residents of senior age who were capable of handling various local affairs and events. That the island community was able to carry out the festival plan with a fireworks display should demonstrate the capacity of the neighborhood associations to draw human, financial, and logistical resources to sustain the functions of the community. In other words, although the island had been facing the crisis of population decline, the native community was robust enough to survive. Against this background, the tourism development prompted by the Setouchi Triennale helped attract newcomers as additional human resources to the island. Whereas the roles of natives and newcomers looked complementary to each other during the summer festival, young newcomers provided the prospect of the community's future: some of them may become local leaders in the future; others may introduce to the island their newborns, who will help the local school continue and become tomorrow's *taiko* drum players during the festival.

It is necessary to further elaborate the demographic background of Ogijima in order to understand the social dynamics demonstrated in the grand festival on the island. After visiting the second edition of the Setouchi Triennale in 2013, a man in his thirties—who was born on the island but relocated to a major Japanese city when he was young—decided to bring his family and move to the island as a return migrant. Together with three other potential newcomer families, they initiated a campaign to request the reopening of the local schools on the island.¹⁵ Their request was promptly fulfilled in 2014, and the schools make the island a more favorable environment for subsequent newcomer families. An informant told me that from March 2014 to July 2017, forty people had moved to the island, while during the same period, the community lost another fifty-two residents.

That means, newcomers have been a key factor contributing to the survival of this island community of less than two hundred residents. In 2016, the abovementioned return migrant assumed the role of chairman of the local neighborhood association.

Young newcomers contribute significantly to the revitalization of the island as illustrated by their private initiatives. Whereas some of them are IT experts who utilize the island as a base to work remotely online, others have established a café, guesthouse, hair salon, and even a private library to serve both locals and visitors. These newcomers also help in the continuation of local traditions. While the neighborhood association is itself chaired by a young return migrant, other newcomers also actively participate in local festivals and events. During the grand festival in both 2016 and 2018, relatives of locals and newcomers, together with outsiders such as a representative from the NPO Setouchi Koebi Network, provided physical labor to shoulder the portable shrine and carry the float. Newcomers also sang the ceremonial songs together with natives. In 2018, at least one of the two young women who performed the ceremonial dance was the daughter of a migrant family while younger female onlookers in the audience may pick up the same duty one day in the future.

Lacking an all-year-round major art attraction, tourism development of Ogijima is far from robust, and none of my informants on the island, natives or newcomers, would claim that she or he could subsist on tourism associated with the Setouchi Triennale. With that said, the Triennale has undoubtedly helped transform Ogijima from an unknown island in the Seto Inland Sea into a recognizable place famous for its revitalization, as frequently portrayed in mass media, which draws further attention from potential newcomers. As demonstrated in the grand festivals, young migrants have become an indispensable part of the island community. They have claimed major roles in community's functions and are key persons to ensure the community's continued survival.

In contrast with the cases of Teshima and Ogijima, the *bon* dance event of Inujima suggests a very different situation. As I explained above, it is said that in 2018 the local neighborhood association had initially decided not to organize the event due to residents' health concerns amidst the hot weather, but the event finally took place because of the determination of young staff members of the Fukutake Foundation. Some residents might have appreciated these young people's efforts; thus, they donated cash and food items. The event also allowed those who really love *bon* dancing, such as my informant in her eighties, to enjoy the night. However, I observed that the atmosphere among residents during the event was generally lukewarm. Other residents were reluctant to participate.

While it is not my intention to cast doubt on the goodwill of the young Foundation staff, the event offers a glimpse into the differences in preferences among stakeholders on the island and ultimately the limitation of art tourism in revitalizing the island community. Different from Teshima or Ogijima, the Setouchi Triennale and its associated facilities have not prompted significant demographic changes to the island of Inujima. I believe that the island's geographical location, which lies in a remote corner of Okayama City, with limited options for transportation, schools, or supermarkets, may look too inconve-

nient for potential newcomers. Moreover, the island is categorized as an “urbanization control area” (*shigaika chōsei kuiki* 市街化調整区域) of Okayama City under the City Planning Act (*toshikeikaku hō* 都市計画法), and the construction of new homes, as well as the reconstruction of the old ones, is rigidly regulated. Some local informants attribute this as the factor behind the difficulties of the island in attracting newcomers. Very few young individuals I know did manage to find suitable homes, and empty houses on the island are in general too dilapidated to use without reconstruction.

The Setouchi Triennale helped put Inujima on the art map. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, tens of thousands of tourists visited this island, with a population of a few dozen, every year. However, severely depopulated and with little prospect of attracting newcomers, tourism has not brought substantial changes to the community. Young Foundation staff members, most of them residing outside the island, can be hardly counted as part of the local community. Owing to the advanced age of the native residents, the continuation of local traditions, such as singing folk tunes or playing *taiko* drums during the *bon* dance, and other functions of the community are at stake. The case of Inujima clearly indicates the limited capacity of art projects in engendering substantial revitalizing effects on island communities that are characterized by geographical remoteness and administrative restrictions.

While the three case studies have demonstrated the potential and limitations of the Setouchi Triennale in supporting the functions of these island communities, a comparative study also further diversifies our understanding of marginal villages. To a large extent, I agree that all three islands, Teshima, Ogijima, and Inujima, as well as many other islands in the Setouchi region, can be recognized as “marginal” in terms of demographic decline, yet the differences among the three communities also reveal that “marginal village” is not a singular concept. Similarly, communities have seen different impacts as a result of the Triennale due to each community’s unique circumstances. I summarize these circumstances as follows.

As outlined in table 2, the three marginal villages differ in population size, infrastructure, tourism resources, convenience of access, and in-migration trends. While all these are factors contributing to the vitality and survival of a community, undoubtedly the attraction of in-migrants remains the most crucial criterion for the long-term survival of a community. My case studies on Teshima and Ogijima suggest that the Setouchi Triennale did help attract newcomers to the two islands, whereas data from Ogijima further indicate that a permanent tourist facility, such as an art museum, may not be an absolute guarantee for a local community to thrive. Indeed, as the case of Inujima demonstrates, art attractions per se do not help attract in-migrants if the community faces other unfavorable conditions, such as inconvenient access from any town center, poor infrastructure, or legal limitations on redevelopment. A very small and senior-aged population also means that the community does not have the human resources to regenerate by itself.

TABLE 2. Comparison of Teshima, Ogijima, and Inujima

	Teshima	Ogijima	Inujima
Population (2015)	Medium (867)	Small (148)	Very Small (44)
Local Schools	Yes	Yes (reopened)	No
Permanent Art Facilities	Yes	No	Yes
Access	Fair	Fair	Poor
In-migration	Yes	Yes	Nil
Vitality of Community	Robust (led by natives, supported by newcomers and outsiders)	Robust (led by a return migrant, supported by newcomers and outsiders)	In decline (led by senior natives, supported by outsiders)
Expected Future	Community to be sustained by younger generation of natives and newcomers	Community to be sustained by younger generation of newcomers	Local community may vanish; tourism activities to be operated entirely by outsiders

Although revitalization measures such as the Setouchi Triennale are instrumental in transforming the image of the region and bringing in tourism revenue, the cases of Teshima and—especially—Ogijima reveal that the availability of local schools is crucial for keeping families with young children from out-migration and attracting young couples for in-migration. As previously noted, these young families are the key to the continuation of community functions (such as local festivals) and the community’s survival in the future. Whereas I agree with Qu (2020) that both top-down measures and bottom-up initiatives are important in community revitalization through the use of the arts, I also argue that an overemphasis on the arts may risk overlooking other factors, such as education or broadband internet connection, that shape the future of a marginal village. This means that Japan’s local administrations need to expand the scope of their top-down policies to promote a substantial revitalization at the community level.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I introduced three island communities that can be categorized as “marginal villages” (Ōno 2005). These three islands—Teshima, Ogijima, and Inujima—belong to a group of a dozen islands in the Seto Inland Sea where the Setouchi Triennale has taken place since 2010. While each edition of the Triennale attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors to the region, I shifted my focus of analysis to local festive events on the islands. By doing so, we can understand to what extent the Triennale has transformed

the demographic situations and social dynamics in these marginal villages. Whereas the comparatively populous community of Teshima demonstrates a balanced collaboration between natives, newcomers, and outsiders associated with the Triennale, the case of Ogijima exemplifies a scenario where a group of young migrants has claimed major roles in continuing the key functions of the small community. In contrast, the severely depopulated island of Inujima demonstrates the limitations of the Triennale in securing the survival of some of the most marginalized communities.

These case studies indicate that the effects of revitalization measures, such as art festivals, are subject to a multitude of factors. While the quality and attractiveness of artwork may contribute to tourism development, I argue that demographic changes remain a key indicator in evaluating the effects of an art festival on the survival of a marginal community. Sizes of native population, local resources and infrastructure, geographical locations, timing of revitalization measures, and the personal capacity and vision of community leaders are some of the factors that determine whether a community could utilize an external measure to benefit its demographic transformation. Echoing Klien's (2010) observations on the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, the reality of many island communities in the Seto Inland Sea is also bleak. While it is important to further examine the transformation of social dynamics among native residents and newcomers in comparatively successful cases—such as Teshima—in the future, the long-term survival of some more marginalized islands—such as Inujima—also requires continuous scrutiny.

Finally, I suggest that the role of non-residents in community functions, as demonstrated by the three festive events examined in this paper, needs our attention. While I noticed that the role of non-residents is significant in facilitating community activities, how do they contribute to a community's long-term survival? This question requires further research.¹⁶

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Notes

1. For the inaugural edition in 2010, the Setouchi Triennale took place on seven islands only.
2. There are four categories of rural villages according to Ōno's (2005) taxonomy. Apart from "marginal villages," in a "surviving village" (*sonzoku shūroku* 存続集落), over half of its population is aged under fifty-five, and is very likely to survive in the future. A "semi-marginal village" (*jun genkai shūroku* 準限界集落) has half of its population aged fifty-five or above; though capable of functioning at the present time, the village is

likely to face difficulties in retaining human resources in the near future. Ōno (2005) labels any village with a population of zero as a “vanished village” (*shōmetsu shūraku* 消滅集落).

3. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (248). Whereas Bourdieu’s concept on social capital points to one’s social class and prestige, Putnam (1993) defines social capital as “features of social organizations, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (167). Putnam (2000) further categorizes social capital into different types: “bonding social capital” is accumulated in a closed and homogeneous social network, whereas “bridging social capital” is heterogenous, relating to outsiders (22–24).

4. I argue that Sumi’s research overlooks detailed substance and process while Yoshida’s research results came from biased sampling (Tu 2021).

5. However, I question Qu’s (2020) use of the notion of relational art (Bourriaud 2002) as the theoretical basis to examine the relations between artwork and people. Whereas Bourriaud’s (2002) focus on selective artistic examples in the 1990s contributes to the recognition of interactional artistic practices of the decade, Kester (2011) and Bishop (2012), though disagreeing with each other on the social qualities of art, re-historize the sociality in art to include much of the twentieth century. These are among the works that have problematized the theoretical and art-historical relevance of Bourriaud (2002). Moreover, I further suggest that we need to reexamine these Western concepts in the context of Japanese art history. See, for example, Tomii (2013).

6. Shima Kitchen, opened in 2010, is counted as a Setouchi Triennale artwork. It is now run by the NPO Setouchi Koebi Network, with several local staff members. Umi no Restaurant, opened in 2013, is run by a private company named Il Grano Corporation, Ltd. Though there is no official relation between the company and the Triennale, Il Grano was founded by Mitsuko Fukutake, sister of the billionaire Soichiro Fukutake, who has invested in art projects in the Setouchi region and is a major funder of the Setouchi Triennale. Some other Il Grano initiatives have been counted as Triennale projects.

7. Koebi Kandadan (literally the Little Shrimp Squad Winds and Percussion Band) is a musical band formed among Koebitai volunteers, who often provide short entertainment in local events on the Setouchi islands. The Koebitai, managed by the NPO Setouchi Koebi Network, is a volunteer team that provides the major workforce for the preparation and everyday operation of the Setouchi Triennale. For details on these Triennale volunteers, see Tu (2014).

8. There are six hamlets on Teshima, and each has its own neighborhood association, whereas the Teshima Federation of Neighborhood Associations oversees island-wide affairs.

9. As this professor told me, he began researching the island ten years ago, and he led his students to the island to conduct fieldwork in the past four years, which resulted in close relations between his group and the local residents.

10. The periodization of Muramachi varies among scholarly discussions. One common definition of Muramachi is the period from 1336 to 1537.

11. The Showa Period was a long stretch of time, from 1926 to 1989. Whereas Nakayama does not specify when during the Showa Period he refers to, it is commonly recognized that the population of Ogijima reached its peak in the 1950s. My informants in the region generally estimate that in the 1950s, the population of Ogijima reached 1,500. Others put the estimate at 1,800 to 2,000 (see Nakashima 2014, 95).

12. In theory, the festival is held by the shrine representative (*sōdai* 総代); in practice, members of the local neighborhood association, acting as the shrine’s parishioners, are also the organizers of the event.

13. I find that these three parts are not necessarily in a fixed order. The sequence I introduce in this paper is based on the festival in 2018.

14. Inunojima is a smaller island privately owned by a local chemistry company. Conventionally, outsiders were allowed on the island only once every year on the day of Inuishi Matsuri in May.

15. Owing to depopulation, the local elementary school and junior high school had been temporarily closed in 2008 and 2011, respectively.

16. I am informed that the concept of *kankei jinkō* 関係人口 (related population; see Klien 2021) has recently emerged in Japan to describe non-residents who engage in a community’s affairs. A vague concept, I refrain from further discussion due to the word limit of this paper.

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