Special Issue
Practicing a Public Anthropology of the East Japan Disaster

Visualizing with "Soft Light"

A Reflection on Public Anthropology and 3/11

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This paper attempts to offer a direction for public anthropology based on an examination of our ongoing intervention in the process of reconstruction after the 3/11 tsunami hit a small village in Iwate, Japan. At the beginning of 2012, I happened to meet the local committee for reconstruction of the town. Since then, we, an ad hoc group composed of an anthropologist and two urban planners, have visited the town regularly and supported the drafting of a local reconstruction plan. In this paper I describe a collective relocation project and the construction of a stone monument in detail. Both cases suggest that different wishes, sorrows, and visions emerge and sometimes crash into one another in the devastated area. The important thing is not to make explicit the differences and conflicts between these, or in other words, to provide a clear vision of the situation they are trapped in. Instead, what is needed is to prepare, through nuanced words and practices, a space where people in different circumstances and with different interests can meet and work together. Paraphrasing James Peacock's simile for anthropology as a lens bringing soft focus in harsh light, I dub this "public anthropology as soft light."

Key words: Public, vision, temporality, disaster, Japan

Unveiling Ceremony

March 26, 2013, was a cold, windy day in Ōfunato, Iwate Prefecture, Japan. I parked my rented car on the side of the paved road near the train station at 10:30 a.m. The station's parking lots were occupied not by cars, but by middle-aged men chatting in groups in a local dialect, some in formal suits and others in *happi*.[1] Relieved by my choice to wear a tie that morning, I looked around. The station building was on a hillside. However, it was not a vantage point to see out over the landscape of the village. Rustic houses blocked my view of the sea and the devastation of the tsunami. Based on my previous visits, I drew a map

[1] A happi is a traditional outfit for a festival. In this context wearing happi shows that someone is a member of the *shōbōdan* (local fire brigade).

of Maehama[2] village in my mind. The fishery port was here, while the community hall was there, and the new housing site for the tsunami-survivors was behind the station.... Then, as I scanned this known landscape, a veiled monument recently placed at the entrance of the station building caught my eye.

The service of this local line remained suspended for two years after March 11, 2011. It was the first time for me to see so many people at the station. I found Oikawa-san and Konno-san, members of the village's semi-official committee for tsunami reconstruction.[3] They were busy preparing for the day's ceremony and greeting guests. I took a seat next to Matsukawa-san and Niinuma-san, middle-aged fishermen from a remote hamlet in Maehama. They nodded towards me slightly and continued their discussion about the height of the new seawalls. The ceremony was scheduled to begin at eleven that morning and the time before the start was a good opportunity to share local news. After the tsunami, it has been difficult for locals to grasp what is going on both in and beyond their village.

The ceremony began on time. Following one minute of silent prayer, Sato-san, vice-chair of the village's reconstruction committee, gave the opening address. Then the main event started. The host called on the chair and another vice-chair of the committee, and then the mayor of Ōfunato and seven members of a national stone dealers' association who had donated the memorial. Men in black came towards the memorial and grabbed the ropes hanging from it with their white gloved hands. Then, on a shouted cue, they pulled the ropes all together. A glittering, triangle-shaped object standing vertically on a big, semicircle-shaped base appeared. All of the parts were made of granite and it was obviously a costly sculpture to produce. A round of hearty applause followed the unveiling.

After the monument was unveiled, speeches from the podium started. Oikawa-san, chair of the reconstruction committee, thanked the guests for their cooperation with the reconstruction efforts. The guests celebrated the completion of the memorial. The artist who designed the memorial explained the meaning of its shape. According to him, it represents a sun-dial pointing to the time when the tsunami hit Maehama, and simultaneously, by standing at the station, it symbolizes encounters of light and shadow, people coming and going, or life and death. Finally, the mayor awarded a letter of appreciation to the president of the stone dealers' association for their donation, which concluded the ceremony.

This seemingly mundane event gives, as I will argue in detail later, a clue about a direction for public anthropology. At the ceremony the new monument became unveiled. However, other things, such as the older monuments and the sorrow of the bereaved families, remained hidden from our view. Our limited and diversified visions reflect our

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[2] I use pseudonyms for the names of the village and people.

[3] The village's committee for tsunami-reconstruction was organized in July 2012. Although it had no legal basis, the committee was recognized as the representative of Maehama since it consisted of the heads of each hamlet, the fishery cooperative, the women's association, the community hall (*kōminkan*), the elementary and the junior high schools, and other local 'big men.'

relationship with, or positionality in, the ongoing reconstruction process. When no one has a clear outlook, what can an anthropologist do? In this paper, based on my field experience, I explore an anthropological engagement with the so-called 3/11 disaster.

3/11 and Public Anthropology

The triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident that occurred on March 11 was, borrowing Ichirō Numazaki's words, "too wide, too big, too complicated to comprehend" (Numazaki 2012). This tri-partite disaster was, and still is, a challenge for Japan. It has caused serious consequences for Japan's social and ecological systems in multiple ways, although, as the media reports, the survivors are extremely afraid that the catastrophe is being forgotten and that they will be abandoned.

The so-called "3/11" disaster poses a host of complications, especially in terms of temporality (Kimura 2014a). While the first 72 hours following a disaster are said to be the most critical window for rescue efforts and for survivors to receive other emergency assistance, both radiation leaks and fuel shortages in the devastated areas prevented civil aid groups and individual volunteers from entering the most affected regions. Despite the lack of information about the potential damage and long-term effects of radiation exposure to humans and the environment, in December 2011 Japan's prime minister officially declared that the disaster had come to a close. And, as described above, while monuments which memorialize the tsunami disaster were erected just two years after the tsunami, there are still hundreds of people considered to be missing. A vision for the future, the linear sense of time, and causal chains, remain confused.

It may be the uncertainty of the outlook for the future created by this temporal incongruity that transfixed Japanese anthropologists for a while. In the aftermath of the disaster, people both inside and outside the disaster area repeated the slogan, "*Ima watashitachi ni dekiru koto*" (Let's think about what we can do now). In an increasingly patriotic atmosphere, this call prompted a critical reflection of what we anthropologists in Japan, as members of the affected nation, can do to address contemporary public concerns. Yet, even though there is a legacy of ethical and critical interventions in emergent issues within the field of anthropology,[4] in the months following 3/11 most Japanese anthropologists seemed deflated (Ichinosawa et al. 2011; Kimura 2012). Caught between a desire to help survivors and a hesitation to intervene without "useful" know-how, many in the scholarly community, especially in the humanities, felt deep ambivalence.

Under such circumstances, what can anthropologists do? Since the 1990s, anthropological projects addressing critical social issues beyond the discipline's traditional

[4] Since the 1990s, anthropologists throughout the world have become increasingly interested in contemporary public issues. Public anthropology has emerged from this change. In Japan, too, more than a few anthropologists have started calling themselves "public anthropologists" (Uchio 2013; Yamashita 2014). However, they tend to seek a rather moderate way to provide *shien* (support) for affected people in a mode different from the *kainyū* (intervention) practiced by, among others, Paul Farmer (2012).

focus have been called 'public anthropology.' It can provoke, as the leading advocate Robert Borofsky writes, "the re-framing and easing – if not necessarily always resolving – of present-day dilemmas" (Borofsky 2007). Similarly, Luke Eric Lassiter (e.g. 2008) has proposed collaborative, participatory research and writing by a team of anthropologists and their interlocutors – "consultants" in his terminology – in order to help solve the predicament anthropology is confronted with. 'Public' is used as a keyword in such alternative approaches that attempt to relate the discipline of anthropology with the people being described, thus bridging the divide between theory and practice as well as between the academic community and society at large.

Yet, how can we address contemporary issues when our temporality is unsettled and our vision is unclear, that is, when our "con-temporality" with the issue is lost? Regarding this question, Paul Rabinow's concept of "untimeliness" is apposite. He writes, "The anthropologist of the contemporary has to be close to things when they happen but, by virtue of her analytical aim, preserves a certain critical distance, an adjacency, untimeliness" (Rabinow et al. 2008: 58). As I understand it, Rabinow's idea of untimeliness is not a zero temporality. Rather, it is a move of simultaneity going along with and going against a contemporary problem. With this kind of double move anthropologists are able to examine the issue at hand critically, situating it in an unexpected context and making unanticipated comparisons. As Rabinow argues, anthropology can bring out its critique by allowing different temporalities to co-exist. Thus, far from being a hindrance, confusion surrounding the temporality(ies) of 3/11 can be a resource for anthropologists in producing "untimely" knowledge.

In this paper I explore how anthropologists might relate con-temporality and untimeliness.[5] Earlier (Kimura 2012) I suggested three ways to engage with 3/11 – responding to the emergency, bridging visions and interests, and writing anthropologically about the transformation of affected people and areas. The present paper is an attempt at the third approach. It shows how we can practice public anthropology by the act of writing, that is, by "exercis[ing] our imagination to shake the system, [and] creat[ing] a hopeful reality" (Kimura 2012: 72; cf. Tedlock 2005). In what follows I first trace my experience, and the multiple temporalities related to it, in connection with the devastation and subsequent reconstruction from the tsunami disaster in Maehama, a coastal village in Iwate. I then propose my vision of public anthropology.

Support and Visibility

In February 2012, about one year after the tsunami, I went to Ōfunato. It was my seventh visit to the city.[6] During my stay, I happened to be introduced to a man in his 70s

[5] This paper is based on my earlier work (Kimura 2013, 2014b).

[6] I first visited Ōfunato just one year before the tsunami hit the area (Kimura 2014a). I started my field research on the effects of the disaster two months after it happened. During the first year after the tsunami, I visited Ōfunato regularly and conducted interviews with survivors, public officials, and volunteers.

from Maehama. He, Oikawa-san, was the head of the semi-public committee for reconstruction of the village.

Maehama, a village with a population of about 2,500 people, is officially one of the districts of Ōfunato City. Located in the "saw-toothed" Pacific coastline of Tōhoku, Maehama consists of eleven small hamlets (locally called *shūraku*, or *buraku*). The central area of Maehama has a small commercial main street and public facilities including a police station, an elementary school, a junior high school, and a community hall. Other smaller hamlets in the area are geographically isolated but structurally similar to each other: a tiny cove with a fishing port, a small river running into the cove, and houses standing on the small plains flanking the river or on the hillside slope facing the sea. Fishing has always been the main occupation in Maehama. Until the tsunami, Maehama had been famous for *wakame* seaweed farming. Everyone in the town proudly said that their wakame was "the best quality in Japan." In addition to this aquaculture, scallop and ascidian farming had been growing industries. However, the tsunami on March 11 washed away almost all these fishing and farming facilities, along with many boats from the beaches of Maehama. It also killed 31 people and left 90 households without homes.

Oikawa-san narrated to me his version of the situation which his village was confronted with. Until then, I had thought that the main concern of the village was the so-called *takadai iten*, that is, the relocation of residences from damaged areas to higher ground. Those who had lost their houses in the tsunami told me that they longed for the realization of the relocation plan as soon as possible. Getting out of the temporary housing was their greatest concern, I thought. However, contrary to my expectation, the gray-haired boss told me that what he was most concerned with was to envision a concrete plan for the reconstruction of the village at large. Before our conversation, the committee had submitted to the municipality a petition of their own, which listed the roads, walls, and public buildings (like the fire station and kindergarten) to be restored. For him, relocation was not the main issue at all. There was obviously a gap between Oikawa-san and the homeless families. In sum, their versions of reconstruction plans have different orders of time. It was likely that, I supposed, there were many more gaps and conflicts in this small village.

At this first meeting, Oikawa-san asked me to support their activity as an expert, but at that time I was undecided. To be honest, I did not have the confidence to play the role he expected. Although I was undecided, I visited the village with an urban planning colleague two weeks later. We talked with Oikawa-san and with the people in temporary housing respectively. We thought there was something we could do to, for example, coordinate between people who had suffered different levels of damage, had different expectations, and faced different futures. We made up our minds to start a continuous support project in their village. Setting as our goal the presentation of a plan with the image of Maehama ten years later, we started collecting information in the field. We attempted to identify

various on-going activities and works for reconstruction in Maehama, and where possible, to connect them with each other.

In retrospect, visibility was a key concept for us. Supposing that there were people whose voices were not heard, we organized several working groups under the reconstruction committee. To encourage more people to express their views, we held meetings with people from each hamlet and with members of the women's association, and, to gather the people together, we conducted a rather big workshop with a huge three-dimensional map of the village. We welcomed both young and old people to our meetings. Besides these efforts, we distributed a leaflet, "*Town Planning News,*" on a regular basis to share what was going on in the village and what fellow villagers thought, opinions which even the locals only partially knew. In the first half of 2013, after one year of activity, the ten-year reconstruction plan of the village was completed with the approval of the reconstruction committee.

However, through this activity I came to realize that our goal was not to produce a clear vision of the situation Maehama was trapped in. To unfold the visibility we have been pursuing, I provide two cases in detail in the next two sections. One is the relocation project, and the other is the stone memorial mentioned above. These events made me reflect further on our activities.

Fractal Gaps, Provisional Settlements

Since the enactment of the Special Financial Support for Promoting Group Relocation for Disaster Mitigation Act in 1972, disaster-related collective relocation has become a legal, public operation. Within this framework, at the request of the local municipality, the prefectural government specifies the *saigai kiken kuiki* (Disaster Danger Area; DDA), decides the area where the construction of new homes will not be allowed, and subsequently determines the *iten sokushin kuiki* (relocation promotion area; RPA) inside the DDA. The local municipality then prepares building lots in the areas deemed safe, with financial support from the central government. Those who lived inside the DDA and have applied for collective relocation in advance can lease or purchase one of these lots in the newly prepared land from the local municipality. If their house was in the RPA, they may receive financial support from the local government by selling their residential land in the area to the municipality. Obviously the matter is how to demarcate the areas. The law strictly specifies that the relocation of land is not to be conducted in a coercive, top-down manner. Thus, in principle, the RPA should be based on consent among the residents and/or applicants.

But then the question is; through what processes is consent to be achieved? Firstly, in order to ensure that the relocation is not for private ends but in the public interest, the law presupposes the existence of a group of people who would want to move to a safer place together. The issue here is in collective interests, and the use of the term *shūdan*, or

"group", where the concept of *shūraku* – a "hamlet" or "community" – is the more familiar word that local residents would associate with their lives. To call them a "group" seems to be more neutral, so more prone to manipulation without contextualizing relationships. Indeed, the MLIT (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism) explains the "group" as not based on existing social relationships or administrative boundaries, but on the number of its constituents.[7]

In autumn 2011, a *kasetsu jichikai* (temporary housing residents' association) was organized in Maehama and discussion of collective relocation began. In fact, residents had to do so. They were pressured by the fact that use of temporary housing is only allowed for two years. They invited municipal officers and held a briefing meeting about collective relocation. But this law is so complicated that it was almost impossible for the local elders to grasp its meanings after only a brief meeting. Moreover, there were a great many things they had to know before they could make any decisions, including the following questions: How will the land price of individual housing lots change after the tsunami? When can residents move into the new houses? What will the new addresses be? How far will they be from the port? Are there better options such as renting public housing?

By asking themselves these questions, the emotional connections of survivors were harmed and fractal differences among them were made explicit. The most accurate dividing line amongst these individuals depended on each family's specific circumstances. And as a matter of fact, their temporary housing was not a "community" in the sense that the relocation law presupposed. It was a collection of families that had lost their houses in different hamlets of the village; furthermore these collectivities had neither influential figures nor conventional decision-making institutions. Thus, to them it seemed impossible to reach a consensus.[8] The municipality was, however, not actively involved in the process in their village. Because of the integration of municipalities conducted in the late 1990s to the early 2000s, the municipality did not have enough capacity to deal with all the groups in the city that were considering applying for the collective relocation program.

Not knowing what else to do, the association started handing out a questionnaire to all of the households in order to ask their views on relocation. Ironically, their attempt made obvious that the situation was even more complicated than had appeared to be the case. They found that, although there was only one temporary housing complex in their village, not all the homeless families lived there. Some were staying in other temporary housing or in apartments distant from the village. Since it was expected that acquiring the information from all the families outside of their temporary housing area would require too much effort, the association had to ask for help from the reconstruction committee.

[7] Operationally, "group" was defined as "more than ten households." After the 2004 Chuetsu Earthquake hit so-called *chū-sankan chiiki* (hilly and mountainous areas) in Niigata Prefecture, the MLIT eased the definition from ten houses to five, out of consideration for victims in depopulated areas. "More than five houses" seems to be an easy constraint, but my focus is on the operational difficulty related to the discrepancy between the numerically-defined "group" and implicitly-presupposed "hamlet."

[8] In addition, they had no public place where all members could meet. Although about 90 households lived in the temporary housing, its meeting place could seat less than 50 people.

Since the committee was semi-official and each hamlet head was a member of the committee, it had the addresses of the families in question at hand, and also had the authority to locate potential sites for the collective relocation, and to negotiate with landowners. The association was reluctant to ask the committee's help, since they knew that there was a gap between the two groups' views and between their senses of temporality. The members of the association sometimes got frustrated by the bureaucratic approach and the slow pace of the committee.

It was then that we joined them to support and help create a future vision of the village. My urban planning colleague explained past cases of collective relocation to the local people in temporary housing, corrected minor errors in their questionnaire, and as mentioned above, organized workshops to hear local voices. The questionnaire they distributed had just three questions:

Q1. In which way do you wish to rebuild your house?
(a) Participating in the collective relocation program
(b) Renting public housing
(c) Moving on your own
(d) Rebuilding at the original location

Q2 (For those who chose (a), (b), or (c) in Q1). Do you want the municipality to purchase your original residential land?
(a) Yes
(b) I want a third party to purchase it
(c) No

Q3 (For those who chose (a) in Q1). Do you want to purchase the land at the new address?
(a) Yes
(b) I want to rent the land from the local municipality
(c) I have not decided yet

One of the results of our activity was that a list of the opinions of each homeless household was completed by early May 2012, fourteen months after the tsunami. Then the list was submitted to the municipality. I thought that we had reached the midway point of the long road to "reaching a consensus" among the would-be applicants. However, to my surprise, promptly after receiving the list, the municipality applied to the MLIT in order to utilize the collective relocation program. In short, they used the list as evidence of consensus by the "group" of the village for collective relocation. In this sense, the self-determined group for relocation, which the law presupposed, was, then at least, a clear fabrication in Maehama.

I have no intention to criticize the municipality. Instead, I argue that this list is suggestive. With the list submitted to the municipality, the struggle of the association

ended unexpectedly. Even after the program was launched, the question of how to achieve "agreement and consensus among all inhabitants," to quote a phrase in the MLIT's pamphlet, was left unanswered. Bruno Latour (1987) would say this is "blackboxing," that is, the consensus came to be considered as a thing with no need to question, like a proven fact. But only by keeping it in the black box could they take steps toward a return to their ordinary life – a life lived in their own houses. In this sense, what the list gave was neither a sense of community nor a visualization of schism but a provisional, temporary settlement.

Half-unveiled Memory

The second case is the memorial I mentioned in the introduction to this paper. However, the details of the memorial itself deserve a more detailed focus. On the triangular clock hand of the memorial, you can read the famous slogan for tsunami evacuation "*Tsunami tendenko*" (a local expression meaning "by oneself"). Although this slogan became popular nationwide, the first advocate of it was Fumio Yamashita, a local historian of this tsunami, who was born in a hamlet in this village. Below the slogan there were more detailed instructions for surviving a tsunami and relevant information.

> Remember, the devastation of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami
> Believe that tsunamis inevitably happen after a big quake
> Rush to a higher place as soon as you can
> When you reach there, never return to a lower area
> Protect your life by yourself
> Don't forget the lesson of Tsunami tendenko
> We establish this memorial as a lesson that we should hand down from generation to generation

Through this epigram, written in a pseudo-classical style, and the reference to the historian, the memorial extends its relationship both to the past and future in and out of the village.

Below the clock hand, there are two plates on the base. On the right plate, the detailed information about the damage the tsunami caused to the district is inscribed both in an official fashion like "The tsunami height of X hamlet was 13.7 meters" and a localized manner like "The tsunami came up to just below floor level of the Y Shrine" or "The tsunami reached the garden of the Z family's house." On the left one, the names of the contributors to the building of this memorial are inscribed: three of people from the reconstruction committee, twelve of stone dealers, and five of organizations. In this manner, these plates indicate that the memorial contains explicit messages and information about the tsunami, as well as enduring attachments to specific persons, places,

and organizations in and out of the district. What I want to note here is that although the letters are certainly clear and readable, some parts of the information are accessible only to a limited number of people, requiring local knowledge in order to identify the places the tsunami reached. The information on these plates seems open to everyone (if s/he reads Japanese). However, simultaneously, the memorial tells the story differently according to the viewer's knowledge.

If looking more carefully, one will notice another thing: the memorial lacks the names of victims. Only the number of victims is written. This depersonalized rendering is strange if compared to the stone monuments of past tsunamis, on which every victim's name is inscribed. The reason the new memorial has no names is that some of the bereaved families hesitate to see their members' names on it. While Sato-san, the vice-chair of the reconstruction committee, was worried about *fūka*[9] of the disaster and suggested building the memorial as a visible achievement of the local reconstruction committee, for the bereaved families two years was too short a time to consider the tsunami as a past event. The fact that the people living in temporary housing, who are thought to have an intrinsic connection with the memorial, did not appear at the ceremony is another evidence of their reluctance. But it is also likely that the feelings of the survivors would change over time. In a sense, what the monument stabilizes is only a tentative statement about a sensitive issue. The monument both extends and cuts connections in and beyond the village in a contingent way.[10]

Another example is the placement of the memorial. Originally, Oikawa-san, the chair of the committee, suggested placing the memorial on a small hill in the middle of the community, since it was a symbolic place where the memorials of past tsunamis and the *chūkon-hi* (memorial of loyal dead, i.e. men killed in warfare) stood. The existing memorials were damaged by the disaster and were under repair at that time. Thus, the small hill was the right place, Oikawa-san thought. And he further felt that it would be nice if the ceremony for the new memorial and that of the repaired memorials could be held at the same time. However, the stone dealers who donated the memorial vetoed this plan and proposed instead to place it in front of the station, saying the new memorial must be viewed by as many people as possible. Oikawa-san reluctantly accepted their idea. Thus, while the location of the memorial creates a connection with future visitors, it attenuates its connection with the historical landscape of this district.

But in fact, at an earlier hour on the very same day as the unveiling ceremony, local people including Oikawa-san held a ceremony for the repair of the old memorials, leaving

[9] Fūka (風化) literally means weathering, but the term here means being forgotten over time.

[10] Similar issues arose over who should design the monument. Oikawa-san first asked the graduate students of urban planning who actively support the reconstruction of this area to design the memorial. The students presented ten plans. Oikawa-san and the committee chose one and proposed it to the stone dealers as the idea of the local community. They demurred again, saying that they had already requested an artist to design it. Then the dealers proposed a new plan, but, it was a duplicate of the students' plan. Even so, the students' plan was officially rejected and their names were not recorded in the official history.

the stone dealers uninformed. This shows that, despite the letter of appreciation they got, the stone dealers were at this point only partially connected to local relationships.

Much as the unveiling ceremony is symbolically representative, the memorial makes some memories public while leaving others in the dark. It is obvious that the memorial itself, and moreover what is expressed on and in it, is a product of contingent negotiations among various stakeholders. In this case, the feelings, intentions and interests of the victims, the bereaved families, the local reconstruction committee, and the stone dealers are connected only partially with each other in the process to build the memorial. Consequently, they have a different relationship with it. Although the memorial seems to have a clear message, the accessibility to the memorial, and thus what it recalls or blinds, varies depending on the viewer.

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored the visibility which the public anthropology of disaster can offer. In conclusion, I add a small episode and make my own view clear. After the 10-year reconstruction plan of the village was completed, we launched another project, this time to document how local life was lived up until 3/11. I have conducted one week of intensive research four times with about ten undergraduate and graduate students from various disciplines. During one of the research terms we conducted interviews with each of the 30 households in a small hamlet of the village. We spent two or three hours in each household to ask about the changes in their life from the 1933 Showa Sanriku Tsunami to the days of evacuation after 3/11.

During the interviews, we found gaps and differences among the villagers (or is it we who made them tangible?). For example, the head of the hamlet told us a beautiful story of how the whole hamlet had stayed at the community hall and helped each other for about 40 days after tsunami. But several families said that they were tacitly refused permission to stay there, so they actually remained in their damaged homes. It was obvious that neither side wanted us to make their alternative interpretations public. After discussion within our team, we concluded that, in the report we were expected to submit to them, we would write about the gap in a sensitive way, as follows: "keeping appropriate distance is a key to enduring the stressful life in a shelter." Resonating with the previous stories I described above, this episode implies one direction that public anthropology of 3/11 can take.

The process of reconstruction is undoubtedly an entanglement of different wishes, sorrows, and visions. Different views with different temporalities about the direction of reconstruction efforts seem to crash into one another. They must move on, despite the lack of consensuses or knowledge of exact processes. What we need is not a device to assemble or integrate different temporalities, but one that preserves entanglements without them coming into conflict. As Didier Fassin states in his short but sobering essay, we can not

only juxtapose but must also relate different perspectives ethnographically, and by doing so, we can "make a difference" (Fassin 2013: 376).

In his classic text, James Peacock, known for his slogan "public or perish," explains the role of anthropology by using the complementary images of "soft focus" and "harsh light" (Peacock 1986). "Harsh light" indicates the tough environment where anthropological fieldwork is conducted, and also anthropologists' strong passion to bring human nature to light. "Soft focus" means their so-called "holistic viewpoint," which is to see their subject without isolating it from its context.

Although I do not fully agree with his illustration, I found his metaphors useful. In conclusion, I propose a public anthropology that can be viewed in a "soft light." Unlike a lens with its purpose being to focus on a subject, public anthropology attempts to cast light on its subjects. But it does not delineate between good and evil, or what is problematic and what is not, with a strong light focused on the object cutting through grey or hazy areas. Instead, what it sheds is a diffused and nuanced light which illuminates delicate differences of interests, visions, and temporalities with rather blurred lines.

Is it an anachronism to say that the word "soft light" reminds me of a work by Kunio Yanagita, founder of folklore studies in Japan? In his collected essays about the changes in the lifestyle of ordinary people around the Meiji and Taisho eras[11] (Yanagita 1993[1931]), he explained that the introduction of brighter light to houses brought clearer separation of the rooms, and resulted in sharper distinction between the inside and outside of the house, private and public, and who is or is not a family member.

It is certain that this process ran parallel with the introduction of Western citizenship and the creation of the public sphere in modern Japan. However, my point here is to propose a different way to improve our vision from that which Yanagita's episode implies. As explained above, by making maps, holding workshops, and distributing hand-made newsletters, our team attempted to offer opportunities for people to express, share, and discuss their views without causing conflict. If the public sphere is a place of communication for people with different ideas, then it can be said that our activity, of public anthropology as "soft light," is a challenge to develop the infrastructure of the public sphere. Its aim is, through words, practices, and devices, to prepare a place, even if temporary, where people in different circumstances and with differing interests can meet and work together, by shedding ambient light on issues through bringing together different experiences, abilities, and things inside and outside of the field.

Now, reconstruction of public infrastructure has become a major problem in the affected areas of the Tōhoku region. Huge seawalls, shiny fishing port facilities, roads and railways are being rebuilt. Through their construction, I am concerned that what reconstruction means is often decided in a uniform, top-down way (Kimura n.d.). Undoubtedly, this is not what we are proposing. Instead, I argue, the aim of anthropology is to contribute to

[11] Meiji and Taisho are Japanese era names, originally indicating the years of the reign of an Emperor. The Meiji era is the period dating from 1868 to 1912, and the Taisho era is the period from 1912 to 1926.

constructing another type of public infrastructure, which would better support and harmonize the lives of the people who continue to live with disaster.

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