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ASPIRED COMMUNITIES
The communities of long-term recovery after
the 3.11 disaster in the town of Yamamoto

Pilvi Posio

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University of Turku

Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History and Political Science
Centre for East Asian Studies
Doctoral Programme of Social and Behavioural Sciences

Supervised by

Professor Lauri Paltemaa
Centre for East Asian Studies

Doctor Yoko Demelius
Centre for East Asian Studies

Reviewed by

Professor Emeritus Vered Amit
Concordia University

Associate Professor Fuyubi Nakamura
The University of British Columbia

Opponent

Professor Emeritus Vered Amit
Concordia University

To my family.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
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Department of Philosophy, Contemporary History and Political Science
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ABSTRACT

I argue in this thesis that we can understand the various ways in which community is ontologized as a tangible, affective and compelling social reality through the analytical lens of the future orientation of collective aspiring. The social and material lives of the residents in the disaster-stricken Tohoku region of northeast Japan were drastically altered after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the tsunami on March 11 in 2011. Based on eight months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2014–2015 in the town of Yamamoto, I seek to understand in this PhD thesis how the local communities were recovering during the still-ongoing reconstruction then. The main objective of this thesis is to offer analytical tools to explore how people come to interpret, experience and feel their social existence as *community*.

I understand community in this research as embodied, materially grounded yet symbolical and discursive by drawing from the practice theory approach. The definition of community has long been debated, romanticized and nostalgized. Instead of as a particular grouping or identity, I analyze community as a process of mutually constitutive enacting and envisioning in social practices. I explore this process in light of the teleological character of human activity that is based on a constant reinterpretation of the past and a striving towards the future in the present. I argue that the various forms of sociality that are interpreted, experienced and felt as community can be understood through the future orientation of a collective aspiring of desired futures as shared objectives. As such, community is not a result but the process of collective aspiring in itself that I have divided into action-oriented pursuing and affectively charged yearning.

The ethnographic analysis of collective aspiring illustrates how multiple, ambiguous, overlapping and even conflicting experiences and interpretations of community emerged in post-disaster Yamamoto. My findings elaborate the community concept by highlighting the role of temporality and the future particularly in social life. This suggests that disaster recovery can be perceived as the process of restoring the capability to envision and to enact the future in and of a place, both individually and collectively. I also highlight the sense of agency in social practices, the felt, embodied and social security and the role of spatiality in collective aspiring.

KEYWORDS: community, disaster recovery, reconstruction, the Great East Japan Earthquake, collective aspiring, future orientation, temporality, security

TIIVISTELMÄ

Ehdotan tässä tutkimuksessa tulevaisuusorientoitunutta kollektiivista tavoittelua käsitteelliseksi linssiksi, jonka läpi tarkastelemalla voidaan ymmärtää yhteisön ontologisoimista reaaliseksi, tunteisiin vetoavaksi ja jopa pakottavaksi sosiaaliseksi todellisuudeksi. Koillis-Japanin Tohokun alueen asukkaiden sosiaalinen ja materiaalinen todellisuus muuttui 11.3.2011 Suuren Itä-Japanin maanjäristyksen ja tsunamin seurauksena. Tämä väitöskirjatutkimus perustuu kahdeksan kuukauden etnografiseen kenttätyöhön Yamamoton kaupungissa 2014–2015, ja pyrin siinä ymmärtämään paikallisten yhteisöjen toipumista pitkäaikaisen jälleenrakennuksen keskellä. Tavoitteenani on tarjota analyyttisiä työkaluja lisäämään ymmärrystä siitä, miten ihmiset tulkitsevat, kokevat ja tuntevat sosiaaliset suhteensa yhteisönä.

Ymmärrän yhteisön fyysisesti ilmentyvänä ja materiaalisena, mutta myös symbolisena ja diskursiivisena soveltaen käytänneteoriaa. Yhteisön käsite on ollut pitkään kiistelty, romantisoitu ja nostalgisoitu. Tietyn ryhmän tai identiteetin määritelmän sijaan analysoin yhteisöä toisiaan molemminpuolisesti luovien toimimisen ja visioimisen prosessina. Tarkastelen tätä prosessia ihmistoiminnan teleologisen luonteen valossa jatkuvana menneisyyden tulkintana ja tulevaisuuteen suuntautumisena nykyhetkessä. Väitän että sosiaalisten suhteiden monien muotojen tulkitsemista, kokemista ja tuntemista yhteisönä voidaan ymmärtää haluttujen tulevaisuuksien kollektiivisen tavoittelun tulevaisuusorientoitumisen kautta. Yhteisö ei ole siis tulos, vaan kollektiivinen tavoittelu itsessään, jonka olen jakanut toimintaorientoituneeseen pyrkimiseen ja tunnelatautuneeseen kaipaamiseen.

Etnografinen analyysi kuvaa, miten monia päällekkäisiä ja jopa ristiriitaisia yhteisöjä muotoutui katastrofin jälkeisessä Yamamotossa. Löydökseni tarkentaa yhteisön käsitettä korostamalla ajallisuuden ja erityisesti tulevaisuuden merkitystä sosiaalisessa elämässä. Täten katastrofista toipuminen voidaan nähdä prosessina, jossa yksilöllinen ja kollektiivinen kyky visioida ja toteuttaa paikkasidonnaista tulevaisuutta pyritään palauttamaan. Korostan myös toimijuuden tunnetta sosiaalisissa käytänteissä, turvallisuutta tunnettuna, koettuna ja sosiaalisena sekä spatiaalisuuden roolia kollektiivisessa tavoittelussa.

ASIASANAT: yhteisö, katastrofista toipuminen, jälleenrakennus, Suuri Itä-Japanin katastrofi, kollektiivinen tavoittelu, tulevaisuuteen orientoituminen, ajallisuus, turvallisuus

Acknowledgements

I write these acknowledgements in my garden where the cherry tree I and my husband received from our friends after we returned from Japan in 2015 bloomed abundantly for the first time this year. This reminded me of how our temporal understanding of our life narrative had been divided into pre- and post-Yamamoto and made me reflect on the past nine years. This long and winding project has taken me all the way to the coldness of a Tohoku winter and the warmth of the people there and, finally, to this completion of my academic endeavors. Little did I know at the time of writing the initial research plan in 2013 that in addition to reading and writing, my work would also consist, for example, of illumination event preparations, Nordic walking dancing, an overdose of green tea and numerous interesting and deeply touching encounters. I have now finished this thesis, but Yamamoto will always be a significant part of my life history that I will not forget, *wasurennai*.

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Having the opportunity to realize my fieldwork through an exchange agreement with Tohoku University and with the help of Professor Hasegawa Koichi was an essential part of this research project. This connection also helped me to enter the field in Yamamoto through the activities of the *pasokon aikōkai* computer class, and I am very grateful for its members welcoming me. I still reminisce about both their cheerful spirit and the delightful local *harakomeshi* (salmon and fish eggs on a rice bowl) dinner prepared for my first visit. Furthermore, words cannot express my gratitude to all the people in Yamamoto who were willing to share their experiences,

feelings and thoughts and to help in numerous ways. It has been not only a great privilege but also a responsibility to tell their story. I hope this thesis does justice to their experiences by bringing forth their worries, needs and desires in the course of the recovery.

It has also been a delight to be a part of the CEAS community for this whole project. I want to express my thanks to everyone for their warm support throughout these years. I want to thank Dr. Outi Luova for sharing her research interests across fields and regions as well as Annamari Konttinen for encouraging me to deepen my expertise on the Japanese society and culture in the first place. The former and current doctoral students Dr. Silja Keva, Liisa Kauppila and Katri Kauhanen have particularly offered not only peer-support during the highs and lows of PhD life but also enduring friendship for which I am truly thankful. I also want to thank all my friends outside the CEAS. They have always been there for me, listened to my endless reflections and encouraged me. They have also taken care that I remember to have fun, sufficiently enjoy both life and sparkling, and play basketball.

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And Lenni yes, *now* mommy's work is finally done.

Lieto, 15.6.2022
Pilvi Posio

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1 Introduction

I hate tsunami. What is my life for?
My dream is once again to open a beauty shop.

I heard these words in the autumn of 2014 during my first visit to Yamamoto, a small rural town in southern Miyagi prefecture in the Tohoku region of northeast Japan (map 1). I was participating in a monthly computer class, *pasokon aikōkai*, for elderly residents. A lady attending this class was writing a letter in English and asked my help in translating those words she had written about the tsunami from Japanese. The letter was addressed to her classmates who regularly gathered at a local community center from their temporary residences around the town to study English. I was struck by the intensity with which the lady expressed her future desire with those words. It created a stark contrast with her questioning of the purpose of life, the sorrow and even hatred as well as the overall dim future prospects of the town to which I had travelled to conduct ethnographic fieldwork to understand the long-term recovery of a disaster-stricken community.

 A little over three and half years earlier, on the Friday afternoon of March 11 in 2011, the lives of this elegant lady and other residents of Tohoku coast were shaken by the magnitude 9.0 tremors of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The ensuing tsunami ravaged the coast of three prefectures, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, wiped away countless lives, homes and neighborhoods and, in doing so, drastically altered the locals' social and material realities. The tsunami also caused a meltdown in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant. This compound event became known as the 3.11 triple disaster and the dramatic, immediate destruction it caused was followed live on television broadcasts around the world. However, another kind of silent, slowly creeping tragedy in everyday life, namely rural decline, had been present in the lives of Tohoku's residents already for decades. Tohoku has been one of the epicenters of Japan's demographic crisis with the rural localities suffering from the vicious cycle of outmigration, population aging, decline of services and job opportunities. This has not only exacerbated the impact of the 3.11 disaster but has also further complicated

Map 1   Map of Japan.

the disaster recovery in the localities (Matanle & Rausch, 2011; Matanle, 2013) where, in the face of this accelerated shrinking, the communities were dispersed to temporary housing for a prolonged period of reconstruction.

The omnipresence of the idea of community in the face of this apparent loss and fracturing kept perplexing me during the fieldwork: I heard constant references by locals to lost, longed-for, essential, calming, new, rediscovered, neglected, secure, viable, district-based, town-level, rural, urban, past, present and future communities. The national and local reconstruction plans also stressed the local communities' recovery and their participation in planning. The post-disaster media coverage praised the post-disaster community spirit, solidarity and social cohesion both locally and nationally, and *kizuna* (human bonds) was selected as the kanji[1] of the year 2011. These observations boiled down to one simple question: What is this

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[1]   A Chinese pictogram character of written Japanese.

community everybody kept talking about? The concept of community has been a target of an enduring debate in the social sciences in general and in the field of anthropology in particular (e.g., Cohen, 1985; Bauman, 2001; Amit & Rapport, 2002; Anderson, 2006; Tanabe, 2008a, 2008b; Amit, 2010, 2020; Olwig, 2010). Thus, this question is certainly not an easy one to answer, nor is it necessarily even the right one to pose when taking into consideration the innumerable forms of social relations that are called community.

The concept of community has long been idealized, romanticized, essentialized, nostalgized, territorialized, criticized and abstracted. As such, it seems to be continuously elusive both as a concept and as an experience. Nevertheless, it can be a tangible and compelling experience of social reality that is used also as a valorized objective and efficient tool in various policies (Brent, 2004). This paradoxical nature of the concept of community turned my initial puzzlement into the research question this thesis seeks to answer: How do people come to interpret, experience and feel their social existence as community, or, in other words, how are communities ontologized as a lived social reality? Thus, in Yamamoto, I explored what constituted community for the locals in their own terms. Furthermore, I aimed to understand particularly how these communities were experienced and how they were sought to be (re)constructed in the context of disaster recovery.

I argue in this thesis that the conceptual lens of collective aspiring can enhance our understanding of how particular forms of sociality come to be interpreted, experienced and felt as community – a community that as a lived social reality can be very real, affective and compelling. The three short sentences quoted in the beginning of this introduction reflect the central theme of the conceptual framework of *aspired communities* I set out to develop in this thesis: The framework aims to understand community from the perspective of the experienced, dynamic temporality of striving towards the future in relation to reinterpretation of the past. However, the most essential aspect of this quotation was its social component: It was meant to communicate aspirations to others, to create the potential for felt togetherness through sharing collectively negotiated desired futures.

I follow in the footsteps of Vered Amit, who contends that community ought to be seen as an analytical working model instead of a definition of a particular categorial identity, situation or a grouping. As such, it enables to query a process of interlinked forms of sociality in their various qualities, contexts, scales, durations, comprehensiveness, degrees of formalization, mediations and, especially, ambiguities and disjunctures (Amit, 2002, 2010, 2015, 2020; Amit & Rapport, 2002). This approach reintegrates the actualized social interaction into the concept of community, the recent treatment of which is criticized for focusing excessively on abstracted, symbolical ideas (Amit, 2002, 2010; Amit & Rapport, 2002; Neal & Walters, 2008; Gordon, 2012). However, sociality, or the intersubjective human

engagements, cannot be an analytical category in itself because it pervades all human life as a trait of human activities. The task of the inquiry is, thus, to analyze how its various forms come to be (Long & Moore, 2013, pp. 1–2; Toren, 2013, p. 48). Therefore, the object of this research is to analyze the processes by which the meanings, interpretations and feelings about community are established, challenged and altered in a constantly emerging world instead of aiming to identify any particular shared, stable and integrated systems of meanings (Hastrup, 2004b, p. 466).

Academic interest in of the notion of community seems to be fading, despite its appeal and power (Amit, 2020). Community as a concept often remains an unproblematized unit of analysis (Scollon, 2001, p. 143) or an orienting device meaning "everything and nothing" (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 2, 9–10). Nevertheless, community enjoys an unprecedented yet often unproblematized legitimacy in disaster management and community development practices (Cannon, 2008; Yoshihara, 2013; Bruun & Olwig, 2015; Barrios, 2016). I contend that it is precisely this combination of conceptual ambiguousness and the power relations embedded in the practices idealizing community that makes it necessary to develop approaches to understand the multifaceted concept of community. Furthermore, it is argued in the disaster research context that it is important to take seriously the lived realities of the affected people and listen to "narratives of power and power as narrative" of those experiencing the disasters (Sun & Faas, 2018, p. 631). This underlines the necessity to hear local voices in the disaster's aftermath (Slater, 2015). In contrast, many locals in Yamamoto expressed the feeling of not being asked what they want or listened to during reconstruction reflecting the sentiments also in other Tohoku localities (Littlejohn, 2017; Vainio, 2020b). This directed my research interests towards the significance of shared aspirations.

I suggest that the notion of collective aspiring gives us tools to explore how future, agency, affects and power relations are present in community that is perceived here as a process. Orientation to the future through planning, dreaming or hoping may appear as self-evident constituents of human experience. However, this makes temporal dimension of future also a significant aspect of social life that, nevertheless, has remained understudied (Munn, 1992; Collins, 2008; Appadurai, 2013; Bryant & Knight, 2019, chapter 2). This thesis will, hence, be a disappointment for those readers waiting for yet another attempt to define community: The framework proposed here offers neither a definition nor an ultimate explanation of community. Instead, I suggest a redefined conceptual lens to analyze and understand community as a process based on an enacting and envisioning of desired futures in social practices. In essence, this thesis is catering to those who are interested in an exploration of what desiring the future together can tell us about the social phenomenon called community.

Here, aspiring encompasses the desired futures as shared objectives, but it especially emphasizes the importance of the activity of aspiring itself as a collective pursuing and yearning. As Arjun Appadurai (2013) remarks, "in a sense, the good life may be characterized as what, in any society, many people hope to achieve. Yet anthropology has been substantially preoccupied with what societies fear and therefore seek to avoid" (Appadurai, 2013, p.293). Unlike imagination or anticipation, exploring the future orientation of aspiring gives thus an ethnographic hold on community as a process or as a "paradox of desire" never fully reached but always desired (Brent, 2004). Furthermore, it is the ambiguities, contradictions and changes of that very desiring that allow us to analyze community emerging or, for example, drifting into conflict (c.f. Amit, 2010, 2015):

> *It is the desire for community, not its achievement, which is itself community…*
> Community is the continually reproduced desire to overcome the adversity of
> social life, and it is community as desire rather than community as social object
> which commands engagement. This desire manifests itself in a number of
> contradictory ways (Brent, 2004, pp. 221–222, emphasis added).

Exploring community through the lens of collective aspiring and desired futures enables overcoming not only the dichotomies of the abstracted and actualized but also the structural, individual, social and material sides of community. The title of this thesis draws intentionally from Benedict Andersons' *Imagined Communities* (Anderson, 2006), which is argued to be a prominent example of how the concept of community has become abstracted from actualized socialization into a symbolic, categorial identity (Amit, 2002, p. 6; Blackshaw, 2010, p. 6). I explore community as a process in social practices that, as the temporally evolving organized manifold arrays of human activities embedded in their material environments, constitute the overall "site of the social" (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 70–87). This approach, thus, enables analysis of community as embodied, materially grounded yet also simultaneously symbolical and discursive, because it perceives the parts and the whole as well as structure and agency as mutually constitutive on the same ontological level of practices (Ortner, 2006; Schatzki, 2010a, 2016b; Moore & Sanders, 2014, pp. 10–11; Reckwitz, 2017, p. 114). My intention here is not, however, to romanticize the notions of desire, aspiring and aspirations by associating them only with organized collective activities or with the ideals of a "good life," individual self-development or self-fulfillment. Furthermore, I do not refer by desiring only to the desire for community. Instead, I perceive aspiring here as a mode of relating to and feeling the temporal dimensions of life characterized by striving towards ends as a part of the open-ended indeterminate teleologies of human activities that constitute social practices (Schatzki, 2002, 2009, 2010b; Bryant & Knight, 2019).

I draw from the work of social theorist Theodore Schatzki to analyze the teleological character of spatially grounded social life. His concept of timespace is particularly useful in understanding how inherently intertwined existential temporality and spatiality are opened in social practices (Schatzki, 2009, 2010b). I turn to the concept of future orientation proposed by Rebecca Bryant and Daniel M. Knight for an ethnographic grasp on these temporal dimensions of community (Bryant & Knight, 2019). Future orientations as the ways we continuously "orient ourselves to the indefinite teleologies of everyday life" capture "the flux of experience, the rollercoaster of aspirations and fears that inhabits every one of us" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p.194). Thus, future orientations depict the teleological nature of everyday actions and the ways people navigate through quotidian in relation to the ends they pursue (ibid., p. 16–17). In this light, the future orientation of collective aspiring addresses the relation of desired futures and actions as well as the significance of aspiring together in creating a sense of community. This dynamic was strongly present in the experiences of the residents of post-disaster Yamamoto.

1.1   Interpreting disaster and community

This research explores community in connection to recovery that is argued to be one of the least-studied aspects of disasters (Cretney, 2017, p. 1). Moreover, the long-term recovery in particular has remained relatively understudied if compared to the immediate post-disaster period: Urgent ethnography conducted while the disaster events are still unfolding does have value in conveying the stories of the affected locals and in enhancing our understanding of the spectrum of the disaster experience before memories fade (Slater, 2015). However, the intense interest in the immediate post-disaster period has raised concerns over the "disaster gold-rush" in which the scholars benefit from the disaster situation (Gomez & Hart, 2013; Gaillard & Gomez, 2015). To focus on the relatively less-understood long-term recovery, I conducted an ethnographic fieldwork for eight-months in Yamamoto between October 2014 and May 2015. During this period, the immediate four-year post-disaster *fukkyū* (restoration) period was turning into a more development-oriented *fukkō* (reconstruction) phase according to the Yamamoto reconstruction plan.

Reconstruction and recovery can be considered generally aspired goals. However, the very notion of development embedded in the term *fukkō* raises questions about on whose terms development is realized and how the recovering community, its agency, value and especially future are defined. Thus, the concept of community in the post-disaster context is not merely a theoretical question: It is also a politicized issue. Therefore, the definitions of community can have concrete effects in the lives of the disaster-stricken people through, for example, the designation of responsibilities, support and reconstruction measures in reconstruction plans and

policies. The post-disaster period is seen as "a gap in time and space in which authorities and people rebuild, reimagine and reinvent society" (Sørensen and Albris,2016, p. 66). Disaster-stricken localities can thus be seen as contested spaces in which various actors and interests compete to define the visions of an ideal, social and material post-disaster future (Gotham & Greenberg, 2014, pp. 8–9; Barrios, 2017b, p. 157).

The notion of local community is often highlighted in this setting as a unit of reconstruction, a romanticized source of security and comfort or as the empowered engine of recovery (Cannon, 2008; Bruun & Olwig, 2015). Disasters and reconstruction are framed in politics as an opportunity for change, development and learning (Birkland, 2006; Edgington, 2011a), and community participation in disaster management is increasingly promoted (Pandey & Okazaki, 2005; Raven, 2016). However, disasters are seen as enabling the advancement not only of hopes and dreams (Cretney, 2019), but also capitalist and neoliberal imagination and projects (Klein, 2007; Barrios, 2017a; Faas, 2018). This has evoked criticism of depoliticization of disasters and delegation of the disaster recovery responsibility to the disaster-affected communities (Barrios, 2016; Faas, 2016; Love, 2016; Sou, 2019). This underlines the necessity to understand the concept of community in disaster recovery and the various actors claiming to define it (chapter 2).

In post-3.11 Japan, the top-down directed reconstruction plans were largely aimed to realize the expectations of an idealized community (Yoshihara, 2013, pp. 45–46). Furthermore, the reconstruction and community recovery in Yamamoto were shaped by various future visions and present insecurities that rose not only from the disaster experience but also from the historical social and political contexts of the Tohoku region (map 2)[2]. Yamamoto, as a part of rural Tohoku, is a site of continuous efforts to turn the tide of decline with, for example, rural revitalization (Love, 2013; Dilley *et al.*, 2017) and the urban planning ideals of compact cities (Sorensen, 2010; Suzuki, 2010). These practices are largely based on the Tohoku region's legacy as the peripheralized counterpart of the developed, urban Japan. Tohoku has historically been kept in a continuous state of a to-be-developed periphery and, as such, harnessed for food, cheap resources and labor to fulfil the needs of the urban center (Oguma, 2011; Kawanishi, 2015). In contrast, the rurality of Tohoku symbolizes the nostalgized countryside hometown, *furusato*, that is

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[2] This map shows the Tohoku region and its disaster-affected prefectures. However, the prefectures of Chiba and Ibaraki in the Kanto region south of Tohoku as well as areas in Hokkaido, the northernmost of the main islands of Japan, were also affected by the disaster.
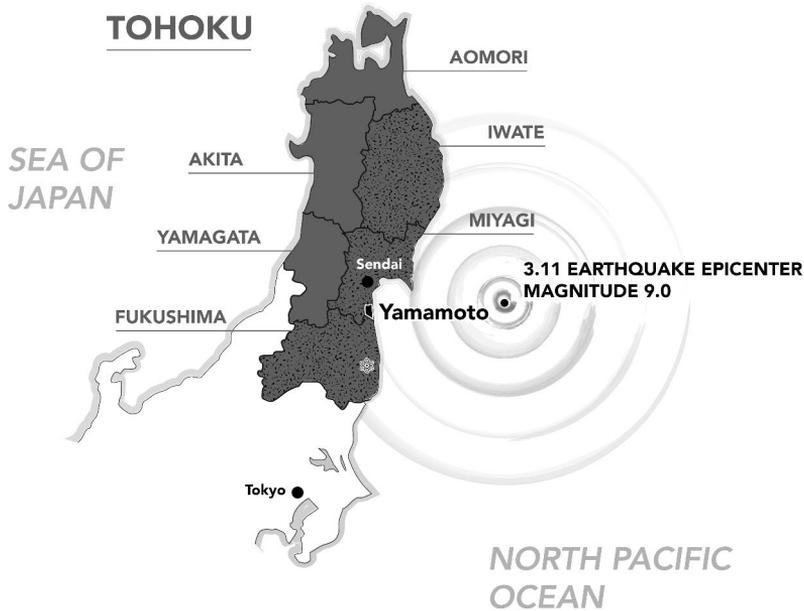
Map 2　　Map of Tohoku.

presented as the fountain of essentialized Japaneseness and its timeless culture, tradition and social structures of the tight-knit village community (Ivy, 1995; Morrison, 2013).

Yamamoto's reconstruction occurred in the crosscurrent of these national aspirations to develop Tohoku to overcome the threat of its rural decline but simultaneously to preserve the center-periphery relation and essentialized Japaneseness. Post-disaster Tohoku continued to serve as an internal colony of aspirations when the disaster was appropriated in envisioning its reconstruction as the flagship of the bright future of the whole Japanese community (chapter 5). This makes the post-3.11 reconstruction a context for reimagination not only of the disaster-stricken localities but also of the Japanese national community (Shindo, 2015; Morris-Suzuki, 2017; Shaw, 2017). Rurality, peripherality, dependence and locality, in turn, were reflected upon in the disaster-stricken localities when redefining future trajectories and social agency. This local recovery was, nevertheless, strongly shaped by a curious mix of a top-down, directed

reconstruction planning scheme (Cho, 2014; Mochizuki, 2014; Cheek, 2020) and trends to decentralize the disaster (Love, 2016).

The Yamamoto locals were navigating towards their recovery in this setting, and their various remarks on community were strongly tied to their experiences of temporality and spatiality. The majority of locals appearing in this thesis are elderly adults, many of whom engaged in various community activities ranging from community building to hobby groups. Exploring their visions, hopes and fears about their communities' futures shows that they have much at stake when facing both the disaster and rural decline. Furthermore, their active roles highlight the challenging task to collectively envision and enact the aspired community and, hence, illustrate the multifaceted nature of community. Some of these locals described the fear of losing community due to the displacement and destruction of familiar neighborhoods or expressed wishes to return to how things were (*moto ni modosu*) in the nostalgized pre-disaster communities. Meanwhile, some locals more readily envisioned and sought to realize the future trajectories in newly defined communities that were hoped to provide a shared sense of belonging, togetherness and security. These narratives and activities of the locals intertwined into various, interlinked social relations during their efforts to reorient towards the future amid social and material devastation. Some of these social relations came to be experienced as community either as recovered, redefined or even completely new.

These post-disaster communities emerged from constant reinterpretation of the past, the present and the future in relation to the experiences of disaster and recovery. This makes it necessary to briefly discuss how this thesis perceives disaster. The definitions of both disaster and recovery have long been debated (e.g., Quarantelli, 1985; Kroll-Smith *et al.*, 1991; Nigg, 1995; e.g., Oliver-Smith, 1999, 2002; Olshansky *et al.*, 2012; Tierney & Oliver-Smith, 2012; Perry, 2017). It is sufficient for the purposes of this research to acknowledge the obvious, namely, that 3.11 was a disaster. The earthquake on March 11 was a magnitude 9.0, the strongest ever recorded in Japan, and it shifted the Earth on its axis. It triggered a tsunami that ravaged 800km of the coastline with waves that reached a height of roughly 5–15 meters and even a record run-up elevation of 39 meters (Mimura *et al.*, 2011).

The nuclear accident the tsunami caused in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant is said to be the biggest since the 1986 Chernobyl accident in Ukraine (Steinhauser *et al.*, 2014). The destruction's massiveness made it the costliest natural disaster in world history after the overall cost was evaluated to reach up to USD 235 billion (Reconstruction Agency, 2021). The most dreadful effects were, however, the human consequences: The disaster led to the loss of nearly 20,000 lives, over 2,500 missing people, injuries to 6,200 people, damage to or destruction of over 1,150,000 houses and, at the disaster's peak, displacement of 470,000 tsunami and

nuclear disaster victims.[3] The local landscape was also permanently changed, and even now the massive recovery and development projects continue to shape the locals' living environments.

This thesis perceives disaster and community as mutually emerging constructs in the process of reorientation to post-disaster social and material realities (cf. Hastrup, 2011., p. 12). This is in contrast to many of the definitions of disaster and recovery as well as to the related concepts of resilience and vulnerability that are criticized for carrying with them problematic, implicit presumptions of community as a static, territorially bounded unit disrupted by singular, outside calamities (Quarantelli, 1993; Hastrup, 2011; Barrios, 2014). Crisis as a temporality that is characterized by an intensified sense of the future being realized in the wrong way (Knight & Stewart, 2016) or by an overburdened sense of the significance of decisions in the past and the future (Bryant & Knight, 2019) may eventually fade away. However, a disaster that is not seen merely as a cause or as an effect of destruction or of social structures never ceases to exist: In many ways, the disaster continues its presence as a chain of events and experiences that people continuously seek to integrate in their life histories and future trajectories. These interpretations simultaneously shape both individual and collective understandings of the disaster, the present everyday life (Cox & Perry, 2011; Hastrup, 2011; Samuels, 2019) and, consequently, of community. This makes recovery "the very process of theorising that interweaves the tsunami [the disaster] and the everyday" (Hastrup, 2011, p.6–8) "in which sense of subjective agency is regained" (ibid., p. 11).

However, it is my intention neither to deny the drastic impact of the disaster in the lives of the people in Tohoku nor to reduce it to just another life event, because it was a massive devastation for everyone involved. Instead, my aim here is to highlight the process nature of the disaster as an integral and continuous part of the lives of the individuals and communities that went through the disaster (Sørensen & Albris, 2016, p. 66): Disaster is a part not only of their histories but also their futures. Furthermore, these future trajectories are negotiated in relation both to singular disaster events and to other threats and insecurities and the efforts to overcome them. For example, in the case of post-disaster Tohoku, population decline and aging (Matanle, 2013) are feared to have disastrous effects in the local communities, while the reconstruction in itself also raises many insecurities (chapters 6 and 8).

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[3]   These figures need to be interpreted with caution, because they may not reveal disaster's magnitude and accumulated effects: The number of evacuees does not include so-called "self-evacuees," referring to those who voluntarily chose to leave their houses outside the official evacuation zones. The death toll includes "disaster-related deaths," but what is or should be considered as such is not clear and varies by each municipality (Gerster, 2019, p. 2212).

This continuous social process – or, more precisely, processes, because recovery is far from being a unified experience (Posio, 2019b; Vainio, 2020b) – is occurring in both political and material contexts that are shaping and being shaped by the recovery. Symbolical, discursive or abstract cultural ideas are argued to be prioritized in the study of social life. In response, the role of the material, lived environment as a co-constitutive of the social life and community has become increasingly stressed (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, 1997; Ingold, 2000; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Low, 2009, 2016; Hastrup, 2010; Pink, 2012). Materiality and experienced spatiality are also significant facets of disasters, as they disrupt not only social relations but also often the physical environment and the experience of place. This makes the active redefinition of the relations of the social and the spatial particularly necessary in the post-disaster context (Erikson, 1976; Miller & Rivera, 2008; e.g., Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009; Cox & Perry, 2011). The destruction of the houses, familiar neighborhoods and natural environment, the dislocation and also the loss of quotidian possessions in Tohoku had a tremendous effect on the disaster victims' experiences, signaled by, for example, the several projects aiming to restore objects of memory (*omoide no shina*), such as photographs, among the tsunami debris (Nakamura, 2012). Thus, it is argued that the strict divisions between the material and social sides are false ones, since disasters "do things: to matter, to space and to meaning" (Littlejohn, 2017, p. 10).

However, the dichotomy between the social and the material still prevails in the disaster context when recovery and reconstruction are often associated strongly with rebuilding housing and infrastructure. In Yamamoto, as elsewhere in Tohoku, the reconstruction was based on the idea of disaster risk reduction separating the so-called hard, or material side, from the soft or social side (Kennedy *et al.*, 2008; Fan, 2013; Kim & Olshansky, 2014; Maly, 2018). The hard side was prioritized in reconstruction plans in the form of massive construction projects in the name of security and the Build Back Better ideal. However, these projects were delayed and, hence, they slowed down the recovery and accelerated outmigration (Edgington, 2017; Nagamatsu, 2018). Thus, reconstruction created many insecurities about the future and the community in the altered environment (Posio, 2019b). This exemplifies the continuous, cyclical need to reorient both social and material lives in relation to the proceeding reconstruction (Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015).

Disasters also do things to the experience of temporality when disaster becomes a marker against which the passage of time is understood (Forrest, 1993). The disruption in quotidian experience of temporality forces us to envision new future trajectories based on the continuous reorientation to the future in the changing present of the reconstruction. The 3.11 disaster was characterized as a "once in a thousand years event" or "beyond imagination" (*sōteigai*); nevertheless, it brought the possibility of a similar event to the horizons of expectations and made the

unimaginable imaginable, thus affecting how people envisioned their future trajectories. However, it is the narrative interpretation of the experience rather than the actual event itself that shapes peoples' imageries of the future (Vainio, 2020, p.67). Moreover, I contend that the shared aspirations and the process of collective aspiring are both shaped by and shaping the interpretations of the disaster and desired futures people seek to strive towards together. However, the attempts to understand the recovery experience have largely relied on the significance of the past, memory and commemoration (e.g., Ullberg, 2010; Henderson, 2013; Moulton, 2015; Boret & Shibayama, 2018). On one hand, this has left the dimension of the future not fully ignored but certainly less explored, although both the material and social recoveries have an inherent futurity embedded in them (cf. Posio, 2019a; Littlejohn, 2021). On the other hand, for example the popular, yet problematic resilience concept has harnessed community capacities as proactive, future-oriented tools against the anticipated disasters (Paton & Johnston, 2001; Yan & Galloway, 2017; chapter 2).

Community is criticized as having been studied excessively in the extreme or polarized circumstances (Amit, 2010) that post-disaster situations undoubtedly are. However, I argue both for the necessity of understanding the emergence of community in this context as well as for critically re-examining the concept. This is not least because of the often idealized notions of community in disaster reconstruction policies and in the locals' everyday recovery process. Disaster as a context of potentially heightened longing for and attachment to community and place (Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015; McKinzie, 2019) and intensified social cohesion (Solnit, 2009; Hoffman, 2020; Oliver-Smith, 2020) evidently shapes the analysis in this thesis. Nevertheless, as Solnit (2010) argues, "disasters provide an extraordinary window into social desire and possibility, and what manifests there matters elsewhere, in ordinary times and in other extraordinary times" (Solnit, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, disaster recovery should not be dismissed as an exceptional or worthless context to explore the concept and experience of community. Disaster recovery is, after all, a contested arena in which people join together to advance, contest and realize competing visions of societal advancement and desired futures. The hegemonic ideas of development in this arena are often negotiated and also challenged by the voices and experiences of those most impacted by catastrophes (Barrios, 2017b, p. 157).

1.2   From community recovery to communities of recovery

Developing conceptual tools to explore community requires discussion about the epistemological stance of this research. Readjustment of the focus from meanings of community to the processes in which these meanings are objectified, altered and even imposed (Keane, 2003, p. 232; Hastrup, 2004b, p. 466) extends the conceptual discussion beyond the particular situational activities and meanings in post-disaster Yamamoto. This, nevertheless, simultaneously maintains the locals' experiences, interpretations and emotions of their social life at the heart of the ethnographic analysis. This epistemological approach helps to overcome the persistent problem of how to portray the relation between the whole and its parts, change and stability, structure and human agency as well as the particular and the general when perceiving these as mutually constitutive (Keane, 2003; Moore and Sanders, 2014; Hastrup, 2004). Thus, the focus on processes enables us to balance the merits of what have been referred to as epistemologies of intimacy and estrangement: the first denotes a close understanding of a particular contextual case and the latter generalizing tendencies (Keane, 2003, p.241).

I originally set out to collect comprehensive data on the recovery of a community after what was called as the "revelatory moment" of a disaster (Curato & Ong, 2015; Oliver-Smith, 1996; Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002). My aim was to understand how a disaster experience affected local communities and how they sought to recover. Indeed, disaster anthropology using ethnographic methods has been praised for offering a holistic view of the "full breadth of disasters" in the form of positioned accounts and interpretations of the disasters and peoples' actual responses in everyday life (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002; Sørensen & Albris, 2016, p. 78). However, as Kirsten Hastrup (2004) has argued, "causes cannot be identified empirically or ontologically, but they may suggest themselves in relation to particular schemes of understanding, or particular epistemologies" in all fields of inquiry. Given this relational nature of knowledge, the factuality of the disaster event cannot be denied, but its explanatory value is based on a particular theoretical understanding or research setting (Hastrup, 2004b, pp. 463–464; Moore & Sanders, 2014, p. 6). This made me contemplate what exactly the subject and the theorization horizon of this ethnographic fieldwork would be in this particular, relatively small rural town of Yamamoto.

Once in the field in Yamamoto, when seeking to identify the community whose recovery I would study, I very soon realized the rigidity of the attempt to study *the* recovery of *a* community. The limitations and inherently static nature of the notions of a "holistic view" or a "revealed" social structure as well as the concepts of vulnerability and resilience (chapter 2) became evident with the first encounters in the field: These encounters highlighted the emerging differences between "here" and

"there" (chapter 6) and other temporally multilayered and overlapping notions of community and future desires. Thus, what was accentuated was the prevalence of a cyclic enacting and envisioning of community in constant dialogue with the post-disaster new normal (c.f. Silver and Grek-Martin, 2015). Therefore, instead of "the long-term community recovery," the subtitle of this thesis states "the communities of long-term recovery." This points to the focus on various experiences and interpretations of emergent communities in all their ambiguities and contradictions while maintaining recovery as the constitutive context.

The epistemology of intimacy of the particular has many benefits that elicit the research subjects' lived lives, experiences and interpretations. The approaches stressing intimacy with the subjects' particular lived worlds are often tied to the expectations of the methodological priority of immersive and participative long-term fieldwork (chapter 4). This enables the production of intersubjective knowledge or "sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them" (Geertz, 1973, p. 23, emphasis in the original). Interpretive anthropology, famously promoted by Clifford Geertz (1973), presents culture as a web of meanings (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) that the researcher seeks to understand. The prestige of anthropological particularity is crystalized in the ideal of a thick description that posits the core of anthropological findings in "their complex specificness, their circumstantiality" that enable interpretations of how the research participants interpret their worlds (ibid., p.23). Phenomenological anthropology also stresses intimacy and focuses on describing the meanings that are the social reality for the people studied. The researcher is considered capable of exploring the (inter)subjective meanings and the ways the social reality is experienced by participating in the subjects' social worlds, taking them as a lived intersubjective reality and refraining from making definite claims about the ontological nature of any interpretation (Knibbe and Versteeg, 2008, p. 47–51; Desjarlais and Jason Throop, 2011).

However, an epistemology of intimacy alone is insufficient when engaging in theorization of any sort: A spoonful of estrangement is necessary (Keane, 2003). The researcher's presentation of the particular lived social realities or other social systems as *integrated, logical wholes* is essentially a result of an analytical, imaginative process because these presumed wholes cannot ever be directly experienced in their entirety by either the anthropologists or the informants (Moore and Sanders,2014, p.15). The research object is thus defined as much by this mode of knowing tied to the fieldwork method and the relationality of knowledge as it is by the presumed ontology of its object of interest (Hastrup, 2004, p. 456). For example, an analysis connecting micro- and macro-level cases to identify larger currents of social phenomena is suggested as a way to enhance theorization in the globalized world (Gingrich, 2011, p.183). However, merely zooming out from local

to global or translocal is insufficient because it reproduces the premise of the intimacy of the particular but just in another context (Holbraad, 2011, p. 81; Amit and Rapport, 2002, p.12) and reproduces the different ontological levels as explanatory models (cf. Schatzki, 2016b).

I draw in this research on Kirsten Hastrup's (2004b, 2005b) suggestion of a way to strengthen the anthropological generalization while maintaining a foothold in the particular. She argues for an increased epistemological awareness of a mutual emergence of analysis and its object as well as of parts and wholes (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 147). This directs the focus to vertical generalizations of *processes* instead of to a horizontal generalization of *meanings*:

> We cannot speak of an anthropological object outside of a particular analysis. The object is a product of a particular epistemology, a way of knowing rather than a pre-established ontological entity. This also implies that we cannot generalise horizontally about whole cultures, societies or systems of meaning; instead we must aim at generalising vertically about those *processes by which meanings are established, challenged and altered through unique events from which emerge complex social forms that are perceived as objective realities*. (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 146, emphasis added)

This is also the approach I am taking in this thesis when concentrating on the *processes* of ontologizing social reality as community in the multiple ways it is experienced and interpreted. Thus, the ethnographic analysis of this thesis focuses on the various meanings, expectations, feelings and names that the Yamamoto locals attach to their social reality and the ways in which they interpret and experience their communities. Therefore, this approach enables using the community concept as an analytical framework for social processes, although, for example, the Japanese term *komyuniti,* a loan word from English, is argued to have different connotations in Japan than the term community has in the West (Komeda, 2001, p.55, 58; chapter 2).

The suggested vertical generalization also dodges the most stereotypical criticism of anthropology when it stresses the analytical features and generalizing opportunities of ethnographic analysis and, hence, helps to develop the theoretical and abstract discussions (cf. Keane, 2003, p. 223; Desjarlais & Throop, 2011, p. 93). Furthermore, an epistemological awareness allows us to take the subjective worlds of the research subjects seriously but avoids objectifying or essentializing their culture by deterministically confining the researched subjects in their particular social worlds, assumed as self-evident, uncontested, logical and integrated (Keane, 2003, pp. 230–232; Hastrup, 2004b; Moore, 2011, p. 210). This thesis shows that the interpretations, experiences and feelings of community are indeed very multilayered,

evolving, blurry, contradictory and even conflicting for the research participants themselves, and the efforts to constitute social realities out of these experiences are varying.

The approach adopted in this thesis also allows productive discussions of several topical research themes. I am tapping into various scholarly discussions about disaster, community, spatiality, temporality and agency that connect the contribution of this research to various debates on community, place, time, security and disasters in the field of anthropology in particular. To summarize the main contributions of this research, the framework of aspired communities joins the recent endeavors to reunite the imagined and actualized (Amit & Rapport, 2002; Amit, 2002; Gordon, 2012; Neal & Walters, 2008) as well as the social and spatial (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, 1997; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Hastrup, 2005b, 2010; Coleman & Collins, 2006b; Low, 2009, 2016; Warf & Arias, 2009) sides of community. I do this by thinking about community through the practice theory approach in which, nevertheless, subjectivity, agency and emotions have remained less studied (Ortner, 2006; Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016; Schatzki, 2017a). This research also enhances the understanding of temporality in anthropology and social sciences in general by directing attention to the significance of desired futures instead of uncertain or possible futures in social life (Sandra. Wallman, 1992; Daniel. Rosenberg & Harding, 2005; Pink & Salazar, 2017; e.g., Bryant & Knight, 2019)

Regarding disaster research, this thesis offers insights for developing an understanding of the multiple conceptualizations and experiences of long-term community recovery. This discussion particularly relates to the recently criticized concept of resilience (Barrios, 2014; Barrios, 2016; Hastrup, K., 2009; Sørensen & Albris, 2016) as well as to the social and emotional sides of security (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015; Glück & Low, 2017; Walravens, 2017), the latter of which was a prevalent shared aspiration among the Yamamoto locals. Thus, because I address emotions related to the community and recovery processes (Barrios, 2017), the suggested framework also connects to the increasing interest in affect, or the felt sides of social life (Skoggard & Waterston, 2015). However, the conceptual framework I am suggesting is developed from, but not limited to, the context of disaster recovery. It is intended to offer tools and inspiration to explore the ways communities come to be experienced as a social reality beyond the disaster recovery context during the "times of peace" (*heiwa no jidai*), as some of the research participants called the non-disaster time.

1.3   Organization of the thesis

I build up the conceptual framework of aspired communities piece by piece in a conceptual discussion and ethnographic analysis in the following chapters. I introduce in chapter 2 the debates surrounding the concept of community and discuss them in relation to the research and practice of disaster risk management as well as to the anthropological research of the future. I present the rationale of this research by arguing that it is the tension between the criticized vagueness of the community concept and its unproblematized legitimacy that makes it necessary to continue exploring it by paying particular attention to temporality. This discussion paves the way to developing the conceptual framework of aspired communities in chapter 3. I begin by outlining the idea that community as a process can be thought of from the perspectives of enacting and envisioning. As such, community is connected to actualized interactions in social practice as well as to the reflective envisioning of subjective agency. I argue that the future orientation (Bryant & Knight, 2019) of collective aspiring captures the inherently intertwined existential temporality and spatiality in social practices and reflects the open-ended, indeterminate teleology of human activities (Schatzki, 2009, 2010b). I discuss the future orientation of collective aspiring as a pursuing, yearning and shared objective and the ways it connects to power.

Chapter 4 focuses on methodology. I introduce the town of Yamamoto, the fieldwork methods and the collected data. Furthermore, I discuss how the researcher participates in construction of the field, the notion of immersion and co-construction of knowledge, the analysis methods and my positionality as a young, foreign female researcher in an aging rural town in Japanese society where predominantly older men have maintained leading positions. Chapter 5 discusses the Tohoku region as the historical, political and social context in which Yamamoto's reconstruction is occurring. Tohoku's reconstruction analyzed as being characterized by national aspirations of development and preservation. These have historical roots in the long-standing peripheralization of Tohoku and the idealization of rurality as an unchanged, essentialized, national *furusato,* hometown. These aspirations shaped the envisioning and enacting of the future of the Japanese community after 3.11, and they are also reflected in the reconstruction of Tohoku localities.

This thesis moves to the ethnographic analysis starting in chapter 6, where I zoom in from the national reconstruction plans to Yamamoto's reconstruction. I argue that the reconstruction plans are based mainly on the logic of anticipating risk, whereas the locals envision their future through aspiring security. Conflicts often arise when the futures cannot be aligned (Schatzki, 2002, p. 90, 2009, p. 44). I show how these conflicting, desired futures have fueled a reconfiguration of the visions and experience of the town-level community and of a coastal (*hama*) community that was felt to be ignored in the reconstruction. I concentrate in chapter 7 on aspiring as

an action-oriented pursuing. The analysis addresses how social agency is delineated and how the included roles and responsibilities are essential features of aspired communities. Pursuing, agency and enacted and envisioned communities are discussed in relation to *machizukuri*[4] (community building) practices, strawberry farming and town promotion activities. Most of the practices discussed in this chapter are formal and organized with explicit goals, but I also argue that not only these goals but also the very activity of pursuing together is a constituent of social realities.

Chapter 8 addresses the affective sides of aspiring, namely aspiring as collective yearning. This chapter also highlights the felt post-disaster need for social, spatial and temporal reorientation. This deepens the discussion on the dynamics of community and the experienced place and material environment at the coast and in the new compact cities. Yearning is especially directed in post-disaster Yamamoto towards a sense of belonging and security. Furthermore, the discussion of the insecurities in the emergent communities in new relocation areas shows how yearning and a sense of security are connected to normative expectations of the proper enactment of community. Finally, in the Conclusion I bring together the threads of the discussions presented in this thesis, discuss potential avenues for future research, and at the end, I return once to Yamamoto for a brief moment to reflect on the developments there after my fieldwork.

I want to make a few practical notes on the contents of this thesis before moving on to the discussion of the prior literature on community, disaster and future. First, the surname precedes the given name in Japanese names. Furthermore, I call the research participants by a pseudonym that consists of a surname followed by the honorific suffix "-san," except for Sensei ("teacher"), a central figure in my fieldwork arrangements (chapter 4) and in a coastal resident-initiated group *Yamamotochō Fukkō o Kangaeru Jūmin no Kai* (Residents' association for thinking about Yamamoto town reconstruction, hereinafter Doyōbinokai) featured often in this thesis. Second, the long vowels in Japanese terms are Romanized by using the macron (ā, ī, ū, ē and ō), excluding the established place names, such as Tohoku, Kobe and Tokyo.

Third, parts of the discussions in the analysis chapters are based on articles I have published earlier on *machizukuri* activities and the renegotiation of safety in Yamamoto (Posio, 2019b) and on the mutually constitutive relation of what I called discursive and embodied social capital and place in post-3.11 community resilience (Posio, 2019a). Research is inherently an iterative process, so in this thesis I develop

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[4]   Literally "town making," often translated as community development or building. The term refers to citizen participation in planning and management of the local living environment (Watanabe, 2007).

the lines of thought introduced in these articles, that is, the enacting and envisioning of community as well as the social and affective sides of security. The analysis of the coastal (*hama*) community, *machizukuri* activities and insecurities in the compact cities in particular are based on these articles, and I utilize many of the same interview quotations as in the published works. Furthermore, some of the ethnographic vignettes appear in these earlier published articles either as such or as shorter versions. I have maintained the right to reproduce them here, because they form an essential part of the ethnographic description and analysis. I refer to the published vignettes exceptionally with footnotes to embed them better into the flow of the analytical narration. I hope that in this way I bring the lived reality and my fieldwork observations of the post-disaster Yamamoto closer to the reader. Now it is time to present these communities of recovery in Yamamoto, first from the perspective of prior literature on community, disasters and future.

2 Community: Enduring debates and unused potential

I argue in this chapter for the importance of continuing to develop approaches for understanding the concept of community. I introduce the rationale of this research through both a conceptual history of community and examples from disaster studies and management practices. Community as a very central concept in anthropology has been a target of enduring debates (e.g., Cohen, 1985; Bauman, 2001; Amit & Rapport, 2002; Anderson, 2006; Tanabe, 2008a, 2008b; Amit, 2010, 2020; Olwig, 2010). It is at once claimed to be too abstract, too vague, too romanticized and too idealized (Bauman, 2001; Cohen, 2002; Blackshaw, 2010), but it has nevertheless been taken as an unproblematized unit of analysis or policies and practices, such as disaster management (Scollon, 2001, p. 143; Alleyne, 2002, p. 608; Cannon, 2008). Furthermore, the question of the relation between the socio-political structure and the individual as well as between the natural world and culture has characterized anthropological research for decades (Moore & Sanders, 2014; Barrios, 2017b).

These debates are highlighted in the disaster context when the notion of natural disaster is claimed to imply ontological presuppositions of stable social systems intruded on by outside disruptions (Quarantelli, 1993; Hastrup, 2011; Barrios, 2014). or when the notion of a revelatory crisis (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002, p.9–10) presumes structurally produced vulnerabilities waiting to be unveiled. Furthermore, the numerous remarks, policies and activities relating to community exemplify how community becomes accentuated in the post-disaster situation. I will particularly discuss the concept of resilience and how it is criticized for relying on the presumption of a static, territorially bounded community with particular capacities. This stress on community capacities has, at its worst, blurred the line between supporting community recovery and delegating responsibility to the affected localities in disaster management practices (Tierney, 2015; Barrios, 2016, 2017a; Faas, 2018). This discussion not only shows that it is important to understand community in the post-disaster context, but it also highlights the observable power and influence of the notion of community in everyday life in reconstruction and beyond.

Furthermore, I argue that although the debates on community have evoked the need to perceive community as an emergent social phenomenon, these studies only rarely provide tools to address the inherent temporality of the community concept. Therefore, I discus in the latter part of this chapter how temporality, and the future in particular, have recently been approached in the field of anthropology. The reviewed studies show how the temporal dimension of the past has strongly prevailed in explaining the present. This approach has also been prominent in community disaster recovery studies in which memory and commemoration are repeated themes. There is, nevertheless, a constantly growing interest in developing the research of the future and for the future (cf. Collins, 2008, p. 125). However, I argue that the potential of temporality, and particularly the dimension of the future, to explore the concept of community remains largely unused.

2.1   Community matters in disasters and beyond

Community is so central concept that scholars of anthropology and other social sciences have used plenty of paper, time and energy trying to define it. Its conceptualizations appear frequently in the disciplines' histories, yet community remains debated, criticized and redefined in various ways to the extent that its usefulness has been doubted (Cohen, 1985, 2002; Baumann, 1996; Blackshaw, 2010), and its analytic value has required defending (Amit, 2010; Gordon, 2012). Blackshaw (2010) remarks that "few concepts in the social sciences have undergone such a remarkable transformation than has that of 'community'" in only a few decades (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 5). However, the interest in the concept of community appears recently to have faded (Amit, 2020). Nevertheless, I stress here the importance of advancing our understanding of community because of its paradoxical role: The concept is criticized in academic debates for being abstracted and distanced from actualized, everyday interactions, yet it has a very strong actuality when the idealized notion of community legitimizes various political and social practices. Furthermore, community is criticized for being too vague and useless, but this has not prevented scholars from taking it as an unproblematized and given unit of analysis, policies or practices.

Much of the fascination with the term community relates to its elusiveness: Community as an idea promises peace, security and comfort, but as such it constantly keeps escaping from us, creating an enduring headache for those attempting to capture it with definitions. Moreover, intensive community activity seeking to realize these ideas of cooperation and mutuality often creates disunity, strife and divisions between those on the inside and outside (Brent, 2004; Blackshaw, 2010). This paradox of harmony and conflict inscribed in the continuous elusiveness of the

idea of community raises the question of the nature of community as a social phenomenon:

> What 'something' is it that does not appear to have a concrete existence, but which nevertheless has important effects on people's lives, an idea that disappoints as it does not live up to its promise, but an idea which still has such a strong purchase on peoples' thoughts and actions... So, what is this elusive and paradoxical 'thing'? We know it's there – but what is it, and how can we understand it? (Brent, 2004, pp. 213–214)

Two tendencies arise from the scholarly debates when considering the concept of community: the attempts to seize it in definitions and the emphasis on its emergent nature. The tension between these two is based on the mutual and accumulative criticism of static, bounded and idealized conceptualizations versus the never-ending attempts to develop an understanding of a constantly evolving community. The concept has been developing from "the people" to abstractions during the course of these debates. The association of territory and the social unit of people has been prevalent in anthropological work partly due to its ethnographic methods. The people = culture = place formula is strongly present in early anthropology in the works of early anthropologists (e.g., Boas, 1911; Malinowski, 1922; Mead, 1930). This set the foundation for historical particularism and cultural relativism treating culture as a separate entity having specific structures associated with the particular group of people (Stocking, 1968, pp. 202–203). The world came to be seen as "a mosaic of separate cultures," enabling cross-cultural comparisons. This approach embraced the idea of fieldwork "among the so-and-so" and, thus, enforced the idea about the unity of culture-specific social structures and a particular location (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, pp. 1–2).

Community later emerged in the research vocabulary to replace culture. This development was linked to modernization and to the shift of research interests to the cities from isolated "primitive societies" (Amit, 2002). Nevertheless, the connection between a particular location and a community remained strong in the field of community studies exploring "local social systems" (Bell & Newby, 1971; Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 60–66). The researchers' interest was also directed to the relations of intimacy and solidarity in urban settings (e.g., Epstein, 1958; Edelstein & Larsen, 1960) as well as, for example, to local community power (e.g., Hunter, 1953; Agger, 1956; Wolfinger, 1960). These developments contributed to an association of community either to a sense of belonging within confined settings vis-à-vis modernizing society or to acting, participating subjects. This reflects the tradition of separating *Gemeinschaft,* or the unity provided by personal and intimate

social relations, and *Gesellschaft,* or a society of impersonal, calculating contractual relations proposed by Ferdinant Tönnies already in 1887 (Tönnies, 1974).

The abstraction of community into symbolic systems or categorial identities has been especially associated with the works of Anthony Cohen (1982, 1985) and Benedict Anderson (1983)[5]. This abstraction coincided with anthropology's self-criticism on exoticism and colonialism as well as on the social and spatial integrity of ethnographic subjects presented by the early scholars (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Cohen (1985) presented symbolic boundaries and belonging as community's main features. He drew from Barth's (1969) work on the prevalence of ethnic boundaries manifesting through interaction, which makes community as a relational idea reflect similarity and difference in contrast to other groups (Barth, 1969). These symbols do not merely describe communities; they also construct them (Cohen, 1985).

This, in turn, directed the focus to interpretations and identifications instead of actual social encounters, an approach that is strongly present in Benedict Anderson's influential book *Imagined Communities* (1983). Anderson argued that the development of print media especially gave rise to national sentiments based on the notions of communality, identification and belonging. He also extended the idea of abstract communities by arguing that *all* communities beyond face-to-face encounters are imagined, and they "are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). Anderson's work is regarded as an important conceptual turning point in the study of community Blackshaw (2010) notes that "in the hands of Anderson, community had turned immaterial and phantasmagorical, and it no longer rested solidly upon social foundations – it was now metaphysical" (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 6).

Community became analytically detached from face-to-face socialization when it was abstracted as identification, sense of belonging and symbolic boundaries and as such distanced from the notions of territoriality and place. Scholarly responses to this presumption have led to what Coleman and Collins (2006) call the "simultaneous prominence and disappearance of place in contemporary ethnography" (Coleman & Collins, 2006a, p. 2). The dichotomy of the idea and the actualization of community is also visible in Arjun Appadurai's (1996) formulation

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[5]   These scholarly works should also be considered in temporal terms as a part of the evolving debate on community. Cohen and Anderson have been blamed for contributing to the neglect of actualized interactions in everyday life, yet even twenty years ago Cohen (2002) argued that his and Anderson's works did not intend to deny the realities of communities. They were, instead, also attempting to put in words "what it is that people use the word to signify" in relation to the scholarly discussion at that time (Cohen, 2002, p.170).

of the terms of locality and neighborhood. The first denotes the relational community, referring to "*a structure of feeling* that is produced by particular forms of intentional activity and that yields particular sorts of material effects," while the latter is the situated community, the context in which locality occurs and is produced (Appadurai, 1996, emphasis added). These two are described to have a dialogical relation, although neighborhood is argued to be presented as a result of these imaginative practices (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 97). It is also remarked that "in a curious sense places have disappeared" when the presumed equation of bounded community, its territory, culture and identity has been questioned (Coleman & Collins, 2006, p.2). Community of place has become contrasted to, for instance, an online community (Feenberg & Barney, 2004) or a community of interest (Means & Evans, 2012) that has no particular geographical location. It is argued that this resignation from place has contributed, at its extreme, to a further abstraction of social structures and culture from their material, lived environment (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997).

However, anthropologists have had a hard time trying to escape the idea of a fixed community and its connection to a place. Scholars have sought to challenge the long-established assumption that the anthropological subject is reachable through ethnographic fieldwork in a set location, They have, nevertheless, reproduced the idea of a bounded community in their "dogged search for new, delocalized 'peoples'" by selecting clearly defined fields and groups with a distinct membership (Amit & Rapport, 2002, p. 12). This multisitedness (c.f. Marcus, 1995) has accentuated the role of the researcher in the construction of the field when the site has become understood as a social category instead of a location singled out by the ethnographer (Amit, 1999, p. 14). Furthermore, the focus on "placeless" issues such as globalization may re-enforce the implicit idea of a static and clearly delineated community if, for example, translocality and mobile identities are presented as results of global forces disturbing and transforming the stable status quo (cf. Amit & Rapport, 2002, p.10).

2.1.1   Vague and romanticized yet not futile community

This thesis is closely connected to the increasing interest in reconnecting the discursive and practiced sides of social life as a response to these attempts to abstract community from both interactions and place (Hastrup, 2005b). The lived, material world is increasingly recognized as a multivocally constructed, organic co-constituent of social life instead of as a static background or a result of social construction (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Rodman, 2003; Low, 2009, 2016; Warf & Arias, 2009; Hastrup, 2010; Reed-Danahay, 2015). Furthermore, the extensive abstraction and the "repeated tendency to turn to the idea of community rather than its social actualsation" is argued to contradict

anthropology's efforts to understand quotidian lives (Amit, 2020, p. 50). Thus, this has led to calls for reuniting the abstracted and actualized sides of community (Neal & Walters, 2008; Amit, 2010, 2020; Gordon, 2012; Amit *et al.*, 2015) and for including the material and spatial in the analysis of social life (Hastrup, 2010; Pink, 2011, 2012; Low, 2016).

To do this, as I elaborate in the next chapter, I follow in this thesis largely in Vered Amit's (Amit, 2010, 2020) footsteps and use community as an analytical framework "to query *process* of sociation rather than to proffer a narrow definition of a particular type of situation or grouping." This perspective leads to exploring communities formed as various forms of dynamic interactions and socialization instead of perceiving community as a separate fixed entity, a "thing in the world" (Amit, 2020, p. 52, emphasis in the original). Thus, the debate about community is argued to be about the need to move away from the rigid dichotomies of direct and indirect social contacts (Gon, 2009). Community is considered from this perspective to be built through mutually enforcing processes of abstract imagination and everyday practices (Neal & Walters, 2008; Tanabe, 2008a, 2008b).

However, the most critical evaluators have argued that this kind of approach to community has made it merely a vague orienting device. This is considered to reproduce the very same criticized abstraction of community and turned it into a universal reference to social relations when the concept is stripped from any definitive or critical value. Therefore, it is argued that the conceptual reorientations have made community one of the vaguest and most imprecise concepts meaning "everything and nothing" (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 2, 9–10). The doubts about the usefulness of the community concept have also elicited the tendency to presume or even romanticize the existence of communities that have now been distracted by social change (Cohen, 2002, p.169). These kinds of presuppositions are thought to produce a problematic situation in which community seemingly transcends its status as a concept because it is surrounded by this idealized atmosphere of its own. This line of critique perceives community having become a hermeneutical tool that is inherently "burdened with romantic sensibility," which makes it difficult to conceptualize it (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 1–2).

The term community is remarked to be so strongly associated with these specific, often romantic, ideas of belonging that it may not be directly translatable to other languages (Olwig, 2010, p. 365). For example, in Japanese, the word *komyuniti* (community) written in katakana is a loan word from English, and its connotations are argued to be different in Japan than in the West. For instance, Komeda (2001) argues that community in the Western countries originated from peoples' daily consciousness and, as such, it refers to the sense of belonging to one's own community. In contrast, the word was introduced in Japan originally in the terminology used by the government to address to the dismantling of local

community organizations, such as neighborhood associations, in the face of urbanization. This made *komyuniti* strongly associated with authorities and community development policies (Komeda, 2001, pp. 55, 58). This remark could be interpreted as an essentialization of a particularly "Japanese community" not corresponding to "the Western community," but it also reflects the ideological and affective load that the concept of community carries with it.

Nevertheless, the word *komyuniti* has also become an often-used concept in the Japanese language community studies. The Japanese language concept of *kyōdōtai* (community) has appeared in the research since the 1920s, and from the 1940s the word *komyuniti* started to gain popularity. Studies focusing on community in the social sciences in Japan decreased between 1980 and 1990, after which they increased again to peak in 2013 (Takahashi et al., 2018, p. 453). Community is often regarded in these studies as an existent social structure whose form and evolution have been sought to be explained. This is often done in relation to various social transformations and concerns ranging from rapid urbanization and rural recline to growing individualism, social problems and loneliness after the post-growth period, particularly since the 1990s.

For example, Hiroi (2008, 2009) differentiates production (*seisan no komyuniti*) and living community (*seikatsu no komyuniti*), urban (*toshigata*) and rural (*nōsongata*) community and spatial or local community (*chiiki komyuniti*) and temporal or theme community (*tēma komyuniti*). The once-united production and living community were separated in urbanization and industrialization. Later in the post-growth period, the eroding of production communities that were central in the rapidly urbanizing post-war Japan is argued to have created a need to revitalize the local, place-based community again. A need has risen to simultaneously strengthen the theme communities centering around a shared purpose and generating a sense of belonging (Hiroi, 2008, p.48–50; Hiroi, 2009, p.11–26). Other attempts to analyze new or post-modern, network-based communities also often start with the presumption that not only are the actual, place-based communities transformed into a myriad of social relations but also that the general bonds between the people have disappeared (Hasumi & Okuda, 1993; Fujioka, 2008).

In Yamamoto, the abstracted notion of *komyuniti* differs from the terms that were more frequently used by the Yamamoto locals to refer to their community, such as *chiiki* (area) or *shūraku* (village) that denote a particular territory. These kinds of territorial notions of community enjoy their part of the idealization and romanticization in public rhetoric and sometimes in research when neighborhoods or villages are portrayed as sites of a romanticized sense of trust and solidarity. The idea of this "local community" (*chiiki komyuniti*) is also often a starting point in the just-described analysis of the modern, diversifying, postgrowth society of Japan (Hiroi, 2008, 2009; Nakasuji, 2014, pp. 19–20). The research on local community

has been closely connected with rurality, and Japanese rural sociology (*Nihon nōson shakaigaku*) has identified the notions of the natural village and the administrative village since the 1940s. The first refers to the unique local community as the voluntary social institution of the villagers since the Edo period that contrasts with the latter, namely, the administrative structures created later in the Meiji era. The theoretical nuances of Japanese rural sociology vary, while the notions of *mura* (village) and *ie* (household) have been at the heart of explaining social life (Nakasuji, 2014). This is not to say that Japanese communities are essentially unique, as such, but it reflects how the Japanese scholarly discussion has sought to address the particular characteristics and transformations of social structures, topography and political developments in the society. However, local community is approached largely as a lost state, and the idea of an agrarian, village-based, naturally occurring community with a particular community spirit and tight social relations seems also to prevail in these discussions.

Bauman argues that this kind of idealized or nostalgized community signals the people's quest to seek security and belonging amid the insecurities of the liquid modernity characterized by life's constant change and open-endedness (Bauman, 2001). Community has become so "nice" in this idealized from that it is seldom critically questioned or treated:

> 'Community' is a word most agreeable to modern ears, or so it would seem. Not only does it come ready-made with its own inner glow, but it also has a hand-made, home-made quality about it. You might say that community is one of the front-line feelings of our age. People feel happy when they hear and see the word (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 19).

These cynical remarks have led to individualistic representations of community that nevertheless bypass the sometimes very real experience of the power of community. Community has been perceived analytically being ultimately a construct of an individual's interpretations and imaginations in the chosen context. As such, it is characterized by heterogeneity and change, although it may be presented or propagated as a coherent, separate entity (Amit & Rapport, 2002, p. 15). Community is also argued to be valuable not as a definitive concept but as an historical consciousness of the very idea of community. This consciousness has developed from the immediate social reality taken for granted into a nothing but an "individualized expression, painted only for individuals… [and] it is imagined only for individual consumption not to alleviate collective shiver" (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 35). The strength of this kind of community is argued to become apparent only when leaving it (ibid., p. 16).

In contrast, Gordon (2012) has noted that community can manifest also as a very tangible experience when someone wishes to enter or is excluded from it. This does not imply symbolic boundaries or bounded identities in Cohen's sense, but it directs the attention to people's value- and norm-laden interactions. Gordon makes a point about society's marginalized people, such as the homeless, who despite their individual aspirations, may face barriers when trying to be accepted by the community (Gordon, 2012). Thus, community is considered to be not only about unity but also about exclusions and power. For example, imposing community as the grand narrative also leads to strengthened juxtapositionings. This refers to what Blackshaw calls "the dark side of community" as the tendency to construct presentations of hostile "them" versus "us" (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 45, 151–156).

Thus, the criticism of community as an orienting device fails to see that it is precisely because community is so powerful idea, experience and tool, it is necessary to continue to a conceptual discussion to explore how community comes to be social reality. Largely because community is a significant part of social life yet is nearly impossible to define, it has too often been approached as the explanation rather than the explained (Alleyne, 2002, p. 608). As such, it has remained a customary, unproblematized unit of analysis rather than being seen as "sociopolitical constructs which carry ideological baggage that needs to be opened and examined" (Scollon, 2001, p. 143). A presumption of a predetermined definition of community is also embedded in the critical comments. For instance, Blackshaw (2010) points out that groupings, such as football fans, are not communities but rather *collectivities* (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 38–39). Hence, an interesting paradox arises from this critique that dooms the definitions of community as too nostalgic, too static, too narrow or too general – in other words, "not community." However, it is remarked that inexact does not mean unusable, and studying community can offer opportunities to explore "how much the illusion [of community] is part of social and political life" (Brent, 2004, pp. 216–219). Thus, we should not "shy away from using the term 'community' because of its multiplicity of uses, but seek to better understand their various meanings" (Gordon, 2012, p. 254). This importance of understanding community as concept, experience, political and social tools is highlighted in the context of disaster recovery.

2.1.2 Problematic yet unproblematized resilient community

The scholarly debates about the notions of community are not merely theoretical exercises: The ways in which community is perceived and defined also have a concrete connection to reconstruction and community-building policies in general. The definitions of community and its role affect the objectives, scale and actors outlined in the particular reconstruction plans that then shape the post-disaster communities. This makes the critical evaluation of academic debates on community and disaster recovery important. This goes not only with how disasters or the future in general are visioned but also with the political economy of the community definition. Thus, it is important to identify the ways disasters and the desired post-disaster futures are constructed – framed, narrated and envisioned – and how these social constructs are acted upon, because they can in themselves become causes of future disasters. These constructs are sometimes constituted by the science itself with tangible and political implications (Sun & Faas, 2018).

For example, one persistent trend in the Japanese literature on community has been the focus on studying the potential of community and community interventions to offer solutions to social problems including demographic crisis and rural decline (Takahashi et al., 2018, p. 455). This reflects how the concept of community in Japan is tightly connected to the community development promotion policies and the various administrative initiatives. Kikuchi (2003) differentiates this as a practical conceptualization of community compared to the ideal and realistic conceptualizations. The ideal conceptualization refers to the desired social connectedness in the area. Because the ideal is not always considered reflecting the state of contemporary Japanese society, the realistic conceptualization is the "attempt to understand the word community based on the reality of Japan". This means that if there are bonds and activities between the people living in the area, that can be considered a community (Kikuchi, 2003, pp. 33–36). As discussed in this section, controversies seem to arise when attempts are made to mobilize politically motivated community ideals in practice.

The studies that consider the prospects and policy responses related to the future community and its revitalization in Japanese society thus signal the perceived importance of reviving the presumably eroded community (Hiroi, 2009, pp. 48–49). The community's expectations are growing for handling the increasingly acute issues in Japan, such as elder care, support for childcare, waste and recycling management, crime prevention and disaster mitigation (Kikuchi, 2003, p. 43). It is argued that the focus of the studies of community ought to be mutual-assistance (*kyojo*) types of local community tackling these issues in contrast to individual self-help (*jijo*) or public assistance (*kōjo*) (Sakakura, 2010; Hasegawa et al., 2015). The combination of private, public and communal assistance is also discussed in relation to disaster prevention and relief (Ichiko, 2012b, p. 13; Hasegawa et al., 2015). This

approach to community is very prevalent in disaster recovery studies in Japan and elsewhere when community is frequently considered a central actor in disaster prevention, relief and recovery (Ichiko, 2012b, p. 13).

The concept of community thus intersects with the concept of civil society in the course of these Japanese debates. Community has been addressed in the context of "intermediately organized groups" between the individual and the nation, such as social movements and third sector groups. In this sense, community is associated with the welfare society as its key element (Komeda, 2001, pp. 60–61; Fujioka, 2008, pp. 18–19; Sugiyama & Matsuda, 2018). However, this feature of emphasizing the social problems and the opportunities provided by the community is criticized for making many studies resemble practical community design rather than theoretical formulations of community (Sugiyama & Matsuda, 2018). Another critique is that many of the numerous studies on *machizukuri* (community building) in Japan have remained as case reports because of unclear theoretical and analytical perspectives (Ishii, 2012, p. 102); nevertheless, these can be regarded as valuable for describing the variety of practices by which the community takes shape.

It is also generally argued that the idealized community enjoying unquestionable value has become largely an appropriating device in whose name various development projects, public policies and marketing campaigns and neoliberal reforms have been implemented (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 7–9; Yoshihara, 2013). This tendency is present in the post-disaster context in well-acknowledged forms of post-disaster opportunism, such as disaster capitalism (Klein, 2007; Faas, 2018). Concepts such as vulnerability have also been used as tools to marginalize or present segments of people as vulnerable "problem populations" (Bankoff, 2001; Hsu *et al.*, 2015). Thus, the "goodness" of community is not only a comforting imaginary construct, but it also has political implications when "a natural community" is used as "a depoliticizing myth in which social inequality [be]comes natural difference" (Brent, 2004, p. 218). However, it is necessary to note that the criticism of the unproblematized community concept in a disaster context may have highlighted crucial issues, but it has rarely provided tools to develop an understanding of the community.

Thus, community remains both largely idealized and taken as an unproblematized given in the context of disaster research and disaster management practice, despite its varying meanings and understandings in a local context (Cannon, 2008; Cheek, 2020; Räsänen *et al.*, 2020). For instance, in an edited volume about community-based disaster-risk reduction, community's definition is outlined in the opening words of the overview chapter with only few general notions of belonging and commitment (Shaw, 2012a, p. 3). The following chapters of the book address the roles of government, NGOs, universities and corporations, leaving one to wonder if the community itself has any role in the process after all. This is, of course, an

anecdotal example of the treatment of the community concept and the community definitions in disaster research have varied greatly (Räsänen *et al.*, 2020). They have ranged from a totality of social structures within an area (McManus *et al.*, 2012) to groups of people sharing an attachment to a place (Gurney *et al.*, 2017) or to an identity and sense of belonging (Kuecker *et al.*, 2011). More often than not, community is, nevertheless, argued being used as a synonym for the local level or the most basic level where recovery ought to be practiced (Cannon, 2008; Bruun & Olwig, 2015). The discussion is then shifted quickly to a disaster governance role division and citizen participation (Ito, 2007; Mochizuki, 2014; Shaw, 2014c; Shaw & Goda, 2004), to general yet rather empty, demands to customize reconstruction in accordance with local needs (Shaw, 2014b, p. 4) or to argumentation for the importance of social capital (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Aldrich, 2012; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Delaney, 2015) instead of any consideration of what constitutes this community in the first place.

Many of the popular frameworks of disaster and community recovery nevertheless carry implicit ideas of community with them. I discuss community especially in relation to the concept of community resilience to underline the necessity of acknowledging the effects of these embedded definitions. The vulnerability concept became the main analytical tool in social science disaster studies by the late 1990s to explain why certain groups seemed to suffer more from the same hazards (Oliver-Smith, 2002; Blaikie *et al.*, 2014; Faas, 2016; Barrios, 2017b). It emerged largely as a response to the criticism of definitions of disaster in agent-specific terms. These are critiqued for presenting disasters as singular outside disruptions to a coherent and stable system (Quarantelli, 1993; Hastrup, 2011, p. 13). The vulnerability approach has directed disaster research towards the analysis of structural inequalities, the uneven distribution of risk in society and the social and political processes producing these vulnerabilities. However, it has also presented the idea that disasters are a sign of society's adaptational capacity (Oliver-Smith, 1999, p. 25). As such, it reproduced the presumption of a coherent, pre-disaster social system that was argued to be exposed by the disaster. Disaster therefore came to be portrayed as revelatory crisis that unmasked the society's social structure (Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, 2002, p.9–10) or as events that can lift veils (Curato & Ong, 2015). However, it is noted that the revealed issues are also always interpreted. This makes the so-called revelatory capacity of disaster "contingent on the sociopolitical vantage point from which the beholder problematizes disaster," which is reflected in the measures taken (Barrios, 2017b, p. 162).

The notion of adaptational capacity connects with the more recent popular concept in the study of disaster, namely resilience. The resilience concept, despite its conceptual and methodological ambivalences, has become prominent in disaster studies as a way to seek answers regarding why some communities seem to recover

faster or more easily after a disaster than others. The concept originates from physics, but it has evolved into a tool to explain the capability to "bounce back after a crisis" (Kendra et al., 2018; Norris et al., 2008). More precisely, the term community or social resilience is used to denote the collective ability of a community to recover from disruptive situations such as disasters through absorption, adaptation or transformation (Berkes & Ross, 2013; Folke et al., 2010; Norris et al., 2008). Resilience theories have sought to identify and measure the adaptive capacities of a community that range from economic development, division of resources, participation opportunities and social capital to narratives and media presentations. (Norris *et al.*, 2008; Sherrieb *et al.*, 2010). Among these capacities, social capital -- referring to social networks, their trustworthiness, norms of reciprocity and embedded resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) -- has been argued to be the most significant constituent of community resilience (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Aldrich, 2012; Kulig *et al.*, 2013; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Kendra *et al.*, 2018).

Anthropologists, however, have criticized the implicit presumptions of community present in the disaster risk management literature and practices in general and in the framework of resilience in particular. The idea of "bouncing back" in itself is considered problematic because it implies the pre-disaster community's stable condition and a reproduction of pre-disaster vulnerabilities (Barrios, 2016, p. 30). As such, the theorization of community resilience as a set of capacities of a given community is argued to be a retrospective approach: It relies on the existing capacities of a presupposed static, geographically bounded, pre-disaster community as something against which the change and adaptability can be measured. This neglects the dynamic and emergent nature of community (Hastrup, 2009, p. 20; Barrios, 2014; Sørensen & Albris, 2016, p. 77) and the potential of disaster conditions to create new communities (Hoffman & Oliver-Smith, 1999; Oliver-Smith, 1999; Fortun, 2001; Solnit, 2009). Thus, resilience is often criticized for failing to recognize the dynamics of memory and future-oriented anticipation that are both thoroughly social and that shape the present-day endeavors (Hastrup, 2009, p. 28, 2011, p. 11; Barrios, 2014; Sørensen & Albris, 2016, pp. 75–76). The emergent post-disaster communities are also found to be shaped, for example, by dynamic relations among the political actors, aid organizations and locals (Barrios, 2014), as well as by the affected people's social agency (Hastrup, K., 2009).

As said, this criticism has highlighted the need to understand the concept of community because the presupposition of the dormant potentiality of community in recovery may have concrete effects in disaster-stricken localities when it guides

reconstruction policies[6]. It is widely agreed that the process of disaster recovery is inherently political. Disaster is presented as a "gap in time and space in which authorities and people rebuild, reimagine and reinvent society" (Refslund Sørensen & Albris, 2016, p.66) in which various actors seek to claim the "ownership" of disaster to define causes, victims and responsibilities and to legitimize visions of reconstruction and its long-term results in the ideal post-disaster future (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002; Pelling & Dill, 2010; Gotham & Greenberg, 2014; Sørensen & Albris, 2016; Cretney, 2017). The politicization of disaster inherent in the recovery process is characterized by the interplay of attempts by existing powerholders to capitalize on the disaster and the opportunities for new alternatives to emerge in the wake of the perceived disruption (Cretney, 2017). Resilience and the idea of community it implies has served both of these roles.

The scholarly work on post-disaster disaster politicization of community in disaster management practice is divided. Some present disaster as an opportunity for development and resilience as a proactive concept that is developed into a framework seeking to fortify the capabilities of a community to bear future disasters (Shaw, 2014b; Yan & Galloway, 2017). The central position of resilience as the leading principle in disaster risk management was particularly solidified in the of United Nations Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (UNISDR, 2015). This framework is the leading international instrument for disaster risk reduction that promotes the ideology of Build Back Better (BBB) for realizing resilience in practice (UNISDR, 2015; Maly & Suppasri, 2020). Resilience has also had a prominent role in guiding the reconstruction of Tohoku after the 3.11 disaster and manifested as massive reconstruction projects in the name of development and BBB (Edgington, 2017; Nagamatsu, 2018; Chapter 6).

Furthermore, the resilience concept as a development agenda is also extended beyond the disaster context to offer means to secure the viable and sustainable futures of societies in general (Zolli & Healy, 2012). The government of Japan released its national resilience (*kokudo kyoujinka*) program in the wake of the 3.11 disaster. It also addressed disaster mitigation but at more general level the program aimed to develop the resilience of Japanese society in the face of the threats of climate change and rapid population decline, for example (DeWit, 2014, 2016; Yan & Roggema, 2017, p. 9). The development ideals embedded in resilience are also reflected in disaster management in Yamamoto, for instance, in the form of urban planning ideals implemented in its reconstruction plans. For example, Yamamoto's reconstruction is largely based on the internationally promoted walkable and densely built smart or compact city scheme that is used as a tool to intensify land use and

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[6]   See also chapter 5 on rural revitalization policies that also embrace the presumed potential of the local community.

focus resources in both urban and rural areas (Sorensen, 2010; Suzuki, 2010; Dimmer, 2017, pp. 34–37; Gondokusuma *et al.*, 2019).

However, some remain critical about the underlying neoliberal and capitalist ideals of current disaster-management practices that rely on the resilience concept. This is not least because the idealized community and its presumed capacities are given an "unprecedented legitimacy" in disaster work and are also foregrounded in the policy rhetoric of decentralization and local governance. Resilience, BBB and even community participation raise questions of what constitutes development. It also highlights the normative expectations of the futures of both communities and participant residents. The debate of what is to be considered "better" building or development is still ongoing. The critical reviewers of the concept agree, however, that the ultimate question is how better is interpreted and experienced in the affected communities and how well that is taken into consideration in disaster recovery and reconstruction planning (Monday, 2002; Kennedy *et al.*, 2008; Fan, 2013; Maly, 2018). Community participation is promoted as an empowering alternative to top-down planning (Pandey & Okazaki, 2005; Shaw, 2012), although that has also raised concerns about the overwhelming legitimacy of an unproblematically treated community: A community is valorized and taken as an unproblematized "good thing," an idea that relies on the presupposition of a locality, such as a village or urban neighborhood, as well as a sense of collaboration, coherence, harmony and "neighbourliness." This approach often fails to recognize the internal inequalities and conflicts within the communities (Cannon, 2008, pp. 11–13).

Thus, this is not merely romanticization of community "to alleviate collective shiver" (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 35): Resilience is criticized for shifting responsibility to the affected communities instead of to adequate disaster recovery support because it directs attention to community capacities instead of socially produced vulnerabilities and structural problems (Cretney, 2014, 2017; Tierney, 2015; Barrios, 2016, 2017a; Faas, 2018). The lack of consideration of local perspectives has led in many cases to a mismatch between the experiences, interpretations and emotions of disaster-affected communities and the official reconstruction visions (Barrios, 2017a, p. 254). In Tohoku, the responsibilities, hopes and reproduction of vulnerabilities are also argued to be transferred to burden the disaster-stricken localities, consistent with the state's decentralization politics since the 2000s (Love, 2016, p. 20). Yoshihara (2013) argues that the overuse of the idealized community created what he calls "community inflation" in the wake of 3.11: The community was depicted as useful in this conspicuous discourse without considering its realities. The scholarly and public focuses were put on the extensive expectations and aspirations for the community that deviated from the actual, pre-disaster situation in the local communities. This was reflected in the reconstruction policies in which the

idealized and top-down defined, desired community (*nozomashii komyuniti*) was sought to be put in practice (Yoshihara, 2013, pp. 45–46).

This is argued to have created "two recoveries" in Tohoku: The official development-oriented one and the locally experienced one (Vainio, 2020b, pp. 48–59). Thus, despite the promotion of resident participation in Tohoku, dissatisfaction has been found to remain in the local communities (Tsuchiya *et al.*, 2013, 2014; Littlejohn, 2017; Kondo, 2018; Posio, 2019b; Vainio, 2020b), while similar findings of the unsuccessful application of and challenges to community-based methods have also been reported in other contexts (e.g., Cleaver, 2001; Davidson *et al.*, 2007; Sou, 2019). The criticism of resilience has especially highlighted the emergent nature of post-disaster communities in contrast to static pre-disaster communities with set capabilities. However, these studies, while pointing out crucial issues with resilience and vulnerability, rarely offer analytical tools to explore these emergent communities.

2.1.3   Emergent post-disaster yet given local communities

I follow in this research the approach to recovery and, consequently, resilience that seeks to balance the retrospective perspective. I treat recovery as a social process characterized by reorientation to the past, present and future in both the material and social worlds (Hastrup, 2009, 2011; Cox & Perry, 2011; Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015). It is suggested that attention should be shifted to the holistic recovery process instead of merely focusing on adaptation or nullification of the disaster and its effects. In this process, the disaster experience is intertwined with the life histories and the everyday, and the sense of subjective agency is regained (Hastrup, 2009). Not only communities and disaster (Hastrup, 2011, p.11) but also the normal and everyday (Samuels, 2016, 2019) are perceived to emerge from this narration of disaster and recovery experiences. Other studies have also used the narrative approach, for example, as a method to understand the affects related to disaster experience and reconstruction (Vainio, 2020b), to capture authentic experiences beyond political and media representations (Barber *et al.*, 2007) and to study social capital as narrative (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2011). These studies mainly analyze disaster recovery as a process. However, their focus is on individual subjectivity (Samuels, 2019), the process of intertwining disaster and everyday experiences (Hastrup, 2011), the contrast between the narratives of victims and official or media rhetoric (Barber *et al.*, 2007; Vainio, 2020b) or the significance of social capital (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2011), rather than on exploring how community comes to be experienced in these processes.

The notion of emergent post-disaster communities and the several factors shaping them have, nevertheless, received scholarly attention. I particularly discuss

studies in a Japanese context here. These works provide valuable insights into post-disaster social experiences and highlight their significance beyond the immediate disaster recovery by focusing on empirical examples. These perceived, felt and propagated post-disaster communities can be reflected in the ways that the locals in disaster-affected areas envision their own post-disaster communities and their future trajectories. However, these works seldom seek to problematize the community concept itself or the notion of "local community" in particular.

One of most significant aspects of specific kind of post-disaster communities is the sense of togetherness, both among the victims and non-victims, that is argued to be produced by disasters mostly temporarily in the immediate aftermath. For example, because disasters make social injustices more pronounced, their aftermath can trigger formation of what Fortun (2001) calls "enunciatory communities." These are temporary communities of stakeholders, activists, academics and medical and legal professionals who are conjoined by efforts to participate in defining the disaster, its outcomes and preferrable measures (Fortun, 2001, pp. 11–14). These kinds of perspectives on communities are reflected in the activities related to the Fukushima nuclear accident and the following insecurities over radiation in post-3.11 Japan. The residents, sometimes together with experts, engaged in the development of "scientific citizenship" to provide an alternative to the government-provided radiation levels and safety evaluations (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015; Polleri, 2019; Kenens *et al.*, 2020).

The post-disaster collective action and communality has also highlighted, for example, the duality of the state-society and rural-urban divisions in Japan. A renegotiation of citizenship and community participation also emerged beyond the immediate victim populations through the sentiments of togetherness, shared concerns and sense of urgency after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in Kobe, Japan in 1995[7]. The media dubbed 1995 as "The Year One of the Volunteering Age" (*Borantia Gannen*) when masses of volunteers rushed to disaster sites to help the locals. The Kobe earthquake gave rise to the so-called "new community theories" in Japan that focus on the ideal sense of togetherness and belonging provided by the volunteer activities. These new communities are contrasted to so-called old communities, such as village communities, that were perceived to be dispersing and eroding because of modernization and urbanization (Fujioka, 2008, p. 17). The

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[7]   The Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, magnitude 6.9, struck the Kobe area in Hyogo prefecture on January 17, 1995. The earthquake caused nearly 6,500 casualties and approximately 43,800 were injured, mostly by being crushed under collapsing buildings. The earthquake was the deadliest in Japan since The Great Kanto Earthquake and Fire in 1923 in Tokyo in which 105,000 people lost their lives (Ishigaki *et al.*, 2013).

earthquake raised academic interest in volunteering and generally in the reconfiguration of the state-citizen relationship and civil society (Shaw & Goda, 2004; Haddad, 2007; Avenell, 2010), the importance of social capital (Aldrich, 2011) and citizen participation in reconstruction, disaster management and community building (*machizukuri*) (Hein, 2001; Ito, 2007; Matsuoka *et al.*, 2012). The aftermath of the 3.11 disasters invited comparisons between post-disaster volunteering patterns and civil society developments (Avenell, 2012, 2013; Leng, 2015). This heightened also the awareness of the domestic rural immigration of young, urban, middle-class and entrepreneurially spirited volunteers who stayed in disaster-affected localities and participated in community recreation as a part of their quest for self-realization and a better life (Klien, 2016, 2020b).

Disasters are regarded as a moment of a heightened sense of togetherness locally, nationally or even globally. Solnit (2009), arguing against the disaster myth of post-disaster havoc and violence, has presented the disaster aftermath as a time of altruism and solidarity that, through post-disaster immersion in the lived moment, forms "a paradise built in hell" (Solnit, 2009). Disasters are thus acknowledged to create a special kind of sense of community built on shared experiences and mutuality (Solnit, 2009; Hoffman, 2020; Oliver-Smith, 2020). This sort of post-disaster utopia was argued to be present in post-disaster Tohoku as well (Abe *et al.*, 2014) and, for example, in the living conditions in the temporary shelters; re-establishing daily hygiene practices together helped to establish this sense of solidarity (Steger, 2015). However, this initial cohesion became more complex, especially when the reconstruction proceeded (Gerster, 2019; Posio, 2019b).

The idea of community and togetherness has also been analyzed on a national level in what Shindo (2015) called "a widespread call for the resurrection of a community in Japan" (Shindo, 2015, p. 135). The heightened attention to the "Japanese community" was present, for example, in the celebration of community bonds *kizuna* (Yoshihara, 2013; Morris-Suzuki, 2017; Gerster, 2019). In Japan, this disaster utopia is argued to function as a vehicle for renegotiating or reinforcing the boundaries and membership of a national community politically when *kizuna* and post-disaster behavior in Tohoku were promoted as essentialized Japanese characteristics (Hopson, 2013, pp. 7–8; Samuels, 2013, p. 39; Morris-Suzuki, 2017, pp. 180–183). In contrast, it is also argued that the national community based on ethnicity was questioned when sharing, loss and hopes for a better future came to be perceived as denominators of felt togetherness (Shindo, 2015; Morris-Suzuki, 2017; Shaw, 2017). A similar example of a post-disaster community ethos on a global scale was observed after the Haitian earthquake in 2010, when extensive media coverage facilitated the accumulation of massive amounts of foreign aid and fueled the global community's imagination (Schuller, 2016).

The vast, expanding body of literature on 3.11 approaches community recovery from perspectives such as the immediate aftermath, recovery and experiences (Kingston, 2012; Shaw, 2014d; Gill *et al.*, 2015), community-based reconstruction and disaster management (Sakurai & Ito, 2013; Shaw, 2014a; Ishikawa, 2015; Cheek, 2020) and reconstruction *machizukuri* in various fields from urban planning to cultural studies (Kazami, 2014; Matsumoto, 2016; Isozaki, 2020). Relating to this, opportunities for or the limitations of citizen participation in community recovery are also featured (Yoshihara, 2013; Mochizuki, 2014; Puppim de Oliveira & Fra.Paleo, 2016; Vainio, 2020a). Furthermore, research has focused on, for instance, the portrayal of disaster localities in disaster tourism and disaster heritage protection (McMorran, 2017; Littlejohn, 2020), dislocation and social isolation (Gagné, 2020a) and the significance of traditional festivals (Sakata, 2014; Takizawa, 2019; Kaneko, 2020). The role of spatiality is highlighted in relation to, for example, housing reconstruction (Hirayama & Saito, 2013; Kondo & Karatani, 2016) and the importance of places to share feelings and information and to maintain social roles and relationships (Teramura et al., 2017).

The Fukushima nuclear accident is represented in a great number of studies concerning nuclear politics, social protest and citizen activities as well as local experiences (Jacobs, 2011; Figueroa, 2013; Ogawa, 2013; Gill, 2015; Manabe, 2015; Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015; Iwasaki *et al.*, 2017; Novak, 2017; Polleri, 2019; Kenens *et al.*, 2020). The research has also drawn parallels between community recovery, resilience and social capital (Nakagawa & Shaw, 2004; Aldrich, 2012, 2015; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015) and stressed the co-constructive relation between an embodied and discursive sense of place and social capital (Posio, 2019a). The limited academic research about post-disaster Yamamoto consists of works in Japanese concentrating on mental health care and volunteering, for example. It also includes reports on local citizen activities and changes in the local environment (e.g., Kikuchi & Numano, 2014; Masaki et al., 2014; Teuchi, 2014; Xue et al., 2014) and an short English language discussions of the town's reconstruction policies (Kondo, 2018) or rebuilding of a coastal shrine (Rots, 2017; Takizawa, 2019).

Some of these just-mentioned studies focus on addressing the problems in the reconstruction policies and practices and, thus, portray local community as a more or less unified entity vis-à-vis officials (Vainio, 2020b). In other studies, the internal divisions within the local communities based on, for example, hierarchies of affectedness and victimhood (Gerster, 2019) and positionality within the reconstruction priorities (Posio, 2019b; chapter 5) are being brought forward. However, despite the fact that the locals themselves are in the middle of post-disaster confusion and reorientation, "the local community" is often represented as stable, singular and given: Something that is helped to recover by volunteers, separated from and entered by new locals, developed in policies and nostalgized and idealized as an

emblem of unity. The preceding discussion has shown that development of analytical tools to understand communities is in order in the disaster context and beyond.

2.2   Community and temporality

Notable in the preceding discussion is the quite limited role of temporality, although it is present in all of the issues discussed: The notions of community as a process and as emergent communities imply temporal dynamism and progression. Disaster reconstruction is essentially planning for the future that various actors compete to define, and resilience has become a tool to fortify communities against future disasters. Furthermore, the disaster recovery and reconstruction especially raise questions about for whom the post-disaster future is planned. In contrast, the notions of abstraction, revealed social structures and pre-disaster capabilities or local communities have an aura of stability. Nevertheless, it seems that the potential of temporality and especially the future are not fully used in the study of community. I will discuss here some perspectives of how temporality is addressed in prior research mainly in anthropology. However, instead of doing anthropology *of* the future or *for* the future (cf. Collins, 2008, p. 125) as many of the prior works have done, the focus of this research is on how temporality and especially the future helps us to understand community.

While the most heated scholarly interest in the concept of community has died down, there seems to be an increased focus on the future in the social sciences in general and in anthropology in particular. Several scholars have argued that anthropological attention on time has been intensively directed towards the past-present relationship at the expense of the future (Munn, 1992; Guyer, 2007; Collins, 2008; Appadurai, 2013; Pels, 2015; Bryant & Knight, 2019). As Munn (1992) already put it three decades ago in the much-quoted passage:

> … anthropologists have viewed the future in "shreds and patches," in contrast to the close attention given to "the past in the present" [...] In short, the future tends to be a displaced temporal topic, absent from its homeland in the past-present-future relation, whereas this relation itself has been kept in history rather than accorded its wider place in time. (Munn, 1992, p. 115–116)

The works drawing form the temporal dimension of the past also have implications for how community is perceived to be built on memories or interpretations of the past. The anthropologists' shyness to address the future has roots in the discipline's development, especially in relation to sociology, that focuses on modernity and progress. This was in contrast to the early anthropologists whose research approach laid a long-lasting foundation for perceiving anthropological

subjects and collectivities through the notions of tradition and custom, documentation and salvage (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. x). This emphasis on the past was further accentuated later when the popularity of nationalism studies in the 1980s led to research focusing on history, nostalgia and collective memory in relation to the state and social change. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) was influential not only in abstracting community but also in presenting a nation as a solid community moving as a whole in "homogenous time" (Anderson, 1983, p. 26). Inspired by this, many studies sought to understand national pasts and national memory (e.g., Cannadine, 1988; Connerton, 1989; Gillis, 1996; Kopeček, 1996) and thus contributed the idea of the past as a foundation for collective, national unity. It is remarked that these studies rarely addressed the relationship between collective pasts and their anticipated futures. Thus, "temporality was truncated at the relation between past and present, where the future often represented an unknown against which persons struggled to maintain stability clung to particular histories" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 7-8).

There has been a growing interest in the future within the discipline of anthropology and its neighboring fields ever since Munn's (1992) previously quoted, much-cited criticism of the neglect of the future. Much of this discussion and treatment of time revolved around how to find a balance between the temporal dimensions of the past-present-future. Many works still maintained the past as the explanation of the present and future. This approach was present, for example, in studies seeking to understand the present day as a complex historical product of modern times (Bear, 2014, p. 6) or in those arguing that dreaming is constituted by historical consciousness (Stewart, 2017). The past was also relied on when the lack of attention to the future in anthropology was attributed to the discipline's unfinished self-reflection on the colonial past (Pels, 2015), or the capacity to aspire was argued to be constituted by past inequalities (Appadurai, 2004).

The past has also been prevalent in disaster community recovery studies that have extensively studied topics such as collective memory and memorialization. Memory and the ways to remember are also in themselves noted to be forming both individual and collective identities (Moulton, 2015), while social relations shape community remembering (Ullberg, 2010). These studies have particularly focused on disaster memorials and museums (Boret & Shibayama, 2018; Maly & Yamazaki, 2021; Nazaruddin, 2021), disaster heritage sites and the related disagreements and politics (Littlejohn, 2021; Sakaguchi & Sakaguchi, 2021) and the role of recovered personal belongings (Nakamura, 2012; Mizoguchi, 2014). The studies have also addressed the process of dealing with the disaster experience and memories of the changed landscape through art and activities (Nakamura, 2021) and reconstruction planning (Tsukihashi & Hirao, 2013). Studies have found disaster story telling (Nagamatsu *et al.*, 2021; Prawoto & Octavia, 2021) and community radio activities

to be important channels for creating collective memories that contribute to the disaster survivor community's collective identity (Kanayama & Ogawa, 2020; Kanayama, 2021). The creation of public memory in newspaper reporting has been analyzed even as it happens (Rausch, 2014). However, some of these studies have remarked on the futurity inherent in memorialization argue for the importance of processing the memories for the future (Boret & Shibayama, 2018, p. 61; Kanayama & Ogawa, 2020; Kanayama, 2021; Littlejohn, 2021; Nakamura, 2021).

The future has come to have a more prominent role in anthropological analysis more recently, while the past remains an important temporal trope through which the present is understood and legitimized, and the trajectories of life are crafted. However, the future is argued to be essential for capturing the emergence that cannot be solely explained or comprehended by explanatory models of the reproduction of existing social institutions, symbolic work and power relations (Rabinow, 2008, pp. 3–4). Many works come close to the idea presented in this thesis when their attention is directed towards how futures were perceived in the present. These studies nevertheless concentrate mainly on the *perception* of the future instead of a discussion on how this future constitutes social life. The research agenda in these studies is to interpret "the way we and others picture the future" and understand "the effects of our (or their) picturing it as we/they do" (Wallman, 1992, p. 2). This has increased the awareness of the significance of these pictured futures, both in the present and the past (Rosenberg & Harding, 2005; Piot, 2010). Imagined communities were also extended towards the future: A nation has been analyzed as an imaginary community, a fantastical projection equivalent to a utopia that is fueled by the feeling of home it provided in modernity (Wegner, 2002), which hints at the significance of future projections of desired collectives.

Starting from the 2000s, however, the studies of the future have been increasingly colored by the insecurities created, for example, by globalization, terrorism, financial crises and the looming threat of climate change (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 9). The future has been addressed in studies concerned with environmental politics (Mathews & Barnes, 2016), climate change (Nuttall, 2010; Hastrup & Skrydstrup, 2012; Whitington, 2013; Kirksey, 2015), economentality as a mode of governance embracing the future and the economy (Mitchell, 2014), precariousness (Baldwin & Allison, 2015a; Desai, 2019), uncertainty and confusion over the future (Guyer, 2007; Bear, 2014; Maertz, 2019). Based on this, more recent studies argue for the irreversible logic of temporality and causality: The present becomes the effect of the future in anticipation and anticipatory action (Anderson, 2010; Nuttall, 2010; Nielsen, 2011, 2014; Bryant & Knight, 2019), and the future manifests materially as "anticipatory infrastructure" (Fehérváry, 2010; Nielsen, 2011; Enslev *et al.*, 2018).

In the context of Japan, the insecurities related to the future are connected in economic and social changes related to population aging and decline, gender inequality, and political leadership in the Japan of the post-90s recession (Allison, 2013; Baldwin & Allison, 2015a). A prevalent feature in Japanese scholarly work featuring the future is also the anticipation of future disasters due to Japan's topological and meteorological features and its location in a very seismically active area. Japan has been referred to as the disaster nation (*saigai no kuni Nihon*) at its extreme. Disasters were argued to form an essential part of the Japanese character and fuel the progress of the Japanese society in the so-called natural disaster evolution theory (*tensai shinkaron*) (Keihachiro, 1973, cited in Yamano, 2011, p. 2). This argument, however, is criticized for turning disasters into good fortune, ignoring people's suffering during the disasters and for neglecting consideration of the societal roots of the disasters (Yamano, 2011, pp. 2–3). It nevertheless illustrates how disasters are considered to form an integral part of Japanese history, of everyday life and future prospects of the national community. The more contemporary literature featuring anticipation of disasters not only argue for the necessity to learn from past disasters but also highlights the temporal dimension of the future by stressing the necessity to prepare for disasters. For instance, an idea of "pre-disaster community planning for post-disaster recovery" is proposed to expand the temporal axis to concentrate on proactive community building (Ichiko, 2012b, 2012a, 2016).

Hence, the scholarly interest has therefore been directed in many ways towards fears, threats, insecurities, uncertainties and avoidance (cf. Appadurai, 2013, p. 239). This connects the discussion of the future with the constitution of social structures, cohesion and identities through the perception or construction of danger, risk and insecurities (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983; Douglas, 1966, 1992; Weldes *et al.*, 1999b; Boholm & Corvellec, 2011). Scholars have also voiced the necessity to start considering people as responsible and active future-makers molding the trajectories of life both locally and globally in response to these uncertainties (Miyazaki, 2004; Nielsen, 2011; Appadurai, 2013; Pink & Salazar, 2017). These efforts are considered to create agency that enables people to navigate towards their visions of a good life (Fischer, 2014). However, people are also argued to be restricted by a socio-politically constructed capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004) or are perceived to be entrapped in their unachievable fantasies within the present socio-political conditions that Berlant (2011) calls cruel optimism.

Despite this increased engagement with the future in anthropology, the calls for heightened attention on the future continue. Therefore, it has been argued that the very act of envisioning the futures' role in anthropology has become a vehicle to constitute the disciplinary identity and agency in relation not only to other disciplines but also to the general socio-political and historical context particularly in the Global North (Valentine & Hassoun, 2019). This is echoed in the visions for adjusting the

discipline's focus to respond to the precariousness of the presence and futures of neoliberalism (Allison & Piot, 2011), urges to increase moral responsibility to do cultural research on the future (Appadurai, 2013) and efforts to create a futures anthropology that is more critical, daring, open and interventional (Pink & Salazar, 2017).

However, this futurity is not value free, but it contains an aspect of power. Greenhouse (1996) has already remarked that the increased anthropological research on social time includes implicit assumptions of separate relative anthropological temporalities and objectivist temporalities of "the others" (Greenhouse, 1996, p. 3). Furthermore, Valentine and Hassoun (2019) have argued the enduring demands for more futurity construct an unproblematized, dominant narrative of a common human future instead of evoking temporal multiplicity. This analytical futurity is based on the presuppositions of commonalities and humanness and the socio-political developments in the Global North and it neglects the power relations formed in this process (Valentine & Hassoun, 2019, pp. 245–246). The notion of multitemporality has not gone fully unnoticed, but it is associated mainly with complex historical processes, confusion and conflict caused by the different temporalities and rhythm of time mediated by institutions (Bear, 2014). These kinds of temporal observations are connected to the narrative of modernity's uncertain times and, thus, its individualized search for community (Bauman, 2001).

Furthermore, the discussion continues about how to treat the future and time without associating it with progress or, more lately, to neoliberal ideals (e.g., Rabinow, 2008; Bear, 2014; Kumar, 2016; Bryant & Knight, 2019). Appadurai (2004; 2013), when discussing culture and temporality, remarks that the future that is embedded in, for example, norms, beliefs and values, and this futurity directs our attention to "how collective horizons are shaped and of how they constitute the basis for collective aspirations" (Appadurai, 2004, p.61). Thus, if it is not easy to avoid romanticizing the community concept, it is also difficult to incorporate the future dimension into the analysis of community without implying any value-laden expectations of development. However, these ideas of development are also important to understand when studying community. For example, the Tohoku region's peripheralization has largely relied on setting the region on a timeline that expects progress from uncivilized, undeveloped and traditional to developed, modern and urban Japan (Morris-Suzuki, 1996; chapter 5).

Futurity is not, however, a search for newness or transformation or a particular cultural temporality, but it is argued that attention should be paid to how it arises in what we already do (Pandian, 2012, p. 548). Even the whole notion of temporality in anthropological analysis has been questioned because it gives both past and present a status of ontological property and, as such, a causal explanatory value of "actual" pasts and futures. It is argued that a presentist approach avoids this by

perceiving temporality as contingent to the social practices performed (Ringel, 2016). In this thesis I follow a similar approach offered by Bryant & Knight (2019) on the experience of temporality in the present. They develop their concept of future orientation from the work of social theorist Theodore Schatzki, who presents the dimensions of time as parts of the inherent teleology of human life that transpire in action (Schatzki, 2009, 2010b). Future orientations enable starting "*from* the future" to perceive the temporal dynamics in the present activities from that perspective (Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 15–16). This reflects Collins' (2008) remark on the necessity to study "the future in its capacity to shake our understandings of the past, to remake identity and history" (Collins, 2008, p. 125), or Miyazaki's (2006) note about the temporal directionality of a present action that can manifest in reimagining "the present from the perspective of the end" (Miyazaki, 2006, p. 157).

Bryant and Knight (2019) refer to collectively experienced temporality as *vernacular timespaces*. Vernacular timespace denote the collective, epochal feeling of living in a period of particular temporality that requires or induces a collective response (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 30–34). A sentiment of the post-disaster (*saigo*) time of crisis in Yamamoto, in contrast to the pre-disaster "times of peace" (*heiwa no jidai*), seemed to be more or less shared by the research participants. However, Bryant and Knight focus more on the temporality and leave the particular collective that is feeling the temporality rather unproblematized. Therefore, an idea of a uniformly shared vernacular timespace that is given explanatory value is implied in their work. This leaves the full potential of exploring futurity in shaping the diversity of social life and collectivity unused. I continue with the concept of future orientation in this research but apply it to study various overlapping and simultaneous collectively experienced temporalities that emerge in these post-disaster times. I particularly concentrate on how they shape and are shaped by the community in all their ambiguities.

2.3   Conclusion

I have discussed in this chapter how the concept of community has been debated and applied both in research and in disaster management practice. In the course of the conceptual reorientations, community has become at once both abstracted as a concept yet actualized as a powerful ideal in practice. It has also been criticized for being vague, useless and romanticized, yet it continues to be an often-used, unproblematized unit of analysis and various practices. I have argued that the necessity to continue the efforts to enhance the understanding of the community concept lies largely in these paradoxical developments produced by the prior research introduced in this chapter. How then, in the context of disaster recovery and beyond, could we capture the process nature of community that is simultaneously

claimed to be stagnant, idealized, belonging, emergent, spatial, affective, imaginative, multivocal and politically charged? I have discussed in the latter part of this chapter how research on temporality and particularly the future have, to some extent, implied the role of temporality in shaping social life. However, these studies have been mostly preoccupied with discussing temporality and the future in itself instead of an analysis of community (cf. Collins, 2008, p. 125).

Thus, I accept the challenge to explore the concept of community in this thesis, although it would be easier to dismiss it as vague and useless. This conceptual reconsideration requires navigation between idealized romanticization and cynical criticism on the one hand and collectivism and individualism on the other hand. Moreover, it necessitates awareness of both the very real experience of community in actualized interactions and its analytical presentation as forms of sociality or abstracted ideas. The debates about community seem to have moved to discussing so-called midlevel concepts, such as disjuncture (Amit, 2015), social space (Reed-Danahay, 2015), fields (Postill, 2015) or sociability (Anderson, 2015) that have been suggested as functioning as useful tools for understanding human sociality in everyday life's ambiguities. However, I consider that the concept of community still has much to give when adding the temporal dimension of the future to the discussion. This approach does not intend, however, to engage in definitional debates; instead, as noted already, it focuses on "the processes by which meanings are established, challenged and altered through unique events from which emerge complex social forms that are perceived as objective realities" in the constantly emergent world (Hastrup, 2004, p.146). This is what I intend to do in the next chapter, where I introduce the conceptual framework that I have named aspired communities.

3   The conceptual framework of aspired communities

Various notions of community were strongly present in the Yamamoto locals' lives when they sought to navigate towards their recovery. These notions were surprisingly similar yet also contradictory and even conflicting. They evoked a full spectrum of feelings, from a sense of belonging and attachment to frustration and insecurity, that motivated and legitimized various activities. The notion of community was also used to direct the recovery's reconstruction measures, roles and responsibilities. The presence of community was also felt in its absence: It was yearned for and searched for. This longing materialized, for example, as gathering places established to enable communication. Most importantly, community was connected to a continuous reflection of the past, present and the future community of place and in place in relation to the disaster and recovery. Thus, this overarching yet elusive presence of community directed the research puzzle that motivated this thesis towards these manifold communities of recovery: How can these versatile notions of community be understood? How do they evolve, how are they used and even imposed? How does community become experienced as a social reality? Previous literature has sought to address this to some extent in the disaster context and beyond, but it has not fully embraced the temporal dynamics of this process (chapter 2).

I introduce the conceptual framework of aspired communities in this chapter. I argue that it is essential to analyze the various forms of sociality through the future orientation of collective aspiring in order to develop an understanding of how community comes to be interpreted, experienced and felt as a social reality. Thus, I suggest that the desired futures and aspiring in itself are important features of community, which is regarded here as a social temporal-spatial process. The first part of this chapter lays the groundwork for developing the conceptual framework of aspired communities. I outline how I perceive community as a process or, in other words, as continuous, mutually constitutive, enacting and envisioning. This approach enables me to explore community as a process in actualized interactions in social practices (2002), but it also underlines the role subjectivity, agency (Ortner, 2006) and imaginative capacity (Hastrup, 2004a) in the constitution of social reality.

I proceed to examine how the enacting and envisioning of community are grounded in temporal and spatial experience of the indeterminate open-ended teleology of human activity. Here, I find it useful to think with Theodore Schatzki's notion of timespace (2009, 2010b) and especially its anthropological application of future orientations by Rebecca Bryant and Daniel Knight (2019). These orientations are argued to capture "the flux of experience, the rollercoaster of aspirations and fears that inhabits every one of us" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p.194), and this lays the foundation for the key concept of collective aspiring.

I suggest in the latter part of this chapter that the future orientation of *aspiring* can serve as a conceptual tool to understand and analyze the ontologization of community. I argue that aspiring offers various analytical strengths when it directs the attention not only to the insecurities over the uncertainty of the future but also to the social agency that seeks to strive towards a desired future. It also leaves room for acknowledging the subjective experience, the subjectively felt motivations, of these actors and the temporal and instrumental uses of the notion of community. Aspiring not only refers to the desired future or aspiration as an objective, but it also particularly highlights collective aspiring in and of itself. As such, aspiring as an ever-evolving future orientation in social life can offer insights into how people are connected through action-oriented collective pursuing and affectively charged yearning. The focus on collective aspiring enables also analysis of how divergent futures create conflict, hubs of social norms, controversies and contribute to power-dynamics. This framework, although presented here before the ethnographic analysis, is largely developed inductively from the analysis of the narratives and activities of the post-disaster Yamamoto locals (see chapter 4). Therefore, I have included a few extracts from the ethnographic data that reflect the key points of this otherwise concept-heavy discussion.

3.1   Community as a process

The previous chapters discussed that the community concept has been debated, criticized and redefined in various ways (e.g., Cohen, 1985, 2002; Bauman, 2001; Brent, 2004; Anderson, 2006; Tanabe, 2008a, 2008b; Blackshaw, 2010; Gordon, 2012) because it is such an important concept in anthropological research. However, is it a necessity to define community in order to study it? Vered Amit's (2010) answer is no. Amit (2010, see also 2020; Amit *et al.*, 2015) develops her prior argumentation on community (Amit, 2002; Amit & Rapport, 2002) and suggests that if the definition of community suffers from ambiguity, we may as well benefit from it.

Community defined as imagined categorial identity or shared qualities neglects both the dynamic aspect of sociality as various, evolving relations as well as the ways

that shared identities are mobilized in interaction. Amit contends that "a more effective working model must therefore focus on the uncertainties arising in the intersection of the idea and actualization of sociation[8]" (Amit, 2010, p. 358). Establishing community as an analytical working model thus makes it a useful analytical tool when it is used "to query *process* of sociation rather than to proffer a narrow definition of a particular type of situation or grouping" (Amit, 2010, 2020, p. 52, emphasis in the original), because community as a social group is never a static entity (cf. Latour, 2005, p. 31). This enriches our understanding of the variety of the conceptually interlinked forms of sociality in altering circumstances and in their numerous qualities across scale, duration, comprehensiveness, degree of formalization and mediation (Amit, 2010). I refer to this idea of refocusing the research when using the notion of "community as a process."

In addition to reuniting abstracted ideas of community with the social interactions and everyday life (Neal & Walters, 2008; Amit, 2010, 2020; Gordon, 2012), my intention is to treat structure and agency as well as social and material as interlinked and mutually constitutive (Moore & Sanders, 2014, p.14) instead of juxtaposed or contested. I use here the analytical terms *enacting* and *envisioning* to describe the dynamic, mutually constitutive relation between actualized interactions and the imaginative abstractions of community. I perceive these as simultaneous and continuously evolving and tied to their material setting (c.f. Neal & Walters, 2008). These aspects are inherently intertwined, because "to treat the idea and actualization of community as if these are in essence independent elements is to leave us and our analyses with only one hand clapping" (Amit, 2002, p. 8). Furthermore, Tanabe (2008a, 2008b) has argued for the necessity to consider community based not only on what already exists but also in terms of imaginative and recursive practices according to the ways people develop their desires, imaginations and thoughts. This directs the focus from retrospective imagined communities to the more active process of imagining communities (Tanabe, 2008b, p. 289). I follow this thought, but instead of imagining, I concentrate on the active process of aspir*ing* that highlights the futural component. Using community as an analytical approach to explore the various forms of sociality, or "forms of coexistence" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 147), connects community as a process to the social practice approach that is argued

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[8]   I interpret the term sociation here as referring to reciprocal human interactions that vary in intensity and scale, "from momentary events like a glance to the structures of the nation-state" (Law, 2010, p. 181). In her later works, Amit prefers the term sociality (Amit *et al.*, 2015) that is an increasingly popular concept in the analysis of social life (Long & Moore, 2013). To some extent, sociation can be compared to (inter)actions in social practices; Simmel also refers to stable and patterned forms of reciprocal interaction between individuals as sociation (Simmel, 1971: 127).

to offer important perspectives on the formation of social life (Tanabe, 2008a, 2008b).

I use the first term, enacting, to point to the actual interactions and activities in social practices. This thesis analyzes community in relation to practices in which the particular experience of community transpires instead of treating community as a result or accomplishment. I draw from the work of social theorist Theodore Schatzki. Schatzki defines social practices as the organized manifold array of human activities[9] or, in other words, the organized doings and sayings that are connected to their material arrangements (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 71–77, 2010a, p. 129). The organization of the practice constitutes the human coexistence, or "the hanging-together of human lives," as the overall site of the social (Schatzki, 2002, p. 147). Schatzki argues that all social phenomena are constituted by complex and compound webs or parts of what he calls practice-arrangement bundles. Therefore, enacting occurs on the same flat, ontological level because all social affairs are sectors, slices or aspects of practice-arrangement bundles and their constellations. This plenum of practices encompasses all human activities; thus, neither the face-to-face interactions in local contexts nor abstracted, larger phenomena have ontological priority. Instead, they are perceived as constellations of social practices and not as separate entities having causal power or different logic of functioning (Schatzki, 2016b, pp. 31–33). Thus, social phenomena, such as community, have no ontological status outside human activities.

However, the interconnectedness in social practices or, simply, doing things together does not automatically mean interdependence or lead to an idea of community, let alone to a subjectively experienced affective sense of belonging (Amit, 2010, pp. 360–362; Schatzki, 2016b, p. 31). Therefore, it is necessary to pair the term enacting with the notion of envisioning. I refer with envisioning to discursive and imaginative efforts that contribute to interpreting, experiencing and feeling community as a social whole. Scollon (2001) offers us a lead in this: He argues that communities formed around specific practices become ontologically structural realities for the social actors through discursive objectivization. In this process they come to constitute "a more or less bounded entity of members and others" (Scollon, 2001, p.155; 170; c.f. Nicolini, 2017, p.102). As such, these communities are "no longer organized around practice so much as around

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[9] Here, I follow Schatzki and use the word *activity* to refer to event-like performing or doing, whereas action as an accomplishment is what happens in this activity (Schatzki, 2010b, p. xv). Social actors are performers of these actions and can be held responsible for their doings. However, they are not individual initiators of these activities, but their agency is inseparable from the activity circumscribed by the social practice (Hastrup, 2004a, p. 233; Schatzki, 2016a, p. 12).

definitions, boundaries, membership, inclusion, and exclusion" (Scollon, 2001, p.170). This reminds us that practices are not only "doings" that transpire in particular (inter)actions or in enactment: Language and discursive practices as "sayings" also play a role in constituting social life and crafting community as a shared idea and experience. Sayings and doings are mutually constitutive (cf. ibid., p. 160), while the analytical separation of discursive and non-discursive "facilitates explorations of convergences, divergences and entanglements in these contributions" and analysis of the communicative roles in social practices (Schatzki, 2017b, pp. 129–131). I elaborate later on the importance of the future dimension also implied in the term envisioning.

Experiences occur in relation to the activity being performed in social practices, but the practice does not fully dictate what is experienced (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 27–28). In other words, the subjective experiences constituting community on which this thesis focuses can vary. Subjectivity, the less studied aspect of social practices, is perceived here as "the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects." These are inherently connected to "the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on" (Ortner, 2006, p. 107). As such, the experienced agency is formed in envisioning the social whole and its future. Hastrup (2004a) highlights the reciprocal relations of individual agency and the imaginative capacity that together constitute the experience of an ontologically distinct whole. This underlines how social phenomena are constituted by human action, yet human agency needs a sense of wholeness characterized by an anticipatory sense of plot to be purposeful (Hastrup, 2004a, p. 223):

> "By investing their own interests and actions in filling out the form, the social actors make the community happen. Without a sustained (and shared) illusion about the social space in which one participates, no action makes sense" (ibid., p.230).

Individuals are, thus, performing parts in relation to others as well as to the imagined whole. Envisioning refers here particularly to this discursive formation of this imagined whole and its future.

I must note at this point that my aim is not to argue that community is a social practice or to analyze it as, for example, "a community of practice" (Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice are founded on the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire that are also relevant in this research. However, they refer to a clearly specifiable type of community around related practices such as workspaces (Wenger, 1998, p. 72), and the concept therefore remains yet another fixed definition of community. Social practices are present both

in this framework and the ethnographic analysis of this thesis, although I seldom explicitly identify them as such in the following chapters: I refer to gardening practices and trash management practices when I discuss, for instance, the perceived significance of gardening or trash management. To merely identify the particular practices constituting community would not result in a rather dull analysis, but simultaneously also neglect the process nature of community occurring in several other practices. Rather, this very simplified outline of the preceding practice approach and the following discussion on timespace is intended to introduce the underlying processual logics of the framework of collective aspiring and its central concepts (cf. Schatzki, 2010a, p. 125).

3.1.1   Temporality and spatiality of community

Temporality and progress are strongly implied by the idea of community as a process of continuous enacting and envisioning. This directs the attention towards the temporal dimensions of human activity and, consequently, to renegotiation and reproduction of community through constant collective reinterpretation of these pasts, presents and futures. Before introducing the future orientation of aspiring that addresses the temporal dimensions of community as a process, I briefly introduce its foundational idea, namely, Schatzki's term *activity timespace* (2009, 2010b). Schatzki argues that the interwoven individual activity timespaces form an essential infrastructure of any social phenomena: Social practices bundle through an alignment of timespaces. The participants in this process share futures and activity pasts characterizing and characterized by the particular practice (Schatzki, 2010b, pp. 77–78). These futures and pasts, however, can be partly common, shared or personal, or even divergent at the times of conflict (ibid., pp. 52, 88). Activity timespace consists of the intrinsically connected existential temporality and spatiality that are opened up in human activity within a particular practice (Schatzki, 2009, p. 35, 2010b, pp. ix–x, 1).

The temporality of the timespaces concept refers to *existential temporality*. It neither indicates the particular cultural ideas of social time nor the objective, linear time as the passage of time nor even the time that is characterized by succession, before and after, or other orderings of events. Instead, it denotes the temporal *dimensionality* of the past, present and future that all manifest simultaneously in human activity and exist as long as a person acts (Schatzki, 2009, p. 37, 2010b, p. 43). This dimensionality constitutes the indeterminate, open-ended teleological character of human activity that is directed *towards* an end (the future dimension) while departing *from* the state of affairs (the past dimension), and the present is the acting itself (Schatzki, 2009, p. 38). Teleology is often associated with modernity, progress or even eschatology in the social sciences; nevertheless, it is a useful tool

for understanding how the future is orienting quotidian action (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 2). Thus, temporality is regarded here not as an ontological property but as a "thoroughly epistemic and social phenomenon" that "should not be taken as a given, innate, or intrinsic quality, but as a matter of contingent and contested social practices." As such, temporality does not have here a causal explanatory value, and there is no particular "actual past" of any object. Instead, objective past and future do not exist as such, but as temporal dimensions they come to have their significance in relation to the practice (Ringel, 2016, pp. 392–393).

This approach to temporality sets community as a process in motion when it comes to be analyzed through the dynamics of striving *towards* ends as its primary characteristics. In this sense, social phenomena, such as community, come to be in a setting in which temporality is inherent in the everyday when "in every action and interaction the future is present" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 198). However, this temporal dimensionality of human activity is circumscribed by the social practices people are engaging in. Schatzki argues that due to this teleological characteristic of activities, people do what makes sense for them to do within the limits of what he calls *teleoaffective structure* of the practice (Schatzki, 2010, p. 114–115). This structure delineates individual timespaces and encompasses enjoined and acceptable ends, projects, actions and emotions in social practice (Schatzki, 2009, p. 39, 2010b, p. 52). This does not equal rationality, but the logic of performing activities depends on how the states of affairs are interpreted and what ways of being are desired (Schatzki, 2010, p. 114–115). Enacting and envisioning of community thus occur within the frames of a particular practice, its teleoaffective structure and intertwined timespaces.

This may all sound rather deterministic, but the focus of this research is on the subjective and creative ways that people experience, feel and interpret their social and its life temporal dimensions. Human activities can be analytically conceived as situational, open-ended indeterminate temporalspatial event (Schatzki, 2010b, p. x): This temporality embedded in social practices is argued to be "what makes acts relevant in relation to social experience, however conceived" (Greenhouse, 1996, p. 1). Nevertheless, as ontologized, immediate social reality of everyday life, these temporal dimensions can be experienced as practical and "real" or abstract and distant and, as such, altering or enduring interpretations of the past, present and future. Even the ways the future is experienced is not always the same: It can be looming on the horizon as barely visible or sensed as being "right here, right now." Therefore, instead of the notion of a never-reachable "horizon," Bryant and Knight (2019) suggest the term "threshold of anticipation" to describe both the affective "imminence of the future and the idea of pressing forward into it, potentially crossing into it." Reaching this threshold may create a sense of crossing into the future, or another timespace, that can trigger a radical reorientation to the past (Bryant &

Knight, 2019, p. 35). These thresholds describing the feel of the future are not always characterized by optimism and hope but sometimes also by exhaustion and hopelessness (ibid., p. 199).

The concept of timespace highlights that existential temporal dimensions of human life are intrinsically unified with *spatiality* that refers here to the "phenomenological," "existential" and "lived" space. (Schatzki, 2009, p. 36; see also e.g., Ingold, 2000, 2011; Pink, 2012). Timespace is, of course, connected to objective time as succession and to space as a geometrical, material environment through a myriad of relations when the places of the teleological activities are anchored in physical entities or locations in objective space (Schatzki, 2009, pp. 36–38). However, any particular places are not in themselves fundamental constituents of complex social phenomena: Spaces become meaningful through the repeated activities performed in them and, in turn, spaces constitute the context for any action (Hastrup, 2004a, pp. 225, 232; Schatzki, 2010b, p. 37). Therefore, "what goes on in place cannot be understood independently of the spatial features … any more than these spatial features can be understood independently of what goes on in particular places" (Schatzki, 2010b, p. 83). Thus, "it is not possible to 'think away' the actual geographical location of social life; lives are always grounded" (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 145): Even cyberspace is connected to the physical space that the users inhabit while acting in cyberspace, which in turn also shapes the actors' spatial experiences and arrangements. Thus, people inhabit multiple spaces simultaneously within which people develop senses of temporality and spatiality when acting (Jones, 2005, pp. 142–143).

I embrace in this thesis this idea of this mutually constitutive relation of sociality, temporality and spatiality that I perceive characterizing community as a process. The lived, material world is perceived as a multivocally constructed, organic co-constituent of social life (Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Rodman, 2003; Low, 2009, 2016; Ingold, 2011) that is signified by and signifying the temporal dimensions of human activities. Spatiality has a specific horizon of expectation delineated by the social practice being performed in it that makes it teleological by nature (Schatzki, 2009, pp. 36–38). Spatiality is, thus, connected to enacting but it requires also envisioning: Understanding the social space as meaningful wholes is essentially an imaginative process that is, however, confined to the materiality of the place (Appadurai, 1996, p. 182; Hastrup, 2004a, p. 232). The shared experiences of emplaced social interaction build up not only ideas of collective memories and identities but contribute also to envisioning of interactions and collective futures associated with the place (Milligan, 1998, 2003; Gray, 2002; Kempny, 2002; Neal & Walters, 2008; Schatzki, 2010b, pp. 83–84).

I use the term "lived environment" together with spatiality in the analysis because the built environment is central in the disaster reconstruction context. This

term highlights the experience of and interaction with the lived environment and particularly its materiality, that is regarded as an important constituent of all social phenomena (Schatzki, 2010a). The term spatiality refers in the analysis particularly to the experience of the space and one's relative position in this lived socio-spatial environment. Thus, lived environment and spatiality go hand in hand in this research and are a rhetorical means to stress different aspects of the existential, lived spatiality. This discussion is the point of departure for the framework of aspired communities. The remainder of this chapter focuses largely on discussing experienced temporality, although the notion of spatiality is also embedded in it as just outlined.

3.2   From anticipation to aspiration: Achieving instead of avoiding

> If there would not be a desire to make this town once more reborn, reconstruction could not be done. (A strawberry farmer in Yamamoto)

I argue in this section that it is necessary to shift the focus from uncertain, anticipated futures to collectively desired futures and aspiring to explore how forms of sociality become ontologized as community. Appadurai (2013) has noted that "in a sense, the good life may be characterized as what, in any society, many people hope to achieve. Yet anthropology has been substantially preoccupied with what societies fear and therefore seek to avoid" (Appadurai, 2013, p.293). This remark about the difference between achieving and avoiding crystalizes the niche of the framework of aspired communities that I am suggesting.

Community as a process is approached here as being inherently tied to the indeterminate and open-ended teleology of human life as described earlier. The question is, how could we operationalize these temporal dimensions and their dynamism? Drawing from Schatzki's concept of timespace (2009, 2010), Bryant and Knight (2019) suggest a concept of *future orientation* to capture both the relationship between the future and action and the act of imagining the future. Bryant and Knight define future orientations as the "way [we] continuously to orient ourselves to the indefinite teleologies of everyday life." As such, they depict the ways people navigate through quotidian in relation to the ends – in plural – they pursue. Future orientations encompass the full spectrum of experiences and affective dimensions of temporality: They "entail planning, hoping for, and imagining the future", but also the possible "collapse or exhaustion of those efforts: moments in which hope may turn to apathy, frustrated planning to disillusion, and imagination to fatigue" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 16–19). In future orientation, people simultaneously act in the

present in relation to the imagined future that, in turn, shapes the future's imagination (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 140; cf. Miyazaki, 2004, p. 157).

I adopt this concept of future orientations in this thesis to put ethnographic flesh on the bones of the practice theory approach as it enables the analysis of the significance of temporality for community as a process. Bryant and Knight argue that all future orientations are teleoaffects (ibid., p. 140) and that they occur within, but also help shape new, intertwined timespaces of practices (ibid., p. 199). I use the term future orientation to refer more generally to the mode of relating to the temporal dimension of the future in social practices that, nevertheless, shape the enjoined and accepted activities and ends. Bryant and Knight (2019) name anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, hope and destiny as central future orientations. Appadurai (2013) adds to this yet two more aspects when he calls for an investigation of the separated, yet interconnected imagination anticipation and aspiration to understand temporality and humans as future makers (Appadurai, 2013, pp. 286–287). All these future orientations evoke, shape and are shaped by affects and the ends that people acceptably pursue (Appadurai, 2013, pp. 286–287; Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 140) and, hence, are central in the ways in which community is enacted and envisioned.

I argue next for the usefulness of future orientation of *aspiring* as a conceptual window to community and temporality: Aspiring complements particularly anticipation and imagination because it directs the attention to *desired* futures instead of uncertain or possible futures. However, it is first necessary to understand the characteristics of the often-used anticipation, imagination and hope. The future is either problematized or framed as *uncertain* and unpredictable in many fields (Kleist & Jansen, 2016). One cannot, of course, deny that nothing absolutely certain can be said about an objective future. It is possible, however, to explore how the future and the experienced temporality are manifested and felt in the present. Bryant and Knight argue (2019) that the limit of knowledge shapes the future orientations: Uncertainty as an affective dimension of time produces fear and anxiety in the face of an anticipated threat and danger (Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 19, 26, 30). Anticipation entails acting upon the anticipated, uncertain future in the present and the sense of thrusting towards the future when enacting it, which pulls the future towards the present (ibid., p. 28). In contrast, a future orientation of expectation relies on reasoning based on past experiences.

However, anticipation is associated not only with uncertainty but also often with avoidance: Its mobilization into collective anticipatory action is argued to be performed to avoid unwanted scenarios, threats and dangers (Anderson, 2010; Appadurai, 2013, pp. 293–295; Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 37–38). Therefore, in anticipatory action, the anticipated, yet unknown, future is manifested in the present action when "bombs are dropped, birds are tracked, and carbon is traded on the basis

of what has not and may never happen: the future" (Anderson, 2010, p. 777). Thus, in a sense, the future becomes a threat and a source of insecurity. Anticipatory action is argued to be relieving this anxiety and fear when it is striving for normalization of the present (Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 42–43).

I suggest here that readjustment of the conceptual focus to aspiring of desired futures rather than anticipation and avoidance is necessary when exploring community in the light of human life's teleological character. Bryant and Knight (2019) link collectivity to avoidance when they claim that anticipation is the most likely future orientation to evoke collective responses (Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 37–38). Others have argued that the shared threats, dangers and insecurities, either perceived, constructed or politically imposed, construct social structures, cohesion, exclusions and inclusions or shared identities (Douglas, 1966, 1992; Boholm, 1996; Weldes *et al.*, 1999b; Boholm & Corvellec, 2011). However, if the activity constituting social phenomena is understood to be teleological, that is, striving *towards* an end, that would be a process of achieving rather than avoiding. Hence, we should pay attention to how the ultimate "end that makes sense" as a basis of social phenomena is something desired to be achieved, not only feared or avoided. Therefore, I suggest that the potential for social connectedness behind uncertainty, anticipatory action and avoidance can be analyzed instead as joint endeavors to achieve the desired future and its aspired sense of security. However, security is never fully complete (Stern, 2006; James, 2014, p. 72). Thus, the sense of togetherness constituted by the promise of security highlights the dynamic, teleological aspect of aspiring (see chapters 6 and 8).

Before arguing more for the usefulness of the concept of collective aspiring, I briefly discuss the notion of imagination. Imagination is used in various ways, but it is also criticized for being a vague, overused term (Stankiewicz, 2016). I use it here to refer to the general envisioning of *possible* futures that is not necessarily goal oriented (Hart, 2013, p. 76). Appadurai perceives collective imagination as "a vital resource in all social processes and projects" that forms quotidian energy (Appadurai, 1996, 2013, p. 287). The future does not present endless opportunities or constitute overarching uncertainty when temporality is approached conceptually from the perspective of imagination: The future is seen as evolving imaginative, yet fuzzy, horizon due to the reciprocal relation of present perceptions and future imaginings. These imaginative horizons shape, direct and delimit our present-day perceptions and actions and, as such, they also direct the imaginative process itself (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 15; Ota, 2011, p. 195). Imagination of possible futures within the organization of social practices thus enables the imagining of alternate futures and social wholes (cf. Hastrup, 2004a). In a sense, imagination is the basis of creative envisioning, but aspiring implies directionality when proceeding towards these fuzzy horizons.

Hope is suggested as a term that balances the focus on the future's risks and uncertainties, the sense of crisis and loss of direction framed in the media and academic research in the contemporary world. Hope is presented as the potentiality for alternative, possible futures and the willingness to act for it: Hope is argued to motivate the activity and to "drive potentiality toward actuation" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p.157; Kleist & Jansen, 2016, p.379; Kleist, 2017). Crapanzano (2003), however, offers a different interpretation: Hope is a positive but passive sentiment that is often associated with fate or force beyond the human agency (Crapanzano, 2003, pp. 100–101). Following this, I present aspiring as the active state of pursuing the desired futures. I perceive hope as a property, something that a person can have. It is the perceived, affective level of the future's potentiality that fuels aspiring; one can have high hopes or lose one's hope, but that does not mean that one is not aspiring.

Nevertheless, while anticipation, imagination and hope are putting emphasis on temporality, practice and social agency, they are still relying more on the notion of an uncertain future and avoidance as analytical approaches. As such, they do not fully capture the ways in which humans seek to collectively interpret and craft their futures and how they experience this process. The notions of desired futures and aspiring also efficiently incorporate the teleological character of human life and activity: Those desires and wants that are constituting the teleological or futural component of the human activity and social practices forming social phenomena. In contrast, imagination, expectation and anticipation (presumptions) relate to the past as a state of affairs on which people act:

> Given such and such states of affairs, it makes sense to perform this action for the sake of such and such way of being (or state of affairs). In more familiar words (see below): which action is signified as the one to perform—regardless of whether it is worldly or mental—depends on *believed, perceived, imagined, expected, presumed etc. states of affairs* and *desired, wanted, sought after etc. ways of being*. (Schatzki, 2010b, pp. 114–115, emphasis added)

Thus, I perceive that imagination and anticipation fuel and shape aspiring, but they neither fully constitute it nor are they sufficient concepts for analyzing community. Disasters, pandemics or other devastations may underline how unpredictable the future is or how big the disasters are that we can imagine on the horizon. However, in this realm of uncertainty, collective aspiring serves as a dynamo for social connections to proceed towards the desired future, both envisioned and enacted – and the ways this may be making community for those involved is what can be analyzed. Thus, the concept of aspiring highlights the social actors' temporal experience: the sense of striving for establishing and acting for the

desired future in order to constitute a shared sense of direction. It also underlines the importance of having a sense of the future, because losing it altogether leads to a sense of crisis and disorientation (Cox & Perry, 2011; Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 42–43).

3.2.1   Collective aspiring and aspirations

> With the strength of one-by-one proceeding forward, with cooperation and sharing mutual desires, certainly [the community] will start taking form… Everyday, a little, but gradually one can understand the form. (The chief monk of Fumonji temple in Yamamoto)

I have already previously argued for the rationale of emphasizing desired futures and aspiring when analyzing community, but community entails an assumption of sharing and collectivity. This requires expanding the notion of aspirations, and especially of the process of aspiring, to the collective, interactional sphere of social practices. What do we actually mean when we talk about aspirations? As Hart (2016) is asking:

> Are they [aspirations] akin to hopes, wishes, dreams, ambitions and goals? Do they signal optimism for the future or pessimism about the present? Do they portray longings and yearnings for that which we are not, or cannot do, or do not have? Are aspirations grounded in rationality, emotion, idealism or pragmatism? (Hart, 2016, pp. 325–326)

Individual aspiration is particularly associated with the future of "the self or the agency of the self in relation to goals concerning others" in contrast to imagination, which is not necessarily goal oriented or related to the self (Hart, 2013, p. 76). These aspects can be summarized by seeing aspirations as "future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations" and "indicative of an individual or group's commitments towards a particular trajectory or end point" (Hart, 2016, p. 326). These definitions of aspiration, as already noted, therefore resonate with the teleological character of human life.

Aspirations have often been associated with the domain of the individual, chiefly in the fields of economy, human development and education (e.g., Carter, 2001; Marjoribanks, 2002; Hart, 2013; Rose & Baird, 2013), which has left them rather invisible in the field of culture. Appadurai (2004) contends that aspirations are always "formed in interaction and the thick of social life," and they derive from larger cultural norms and system of ideas (Appadurai, 2004, p. 67). Furthermore, aspirations are commonly understood as objectives, whereas the significance of the

act of aspiring itself is not often discussed, similar to hope studies that seem to focus on hope instead of hoping. However, Tanabe (2008a, 2009b) has underlined the significance of active imagining over the retrospective idea of imagined communities. Hart (2013) likewise reminds us that aspiring can also be perceived as a process, an active endeavor and state of doing (Hart, 2013, p. 76). From this perspective, aspiring as a future orientation encompasses the act of collective envisioning of desired futures, future objectives and enacting to realize these shared aspirations. This is not, however, to suggest a straightforward, organized act of drafting a vision together and proceeding linearly towards it. Rather, experiences of past, present and future are overlapping and interconnected, unfolding together as they are being continuously reinterpreted in action (Munn, 1992, p. 115; Nielsen, 2011).

Therefore, what characterizes collective aspiring is a continuous collective readjustment of the shared (re)interpretations of the past and the ends strived for in social practices. I perceive individual aspirations as being interlinked, negotiated and intertwined to a varying extent in the collective aspiring process that is circumscribed by the practices people engage in (cf. Schatzki, 2010b, p. 55). An analysis of community as a process is thus, from this perspective, directed towards exploring the ways that desired futures not only come to be created, shared and acted upon but also are felt and imposed upon others. I do discuss in this thesis desired futures and future-oriented aspiring, yet these are not descriptions of objective temporality (cf. Ringel, 2016, p. 392). I also describe the post-disaster context, for example, as a battlefield of future visions (Gotham & Greenberg, 2014, p. 9) of which, evidently, some come to be realized. It must be underlined, however, that in light of the teleology of human life, the analysis in itself is very much presentist. This means that aspiring or desired futures do not have any causal explanatory value in the sense that the communities would be formed as *a result* of aspiring (cf. Ringel, 2016). Instead, future orientations are an analytical tool to explore the *present* aspiring in the light of both, interpretation of the past and the mode of orienting to the future, and the social relations forming in doing so. The term *aspired communities*, thus, denotes three aspects relating to the temporality of social life: the collective aspiring in itself (aspir*ing*), the particular communities that come to be enacted and envisioned as this aspiring (aspir*ed* community), and community as an objective (aspiration).

3.2.2   Aspiring as collective pursuing and yearning

Each individual should have the same intention to achieve *chiikizukuri* (area making). So, there is no person in charge, there's no role to play, but people spontaneously help each other, speak with each other and work together and like

that *chiikizukuri* is done. So, it's not something by the plan. (A resident of coastal Yamamoto)

I suggest that aspiring as future orientation can denote, in addition to shared objectives, both action-oriented pursuing and affectively charged yearning, which are inherently intertwined. Adam (2010) notes that the future has moved increasingly from "the domain of fate into a realm of action potential," which makes the future "ours to shape, make and take" (Adam, 2010, p. 365). Thus, aspiring as pursuing also denotes action and agency. It refers here to the process of negotiating and aligning desired futures and the mobilization of these into social (inter)actions that can become considered communities. I suggest that the notion of pursuing helps to understand how the meaning of community is not arising from difference or sameness but from "*actuality:* actual relations among entities, and what these entities actually do" (Schatzki, 2002, p. 57).

I perceive that the creation of interdependence through aligning desired futures is essential for this actuality. This resembles what Amit (2010) has called coordination of joint commitments. Drawing from Margaret Gilbert's (1994) notion of plural subjecthood, Amit (2010) outlines joint commitment as "a key generative principle of community" in which each individual is committed, yet everyone is committed independently. These individual commitments can be seen as intertwined and common or shared to various degrees, thus forming the basis for social relations. When individual commitments meet, their joint commitment forms a new motivational force according to which those sharing the commitment seek to act (Amit, 2010, p.359). As previously noted, the interconnectedness, or the hanging-together of human lives in social practices, does not automatically mean interdependence (Amit, 2010, pp.359–360, 2020, p.55; Schatzki, 2016, p.31), but requires coordination that emphasizes process instead of sameness:

Placing the emphasis on joint commitment shifts the emphasis away from sameness, whether actual or imagined, as the basis for community and puts the onus more squarely on interdependence as the basis for this class of sociation. *Interdependence is first and foremost a matter of coordination…* A joint commitment may be ephemeral or enduring, partial or comprehensive. (Amit, 2010, p.360, emphasis added)

This directs the analytical attention to the various activities in which this coordination for interconnectedness occurs and the various ways the futures are aligned in them. Furthermore, this begs for discussion about agency and also power in social practice, the latter of which I elaborate on later. Change and creativity is

inherent in individual actors in practice, yet agency and intentionality are circumscribed by social practice (Schatzki, 2002, p. 234; Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016, p. 66). Agency presupposes here subjectivity that reflects, internalizes and reacts to the states of affairs. Agency is never fully individual in this light but is always embedded in social relations, either those of perceived solidarity or those of power, inequality and competition (Ortner, 2006, pp. 127–131). Thus, subjective agency is "a necessary part of understanding *how people (try to) act on the world* even as they are acted upon" (Ortner, 2006, p. 110, emphasis added).

Intentionality and pursuing can be *felt* and *experienced* as motivating and compelling in everyday life, which gives an ethnographic hold to the notion of social agency and collective pursuing: I am highlighting here the significance of a *sense* of agency and subjectivity in relation to others when pursuing aspirations and aligning desired futures. I will elaborate later that this process of coordinating and aligning can result not only in a harmonious sense of togetherness but also in ambiguities, contradictions and conflict (Schatzki, 2009, pp. 43–44, 2010b, p. 44; Amit, 2020, p. 54). To summarize, action-oriented pursuing enables the exploration of the very process of the aligning of temporalities and activities performed and the social agency constituted to reach these desired futures.

This is not to say that collective pursuing is always related to intentionally organized formal activities[10]. People in social practices can be perceived as reflexive and self-aware "knowing subjects" (Ortner, 2006, p. 126) capable of envisioning. However, I do not wish to argue that potential participants in these practices wishing to share aspirations need to sit around a table, negotiate the objectives and then decide on the execution of this vision. Instead, in light of the teleological character of activities, I perceive pursuing as a constantly ongoing process of maneuvering the interdependent social relations in action towards and in relation to the desired future shared to a varying extent. This process is never complete, and it is this incompletion that enables us to analyze community as a dynamic process constituted by this activity of sharing temporalities in itself[11] (cf. Brent, 2004). However, my intention

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[10]   Pursuing can certainly be analyzed as occurring, for example, in organized collective action, as I have also done in this thesis and elsewhere (Posio, 2019b). Collective pursuing does resonate with social movement studies and especially collective action framing (Snow *et al.*, 1986; Snow & Benford, 1988; Hunt *et al.*, 1994; Benford & Snow, 2000) that is the interactive process of creating schemes for interpretation (Goffman, 1974) among those who are dedicated to a collectively defined cause and act to achieve it. Participants in this process are also simultaneously enacting and constructing their definitions of territorial communities in place-framing (Martin 2003a, 2003b, 2013, Pierce, Martin & Murphy 2011).

[11]   Competing conceptualizations of community argue that community is inoperative and cannot be produced through work or particular projects. Community is argued as

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is not to romanticize pursuing, because it may also lead to frustration and conflict. Instead, I highlight the necessity of exploring *how* desired futures are negotiated and acted upon.

Collective aspiring refers here also to an affectively charged yearning that denotes craving or longing for something. Collective pursuing can be associated, for example, with sentiments of capability, a sense of subjectivity and empowerment or disempowerment when striving to "do together." However, I use the notion of yearning particularly to address the affective sides of community: The side of "feeling together." Aspiring may also cause controversies and conflict, yet the allure of the constantly elusive community is often associated with the positive emotions of belonging and a sense of community (Bauman, 2001; Brent, 2004). This implies that affective yearning is geared towards, for example, achieving a sense of belonging, togetherness and security from the state of affairs felt as conflicting, lonely or insecure. Amit (2010) asks what this affect belonging is and how it is expressed, related to and distributed: Affect or the sense of belonging may come in various, even contradictory, forms and be unevenly distributed, which blurs the lines between clear-cut boundaries between us and them, inclusion and exclusion (Amit, 2010). Thus, perceiving aspiring as affective yearning also directs the attention to how not only affect belonging but also other sentiments brought forth in aspiring are constructed and what are they constructing.

Affects form a foundational part of social life that, in turn, continuously produces affects. Therefore, affects are also an inseparable part of community. I refer here more often to affects instead of emotions and the emotional: Affects refer not to qualities or properties but to relations between entities and the dynamic process of affectivity (Reckwitz, 2017, pp. 118–121). Bryant and Knight note that compared to hope, which they associate with positive movement, yearning is a passive form of futural momentum (Bryant & Knight, 2019, p.157). I argue, however, that yearning, as the affective aspect of aspiring, is an active state, an affective social activity: The noun "affect" and the verb "to affect" are always "directed as something of significance, always intentional in the phenomenological sense, in that it involves the interpretation of some entity as desirable, revolting, etc..". These sentiments differ between individuals and often create, for example, positive desire, negative avoidance or their combination (Reckwitz, 2017, pp. 118–121). However, with affect I do not intend to probe pre-conscious or pre-discursive sensations (e.g., Massumi, 1995). Instead, I use it as a general analytical term intended to direct the attention to feelings, emotions and other affective sensations (Skoggard & Waterston, 2015) that

coming through nothing but sharing itself. This is a counterargument for presenting community as romanticized past or utopian future (Nancy, 1991). Here, I perceive this notion of sharing particularly from the perspective of sharing temporalities.

arise from temporality in spatially embedded social interactions and to the ways these are sought to be transmitted discursively and narratively (Wetherell, 2013; Vainio, 2020b)

These affects shape the teleology of human activities by affecting how the states of affairs are interpreted and which ends people strive for. Thus, they are also central in constituting collective aspiring and the desired futures. Yearning is inherently connected with pursuing because agency and the motivation to take part in activities are argued to reside in affects. Affects are, in turn, linked to the practices being performed as they delineate the repertoire of expected emotions that individuals feel to varying extents (Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016; Reckwitz, 2017; Schatzki, 2002, pp. 80–81, 130; Schatzki, 2017a, p. 39). Furthermore, peoples' capability to discursively reflect on practices and their emotional significance outside the actual performance of practice can function as motivation (Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016). Affects and emotions cannot be totally reduced to properties of practices due to their motivational force and connection to bodily experiences (Reckwitz, 2017, p. 80), although they most often arise from and are circumscribed by social practices (Schatzki, 2010b, pp. 121–130). Affects thus "navigate people through a world of practices and their horizons of opportunities for engagement, significance and meaning" (Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016, pp. 69–70). The distributed affect belonging is, hence, situational and manifests in joint activities in varying degrees (Amit, 2010, pp. 360–362).

Thus, when perceiving community as an evolving process, I do not refer to individual emotions *per se* but, again, to relational and interdependent affects collectively constructed, defined, enforced and sanctioned in relation to social practices being performed. In simple terms, feeling together in itself serves as the platform to enact and share affects in a social interaction, whereas this interaction can generate further yearning. The relation collective yearning and pursuing in everyday practice is, therefore, co-constitutive when "the imagined community gives rise to a series of material activities and everyday labors to realize more tangible and more concrete structures of community feeling," which will then contribute to collective imageries of community (Neal & Walters, 2008, p. 282).

However, collective aspiring may also collapse into affects of despair, disappointment or frustration instead of a collective sense of belonging (c.f. Bryant & Knight, 2019, p. 199). Amit stresses that community as an analytical notion can be found in the intersection of individual commitments and affects, and it is "precisely the ambiguity of the possibility, but not the certainty" of them turning into collective construction that "we are seeking to investigate rather than assume" (Amit, 2010, pp. 361–362). Yearning serves as a tool to understand how not only affect belonging, but also a myriad of other affects is constructed in and are constitutive of this process of aligning the desired futures. This is, however, not only about the free

alignment of action or emotions, but also about them being shaped by and shaping power relations, as I will elaborate after discussing aspiration as an objective.

3.2.3   Aspiration as an objective

> The people living here in their town need to start thinking what kind of a town they want. Whether they like it or not, the way this town will change a great deal and that is just the times we have now entered. (A resident of Sakamoto area)

Now that I have highlighted the significance of the collective aspiring process in itself, the reader has probably started wondering exactly *what* is aspired or desired from the future. Schatzki (2002) reminds us that the ends that are strived for in the particular social practice are not necessarily the same as the explicit, collectively outlined projects or willed ends. They are neither pre-existing nor a property of an individual but come to be in practices that also open up timespaces and boundaries for the objectives (Schatzki, 2002, p.81). Thus, aspirations as objectives are regarded here as situational and connected to the practices being performed. For instance, community as an objective in itself can, then, be sought and strived for in various practices. Therefore, aspiration as a shared objective is not perceived here necessarily as a static goal or a project to be completed. Instead, it comes to be, emerges and continuously evolves in the course of collective aspiring as the more or less explicitly defined end that is being strived for. What is envisioned as the objective is in itself simultaneously shaping the enactment and further envisioning of community.

Appadurai (2013), as noted earlier, outlines "a good life" as a universal aspiration. [12] However, good life is a rather overarching objective, and focusing on it ignores the dynamic, situational and relational nature of collective aspiring. I perceive that the ends, or aspirations as objective, that are strived for can vary, and they may be very practical and immediate as the lived reality. Furthermore, aspiration is not a value-laden term here. I may discuss desired futures, but by aspirations I do not refer to self-realization, self-fulfillment in life or to ambitions of self-development that are often presented as having intrinsic value (c.f. Hart, 2013). Moreover, as noted in relation to the efforts of aligning desired futures, aspirations

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[12]   Appadurai promotes an idea of culture-specific aspirations and the importance of studying "the significance of ideas of the good life in different societies" (Appadurai, 2013, p.187; 290). However, this kind of culture-specific aspirations presents aspirations as static, ontologically separate "cultural" constructs instead of dynamic and evolving in relation to the social practice being performed.

as objectives can be contested and conflicting, which highlights their multivocal construction, power-relations and normative expectations relating to community.

My interest here is also in exploring how having an objective in itself is shaping forms of sociality. Thus, the *sense* of having a future objective or an end to strive for that takes form and develops during collective aspiring is at least equally as important as what is aspired:

> The imaginative aura is anticipatory, independently so, as when one begins a thought, a sentence, a drawing, a musical composition *without knowing and yet knowing, indeed with some certainty, how it will end*, that it will come to some sort of fruition even if that fruition is a failure (Crapanzano, 2003, p. 20, emphasis added).

The present and the past also cease to exist without this sense of having a future in which one can imagine the object in the first place: Bryant and Knight argue that at times of crisis, the future may not be imaginable. This causes the collapse of the teleological nature of human life, making the present without the future dimension feel uncanny in its overwhelming presentness. In this setting, the reinterpreted past, often in nostalgized form, may come to be used as the determinant of the present and future and the basis of orientations and motivations (cf. Farnetti & Stewart, 2012; Bryant, 2016; Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 40–43, 47). Aspirations are future-oriented, but they can, thus, be drawn from the past or focus continuity of the present state of being (cf. Hart, 2016, p.326). Thus, shared objectives have a reciprocal relation with collective aspiring, and they are not merely products or goals of aspiring.

3.2.4 Conflict and power of aspiring

> The mayor is acting for the future, but support should be directed to those who are suffering now and who are here now. (A resident of Shinyamashita)

As said, the efforts of negotiating desired futures may eventually result or develop into conflict or indifference instead of a sense of belonging and community (cf. Amit, 2010, 2020). Community also means being subjected to its values and norms and, hence, losing some freedom (Bauman, 2001, pp. 4–5). Furthermore, collective aspiring is also inherently tied to power through the question of who is entitled to participate in collective aspiring to negotiate future visions and how. In Yamamoto, conflict and power relations became accentuated not only in the reconstruction planning policies and practice that many felt were endangering the residents' future but also in the inter-community dynamics.

Conflict and power divisions arise from the complications in the intertwining of timespaces (Schatzki, 2010, p.93). Harmonization or orchestration of timespaces in social practice leads to a smooth fitting together of the activities in the same space through contingent adjustment of each person's doings to those of others (Schatzki, 2009, pp. 43–44, 2010b, p. 44), hence creating a modality of sociality that has been called watchful indifference (Amit, 2020, p.51). However, as previously noted, collective aspiring also includes the perils of anxiety, conflicts and tensions that complicate the realizing of the jointly desired future. Thus, at the other end of the spectrum is conflict that arises when this balance of coordinated practices breaks down and the timespaces become divergent or incompatible: Conflict arises "because people, acting in partly shared and partly conflicting spatialities, pursue incompatible futures fueled by divergent pasts" (Schatzki, 2009, pp. 43–44, 2010b, p. 44).

Furthermore, collective aspiring and aspirations are always connected to power relations and social norms and, hence, need to be understood in relation to them. Futurity is also present in values and beliefs and can be crafted from collectively held norms (Appadurai, 2004, p.61). These need to be studied to understand collective aspiring and shared aspirations because "aspirations mean little without origins and location in existing power structures, legal entitlements, customs and social practices, institutional and national priorities" (Hart, 2016, p.336). I discuss here and in the analysis several aspects of power: the normative expectations of socially sanctioned ways to envision and enact community, the power positions that shape aspiring and the power to imposes aspirations. Power is understood here in the Foucauldian sense as the capability to structure the other's possible fields of action both by constraining and enabling them (Foucault, 1982, pp. 119–121; Schatzki, 2010b, p. 95).

People in their overlapping and multiple simultaneous aspirations are always contingent to others' actions and aspirations. Expectations may not be met, hopes may not be fulfilled because the future is uncertain, after all, and its emergent character is orchestrated by so many actors that it is impossible to direct it by will (Hastrup, 2005a, p. 7). The desired futures do not exist, but they need to be crafted not only through negotiation but also through contestation. Not everyone is allowed to participate in this process of collective aspiring on equal terms, and clusters of interrelated shared, hegemonic collective aspirations that define socially sanctioned ways of being and belonging are constructed. Communities do not exist as independent entities with their own agency or energy (Amit & Rapport, 2002, p. 15), but as a collectively shared and reproduced ontologized social reality they can reflect back to individual subjective experience as compelling and tangible (Gordon, 2012).

Rules, values and customs are powerful in the sense that, as normative expectations, they also operate through emotional impacts, of which fear is argued

to be one of the most powerful (Weenink & Spaargaren, 2016). The fear of losing a social bond is significant in social life because norms set the moral boundaries of the group: Not following them indicates a risk of not being perceived as a worthy group member (Scheff, 2003). If leaving the community is said to indicate the strength of the community (Blackshaw, 2010, p. 16), the power of the collective social norms beyond the individual comes at the forefront in cases in which one is excluded from or wishes to enter a community (Gordon, 2012) to partake in collective aspiring. Thus, the power of normative expectations of how to belong might also rely on "othering," a both practical and discursive positioning of a specific group or area as a community other than the aspired. Blacksaw (2010) calls this the dark side of community referring to a tendency to stress "we" against "them" (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 21–22).

The envisioned, desired futures are not necessarily crystal clear nor guaranteed to happen. This is not to claim that everything is possible as long as you want it, because "the *will* is important, but there also has to be *a way*" (Fischer, 2014, p.6, emphasis in the original). It is essential to notice that, for instance, opportunity structures, socio-economic position and resources enable or limit the realization of aspirations and shape the capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2004; Fischer, 2014, p.6). Furthermore, the future orientation of collective aspiring is grounded in both temporality and in spatiality; for example, designers and planners of the material environment are somewhat privileged in shaping the material settings according to which social practices are performed. However, the plan and constructs also reflect the existing practices and social relations (Schatzki, 2009, p. 46). This also makes the question of power especially relevant in the context of disaster reconstruction politics and planning: For instance, reconstruction plans have a very powerful role in determining the material environments in relation to which the post-disaster communities come to be enacted and envisioned.

Furthermore, the affective side of aspiring is an effective tool to exercise power and mobilize action in others. In other words, those who have power can define or shape the futures of others or make others act for specific ends (Schatzki, 2009, p. 93), for example, by appealing to affects (Dilley *et al.*, 2017). This shaping or imposing of aspirations also reinforces existing power-relations and directs responsibilities in situations in which "the rhetoric of aspiration ultimately serves as a diversion from the reality of increasing social exclusion and inequality" (Unterhalter *et al.*, 2014, p. 140). Similar dynamics can be observed when the valorization of a local community in the discourse of resilience delegates the responsibility to recover to local communities and draws attention away from structural problems (Barrios, 2016). Power relations are also reproduced when peoples' longing to belong, their feelings of nostalgia or craving for hope are appealed to (Dilley *et al*., 2017) or when threats and insecurities are constructed

(Weldes *et al.*, 1999a) to mobilize for given desired futures. This illustrates how aspiring and aspirations are not merely an individual effort communicated to others: Aspiring is always multivocal process based on interrelations. Conflict and power in the post-disaster context become acutely present in the process of re-establishing rules, moral orders, interpretations of pasts and future trajectories because of the drastic disruption to both social and material worlds. Aspiring and the range of aspirations are open ended in this setting, yet they are still circumscribed by norms, values, power relations and accepted ends and emotions embedded in social practices.

3.3   Conclusion

I have outlined in this chapter the conceptual framework of aspired communities that offers an analytical conceptual tool to understand community not as a definition or categorial identity of a grouping but as a process: an analytical working model to explore various forms of sociality with different intensities, ambiguities and even conflicts (Amit, 2010). In essence, I suggested that ontologization of community as a lived social reality can be analyzed with the concept of a future orientation of aspiring in social practices. Community as a process is conceptualized here as a mutually constitutive enacting and envisioning (cf. Neal & Walters, 2008) that is characterized by an inherently intertwined, existential temporality and spatiality.

I associated enactment with social practices and actualized interactions, whereas envisioning denotes reflective, imaginary discursive efforts. This perspective on community as a process is characterized by the indeterminate, open-ended teleology of human life. I drew from the idea of future orientations to operationalize this temporal-spatial nature of community and to have an ethnographic hold on it. In connection to this, I also argued for adjusting the focus on collective aspiring instead of anticipation, imagination and hope. To elaborate further, I suggested that collective aspiring can be understood as collective action-oriented pursuing, affective yearning and shared aspirations as objectives to capture, for example, the significance of subjectivity, agency and affects. I acknowledge this division is arbitrary because these aspects are intertwined; nevertheless, it provides opportunities to examine conflict and power relations arising from aspiring.

Community is perceived, thus, as a fluid, relational and experienced set of social, spatial and temporal relations that are both envisioned and enacted as a part of the inherent teleology of human life. The aspirations as objectives are situational and can vary, but I essentially suggest that collective aspiring in itself can be analyzed as community (cf. Brent, 2004). However, this aspiring can also evoke contradictions and anxieties, not just positive emotions (cf. Amit, 2010). I do not claim that the offered conceptual readjustment to collective aspiring excludes other future

orientations or offers an overarching explanation of social life. Instead, I presented here an analytical conceptual lens that was developed from the ethnographic analysis and the hopes, dreams, wishes and wants the locals voiced in Yamamoto. As such, the notion of collective aspiring also raises methodological concerns: How do both the research object and the field emerge in mutually constitutive relation with the analysis? How do we capture experiences and feelings? How do we address the fieldwork and analysis as temporal enterprises that also involve the researcher's subjectivity? These are the issues that I address in the following chapter on methodology.

4 Methodology: To Yamamoto and back again

> This, dear reader, is a faithful narrative of all my dealings in the town of Yamamoto before, during and after my ethnographic fieldwork of eight months there in 2014–2015.

No matter how objective Mr. Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* intended his "faithful narrative" to be (Austen, 1994, p. 158), here the expression already indicates a range of assumptions about the construction of the field site, interpretation of experience, description of lived reality and the researcher's role as the narrator of this story. In this chapter, I discuss these issues that are closely related to my ethnographic fieldwork. Anthropology does not equal ethnography (Ingold, 2011), yet it is, for better or worse, strongly grounded in the practice of ethnographic fieldwork (Crapanzano, 2010). Ethnographic fieldwork at its simplest is described as a method of understanding complex social relations and meanings through participating in and observing everyday life (Thomas, 1997, p. 333; Słuka & Robben, 2012, p. 2). This immersion in local life is argued to be the strength, or even a prerequisite, of anthropological research that produces rich and contextual knowledge about the "real world" in and of these particular localities through "thick description" (Geertz, 1973; Hastrup, 2010).

As such, ethnographic fieldwork provides an invaluable method for understanding the Yamamoto residents' experiences of their post-disaster communities. Furthermore, ethnography is valued as a method of capturing the interpretations and experiences of disasters in everyday life (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002; Sørensen & Albris, 2016, p. 78). However, instead of searching and documenting integrated, independent social systems, ethnographic fieldwork is increasingly considered engagement with, interpretation or even interruption of lived, constantly emerging social worlds that the researcher is co-constituting with the research participants (Hastrup, 2004b, 2005b, 2010; Pink, 2008). Thus, a thorough methodological discussion is in order here.

In this chapter, I first travel with the reader to the Yamamoto research site located in the south of Miyagi prefecture. I discuss how the field is constructed as a part of

the research project and comment on ethical issues relating to the research in a post-disaster context. I then introduce the practicalities of the data collection. I discuss the methods of participant observation and interviews in relation to the notions of immersion, emplacement and affects. I then reflect on how my positionality affected this particular fieldwork in Yamamoto. This chapter aims to describe the research as a reflective learning *process* that continues through the data analysis and writing that are the topics this chapter addresses in the last section.

4.1   To "Yamamoto that is here"…

Ethnographic fieldwork has long served as a valued constituent of anthropology's disciplinary identity, and now the method is also increasingly employed in other disciplines (Howell, 2017; Carter, 2018). The ideal of fieldwork traditionally was to study people in "other" far-away places. This implicit expectation has served to validate an ethnographic analysis based on the anthropological authority established by "being there" (Coleman & Collins, 2006a, pp. 5–8). This contributed to a representation of the research object as a bounded whole anchored to a specific location. These ideas of the research object and "the field" of the fieldwork have been developed and pluralized to include, for example, ethnography at home as well as translocal and multisited ethnography. Nevertheless, the hegemony of travel, immersion and long duration are still influential as a fieldwork archetype (Marcus, 1995; Amit, 1999; Coleman & Collins, 2006a). This development has also nuanced the understanding of the researcher's emplacement in the field because "the social world happens by our spatial engagement with it" (Hastrup, 2010, p. 207).

I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork for eight months in 2014–2015 in the town of Yamamoto in Tohoku, whose remoteness was established physically for me yet also politically, for example, in the Japanese context (chapter 5). It is thus important to acknowledge what implications the field has as a relational construct of territory and as a spatial experience. Therefore, this section introduces the features of this relatively small rural town of Yamamoto that covers an area of 64.48 km^2 on the coast of the southern border of Miyagi prefecture in Tohoku region (map 2, p.18) and discuss how Yamamoto is constructed as the field.

Our journey to the post-disaster community of Yamamoto starts by traveling there. The most convenient way to access the town is by rail from the prefectural capital Sendai, located 42 kilometers north of Yamamoto. My first visit to Yamamoto started from the Sendai main railway station in the early hours of a sunny autumn Saturday. I sat onboard the Japan Railway Jōban line train with Tohoku university graduate student Yoshino-san, who had promised to introduce me to the locals' computer class *pasokon aikōkai* where he volunteered every month. The train first passed central Sendai, then the suburban areas, and gradually the landscape

became lusher and more sparsely inhabited in between stops at the local stations. The tsunami's path had also wiped away the Jōban line railway track in Yamamoto. Due to this destruction, the train connection from Sendai was functioning only as far as the Hamayoshida station in Watari, Yamamoto's neighboring city, at the time of the fieldwork. From there we had to transfer to a bus that operated on a temporary route on Road No. 6 (map 3) running through Yamamoto towards Fukushima prefecture in the south. The Jōban line had traversed the coast of Yamamoto past the Yamashita station located in Hanagama district and the Sakamoto station in Nakahama district before the disaster. Now, the main bus stop of the temporary route was at the town hall, located on the mountainside of the Shinyamashita area approximately three kilometers from the old Yamashita station destroyed by the tsunami. The bus continued south to the Sakamoto bus stop along Road No. 6 after stopping at the city hall.

I had a hard time imagining the town's pre-disaster landscape as we approached Yamamoto. Before the disaster, the view to the sea was mostly blocked by a lush pine forest zone on the coast. The traveler would have been able to view the coastal plain covered with paddy fields, densely built houses around the train stations and the mountains bordering the town on its west side. This coastal landscape and the lives of the town's population were changed forever when the disaster hit the town hard on March 11 in 2011: 635 residents lost their lives when the tsunami inundated 37.2% of the town area from the sea to Road No. 6. The area is now divided into officially declared Disaster Hazard Zones 1–3 (DHZ 1–3, map 3). Six coastal administrative districts of Ushibashi, Hanagama, Kasano, Shinhama, Nakahama and Iso suffered the most significant damage. The tsunami's grey waves totally destroyed 2,217 houses and severely damaged 2,223 more. The disaster directly affected 8,990 residents (approximately 54% of the town's population at the time) through loss of life, housing or livelihood (Yamamoto, 2015). The indirect effects caused by the loss of relatives, friends or places of importance are innumerable.

Now, when visible from the road, the landscape I was gazing at from the temporary bus route on the sea side of the town was still dotted by paddy fields and clusters of greenhouses. However, the remaining houses were scarce and further decreased in number closer to the barren coast that had the Pacific Ocean as the dominating background. Near the bus stops at Yamashita and Sakamoto, I was able to see glimpses the old village centers that were overshadowed by the massive reconstruction projects proceeding in the new relocation areas built according to the urban planning ideal of walkable and densely built compact cities (Sorensen, 2010). The compact cities of Shinyamashita ("New Yamashita") and Shinsakamoto ("New Sakamoto") were connected by the new Jōban line built on elevated railway tracks
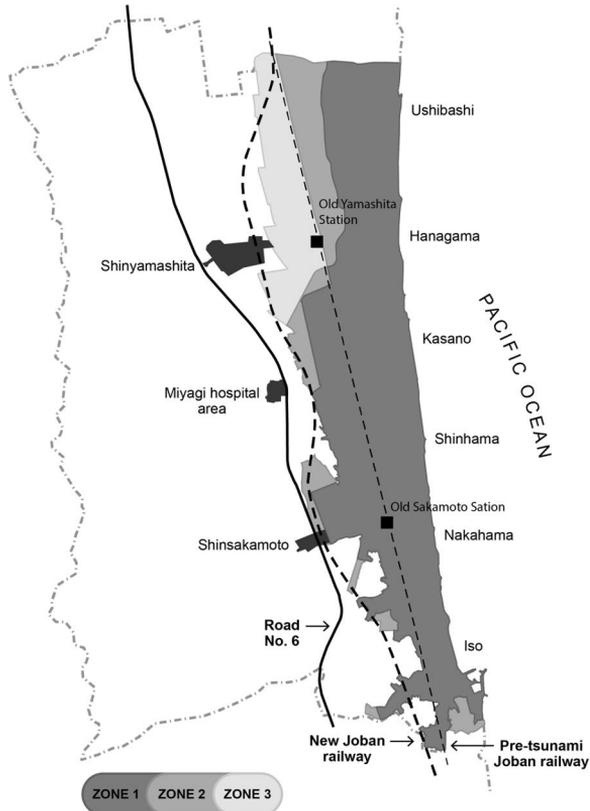
Map 3   Map of Yamamoto.

piercing the landscape. The third relocation area to be built, the Miyagi Hospital area, halfway from Shinyamashita to Shinsakamoto along Road No. 6, was still waiting for the construction project to commence. The railway has played an important role in the town's development and access to it, both historically and in the post-disaster period (chapter 6). The railway's Yamashita station had especially led to the Hanagama District's growth due its relative proximity to Sendai.

The town's population was 16 704 at the time of the disaster. However, Yamamoto was already plagued by depopulation and aging like the rest of the Tohoku region before the disaster that further accelerated the trend. The optimistic projection of a population of 13,700 by the year 2018 in the town's reconstruction plan was not realized: The population declined drastically by 26.4% from 16,704 residents at the time of disaster to 12,290 in 2018 (Yamamoto, 2011a, 2018) and was 11,954 in December 2021 (Yamamoto, 2121). Yamamoto's population ranks as the third oldest population in Miyagi prefecture: 41.2% of the town's population was over 65 years of age in 2021 compared to 30.8% in 2010 (Miyagi prefecture, 2021).

Here, I consciously joined the tradition of anthropological arrival stories as a narrative tool by using imageries of travelling from "here" to "be there." This aims to frame the field and show the physical connection between the text and the researcher by the inserting the ethnographer into the field as part of its story (Rapport, 1999, p. 72; Coleman & Collins, 2006a, p. 1; Hastrup, 2010, p. 203). I simultaneously acknowledge that the field of the fieldwork does not exist out there on its own and that I see it rather as a site emerging through my engagement with it (Amit, 1999, p. 17; Coleman & Collins, 2006a, p. 5). I often encountered people's puzzled expressions and wondering, "Yamamoto, where is that?" when I told the people I met, both foreign and Japanese, at the prefectural capital Sendai or at academic conferences, where I would be conducting my fieldwork for my research. Reaching this small town without famous attractions would have required some effort if I had been a casual traveler. Many people recognize the place names of the rocky Sanriku coast north of Sendai, such as Kesennuma and Minamisanriku in the Northern Miyagi prefecture or Rikuzentakata in the Iwate prefecture, and, of course, Fukushima, when the 3.11 tsunami is discussed. Despite this, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in this lesser-known town of Yamamoto from October 2014 to May 2015 during a time when the *fukkyū* (recovery) period was turning into a more development-oriented *fukkō* (reconstruction) phase according to the town reconstruction plan. Readers may wonder how "Yamamoto, where is that?" transformed into "Yamamoto that is here" (Figure 1) for the purposes of this study.

Figure 1   Yamamoto town PR T-shirt worn by a town official at the opening event of the new highway on the mountain side of the town on 30.11.2014.

I initially perceived Yamamoto as a case involving the recovery of an aging and depopulating community, controversial reconstruction housing policies and resident participation in reconstruction. However, in the field these turned into contemplations of more abstract conceptualizations of the future in relation to security, place, and community. I personally learned about Yamamoto by discovering a web page of a project called Salvage Memory (*Omoide Sarubēji*) that cleaned and returned to their owners the photographs washed away by the tsunami in Yamamoto (Mizoguchi, 2014). My initial intention was to conduct research on community recovery through this project because that seemed to offer fruitful ground for studying the significance of pre-disaster memories in reconstruction. However, although the Salvage Memory project was ongoing, it was not as active as in the initial stages, partly because it was mainly led by actors from Kyoto and Tokyo. Those actors perceived the photographs to be more about the owners' personal histories than emblems of community. Furthermore, the individual locals who had retrieved their photographs were nearly impossible to reach.

The Salvage Memory project would have offered an interesting yet limited window to the conceptualization of volunteering's role in the local community's recovery and the significance of the memories' materiality. However, in the field I soon realized that for the locals, the question was not only about recovery of a particular community, but it also encompassed a wider set of future-oriented social, temporal and spatial concerns and controversies than I had anticipated. These are the issues I discuss in this thesis to elaborate the understanding of community and recovery.

During the first phases of my fieldwork, I stayed in Sendai where I had a study right at Tohoku University for the autumn semester 2014. There I studied the Japanese language, had contacts with local disaster researchers and other scholars, and I also gained access to Yamamoto through these contacts. When stationed in Sendai, I commuted to Yamamoto several times a week, sometimes even daily or staying overnight to participate, for example, in community events, *machizukuri* meetings and reconstruction information events as well as to volunteer in *pasokon aikōkai* and, naturally, to conduct interviews. For the final three-month period of my fieldwork, I and my husband, who accompanied me in Japan during his sabbatical year, resided in a house located in Hanagama district bought and renovated by Sensei, a retired university teacher (hence the pseudonym). Being able to settle at Sensei's house was thanks to my accumulated networks in the town. Residing in coastal Hanagama district also further reinforced my territorial focus on the Yamashita area and my interest in *machizukuri* activities, because Sensei was an active member of a group called *Yamamotochō Fukkō o Kangaeru Jūmin no Kai* (Residents' Association for Thinking about Yamamoto Town Reconstruction, hereinafter Doyōbinokai) (see Xue *et al.*, 2014; chapter 6).

Yamamoto as a fieldwork site for the study of community is not neatly delineated by the town administrative territorial borders, although this and many other post-3.11 research claim to focus on the recovery of this and that town. Anthropological research has always carried either implicit or explicit ideas of a relation to a place when the anthropological subject that is often assumed to be constructed in a set location and reachable through ethnographic fieldwork (Amit & Rapport, 2002, p. 10). This research does have a particular field site, but it is necessary to recognize that "Yamamoto" is constructed as a geographical, political, social and analytical field. The town as an administrative unit is a rather recent development. The name Yamamoto (山元) combines characters from the names of two villages, Yamashita (山下) in the north and Sakamoto (坂元) in the south, that were merged in 1955. The historical division of the Yamashita and Sakamoto areas, as in many other merged Japanese municipalities (Doshita, 2011; Morikawa, 2013), still characterizes the socio-spatial understanding of the residents, as the following chapters make evident. Furthermore, while the designation of the municipalities as the main actors in the reconstruction planning and governance in the national guidelines (chapter 6) directs the research focus at the town level, this policy also participates in the definition of post-disaster community units by speaking about them in rather homogenous ways.

One must therefore keep in mind that "Yamamoto" is perceived here as an emerging construct. As such, it is partly defined by but not confined within the historical divisions and the town administrative borders. It is also redefined in relation to the disaster and reconstruction (cf. Barrios, 2014) for example in the post-disaster rhetoric of "team Yamamoto with one heart" (chapter 6). It is important to consider the notion of place seriously and study "how different actors construct and ground experience in place" while acknowledging that these place narratives can be multiple and contested, which highlights the multivocal construction of the field (Rodman, 2003, p. 203). Therefore, this research is not settling only for studying the polarities of "the locals" and "the officials" as univocal entities. Instead, I am stressing the variety of the locals' desired futures, their pursuing and the associated affects whose alignment constitutes collective aspiring in and of place.

Furthermore, I am not trying to present an overarching description of the whole of Yamamoto. On the contrary, the individual experiences, words, actions and places are intertwined into a story that cannot escape the subjectivism and accentuation of certain perspectives and local residents' viewpoints. The experiences of older adults engaging in community activities is pronounced, as I will elaborate later. By acknowledging this multivocal and often overlapping, conflicting narration of community that characterizes disaster reconstruction and community recovery, I also highlight both political and social power structures. Therefore, it is important to note how the definition of the town as my research site is in itself an act of constructing

that particular locality and its community (cf. Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Rodman, 2003).

Thus, "the field as event is constantly in a process of becoming, rather than being understood as fixed ('being') in space and time" (Coleman & Collins, 2006b, pp. 11–12). This gives the field an event-like character when the researcher "is involved in a locality, encounters the social, sensory and material elements of that environment, and her or his trajectory becomes temporarily intertwined with the people and things that also constitute that place" (Pink, 2012, p. 38). However, it is also noteworthy that the analysis in the following chapters includes a great deal of discussion of communities' geographical boundaries. This is because my research participants often relied heavily, though not entirely, on territorial definitions of community. Instead of taking this as a simple mapping function or as a set definition of community boundaries, I relate this to the temporality and spatiality of social life and how these topographical realities are lived in relation to the others and the physical environment (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 145).

The areas appearing in the locals' stories, such as the town, the districts and the coast, can therefore be simultaneously seen as my research sites and as parts of the processes constituting communities. Here, my interest is, thus, neither merely in the category (community) nor its boundaries (in this case, territorial) but also in how and on what premises people envision and enact these. The ethnographer in the field also becomes emplaced in this social and spatial environment. Thus, "space affects intersubjectivity deeply, because intersubjectivity is not simply a matter of relationships between persons but involves relations between people and places and ideas about places" (Hastrup, 2010, p. 208). I discuss some ethical issues relating to the significance of Yamamoto as a particular place and to local controversies in the disaster setting before discussing how this intersubjectivity appears in the data collection.

4.1.1   A note on the ethics of emplacement

As noted, place and the topography of place are significant parts of people's experiences, feelings and imaginations. This includes the fieldworker who is also emplaced in the shared sensual, experiential and topographical environment (Hastrup, 2010, p. 193). This, however, forces us to consider how to balance between emplacement and anonymity in the post-disaster setting as in any other ethnographic research. I have already identified Yamamoto as the field site of this research, and I use the real place names in the following chapters. I made this choice because the mere topography of the place affects how people construct their spatial and social experience in lived environments (Gray, 1999, 2002; Hastrup, 2010). The drastic changes in the landscape, displacement, loss of housing and other important

community locations such as shrines, temples, cafés and so on, especially after the disaster, are at the core of how people seek to re-establish their social relations and their sense of place and belonging (Erikson, 1976; cf. Cox & Perry, 2011; Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015). The interplay between the characteristics of a place, its unique history and other topographical features and related policies thus continue throughout community recovery. This is reflected not only in the ways the people imagine their future trajectories but also in practicalities: For example, there was more available land for relocation areas in the considerably flat coastal plain in Yamamoto than on the rocky Sanriku coast in the north where the relocation created different kind of problems of accessibility, livelihood and socio-spatial fracturing (Vainio, 2020).

The disaster event and its aftermath have been traumatic, sensitive experiences that have also evoked conflicts and controversies. Ethnographic methods are argued to provide the means to grasp these sentiments, local knowledge and the ways disaster is present in many spheres of life (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002, pp. 12–13; Sørensen & Albris, 2016, p. 66). However, it is necessary to reconsider the ethics and merits of so-called disaster gold rushes, in which researchers from all over the globe dash to the disaster sites in the immediate aftermath of those drastic events. Urgent ethnography is important in gathering perishable data to improve disaster risk reduction, yet the studies in the immediate aftermath are often unorganized and motivated by publishing pressures in the contemporary academic world. As such, they increase both the concrete and the psychological burden of the recovering localities. They also enforce the power relations related to, for instance, the researchers' nationality. This has necessitated the development of a code of conduct for post-disaster studies (Gomez & Hart, 2013; Gaillard & Gomez, 2015; Slater, 2015; Gaillard & Peek, 2019).

A big disaster leaves wounds that take a long time to heal: Disaster experiences are still strongly present in the locals' minds and often appear in their discussions. It is precisely because ethnographic methods are used to understand these experiences and feelings that the issues' sensitivities also remain throughout the long-term recovery. Concerning the topic's sensitivity, I first carefully approached it in the interviews by asking whether it was considered a comfortable topic to discuss. Narratives are often a way to organize and establish order for life's temporal and spatial experiences and disruptions (Rapport, 1999, pp. 74–75, 90). I soon noticed that for many people, the stories of their survival, losses and path to their current situation were also a natural way to structure their situation and future trajectories.

I recorded the survivors' consent to participate in the research at the beginning of the interviews and promised to secure their anonymity. The majority of the participants stated that they would not mind me using their real names, but I have anonymized the research participants' name and partially anonymized their

positions. This was to prevent their direct identification or appearance in connection with my research, for example, in Internet search results for their real names. I consider this the best compromise that can be reached when taking the importance of emplacement into consideration.

Another issue relating to the protection of the research participants' privacy – and the researcher's, for that matter – arises in the use of social media. I established my first contacts in Yamamoto before leaving for Japan by following the locals' Facebook group discussions. Facebook proved to be a convenient tool for gaining initial impressions of some local sentiments, yet it is also a very open and politicized platform that is not free from the post-disaster controversies. The circle of my research participants became more visible to those who were involved as I started connecting with the locals on Facebook. I had to be sensitive about what I posted and refrained from posting, for example, pictures of individual locals in my updates during my fieldwork. However, the likes, comments on my posts and the pictures I was tagged in reveal who I have been in contact with in Yamamoto. This visibility in social media always contains the peril that some could associate me as representing views they would not agree with (cf. Gerster, 2018). Of course, similar logic also related to my offline life in Yamamoto; for example, Sensei, in whose house I was staying, was generally known as an active critic of the coastal reconstruction policies. My association with him prompted occasional interesting discussions about town controversies but may have also limited discussion on some issues.

Fieldwork is inseparable from our life and vice versa (Amit, 1999). The use of social media was one means of being emplaced in the field not only as a researcher but also as a person when my social media presence revealed glimpses of my private life. An aspect of my private life was also constantly present in my field because I was accompanied by my husband (Posio, 2021). I will reflect in detail on the role of the research in data collection and my position in the field in the following sections, but it is important to note here how this certain openness and continuing interaction in the social media, for example, even after the fieldwork is also a way to establish rapport and increase reciprocity (Gerster, 2018, pp. 18–19). Ethnographic fieldwork draws its authority from immersion and personal engagement with the research participants. However, the researcher is nevertheless acting in a double role and uses this established intimacy, after all, as means of investigation (Amit, 1999, pp. 2–3). Reciprocity needs to be carefully considered, especially in the post-disaster situation in which the researchers study people who themselves are struggling to re-establish their agency. The inability to establish reciprocity and a long-term relationship would be an exploitation of their weak position (Slater, 2015; Gerster, 2018, pp. 18–19). I have also kept in contact with several research participants, mainly through Facebook.

According to the Code of Ethics published by the American Anthropological Association, reciprocity can include, for example, drawing public attention to a specific problem (American Anthropological Association, 2012). This question of intertwining of ethnographic analysis with the representation of "local" perspectives becomes acute especially in the delicate situations where the survival of the community is at stake as noted by Bridget Love (2007), who studied revitalization efforts in a rural Japanese town in the 2000s. She perceived the rural localities as "a nexus where national politics of revitalization and local aspirations for renewal collided" (Love, 2007, p. 545). This makes them a challenging field site where "ethnographic engagement entails assessing the agency and alternatives of local populations attempting ambitious projects of community regeneration in the face of steep odds" (ibid., p. 557). It is necessary to acknowledge that also this ethnographic research is done in a politically sensitive context of disaster reconstruction and recovery, where the studied communities are fighting for their existence: This situation is shaped by the communities' decline and the stress brought on by the disaster's destruction and its long-term challenges.

Thus, the local reconstruction, recovery and revitalization efforts after 3.11 are shaped more by general economic and political trends in Japanese society. This poses a challenge to the ethnographic researcher about how to represent the ongoing redefinition of the local community and the political aspects affecting it. First, I want to avoid unproblematized valorization of local community solidarity, *kizuna*, or social capital as the key for community recovery because it may contribute to promotion of self-help and pushing of responsibility to the local residents. Second, as said, juxtaposing dominant authorities and critical residents at the local level is tempting because of they create a stark contrast: The massive national reconstruction projects are argued to neglect local community's structure, culture, lifestyle and livelihood and government's guidelines are portrayed as both physically and mentally distant from the Tohoku localities. However, this often constructs only the two radical ends of the recovery experience spectrum, as I myself have done when contrasting town reconstruction policies and the critical views of Doyōbinokai (Posio, 2019b, chapter 6). Here, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's authority and opportunity to highlight specific issues among the multivocal negotiations of post-disaster life. However, this is not to undermine the fact that critical views and voicelessness in reconstruction process were expressed on many occasions in Yamamoto and elsewhere (Littlejohn, 2017; Vainio, 2020b).

We must be careful, however, not to position the research participants only in the role of passive recipients of the researchers' agency on reciprocity; we must also acknowledge that researchers in the field can be "objectified, manipulated and exploited in the research space, and they have to struggle to find connection between these power positions/structures as well as their own feelings and emotions while

making sense of the lives of the people" (Ali, 2015, p. 790). I might not have been used as such in Yamamoto, but some active locals did see the opportunities presented by my role. First, it was hoped on one occasion that I would act as "a bridge" between the coast and the mountainside regarding the relations that had become distrustful after the disaster. A farewell dinner for me was arranged as a tool of reconciliation, and both the coast's and the mountainside's representatives were also invited by an outside volunteer who had connections to both sides. Judging from what I saw during the dinner and later on Facebook, the representatives seemed to have created at least some sort of connection.

Second, some of those who felt that they were experiencing injustice in the official reconstruction scheme saw my potential to give them a voice in the official reconstruction narrative and to convey their experiences to the wider public. I was helped a great deal by these active coastal residents during my fieldwork. I asked one of them what could I do in exchange. He replied, "tell our story, that is enough." This story, one of many, emerges in the course of this thesis as the locals sought to envision and enact their aspired communities. I am, thus, not only the teller of the story but also a part of it. I will discuss next how the multivocal story was co-created throughout the fieldwork, especially through participant observation and interviews.

4.2   Data collection: Participation, snowballs, luck and networks

I collected a vast amount of data during the fieldwork through participant observation, interviews and gathering of textual primary sources. The term "collect," to be precise, presumes information exists out there just waiting for the fieldworker to pick it up. This understates the temporal and situational intersubjective co-creation of data. For instance, in October and November, I participated in the preparations for a local illumination event called Kodanarie that occurred on the Yamamoto mountainside. This annual event was initiated by Fukuda-san in 2011 to fortify the spirit of reconstruction, to express gratitude to the disaster relief volunteers and to show everyone that Yamamoto was recovering. The aim was to make the event as big as possible by constructing hand-made illumination installations that showcase the locals' joint efforts. Fukuda-san picked me up from the Hamayoshida station on the morning of the first preparation event. We chatted about the illumination after I introduced myself to this slightly nervous and shy but friendly man. I asked what the aim of the illumination was. He replied after a short silence, "*kokoro no yutakasa*" (richness of heart and spirit).

Months later at our farewell party organized by Fukuda-san and his friends, he laughed and told how on that day when I arrived, I asked all these difficult questions. He felt that he had to make up something intelligent and nice, so he answered,

"*kokoro no yutakasa.*" Before that, I had interviewed another local resident, Tahara-san, who was just nominated as the chairman of the local community activity group Tanemaki Kaigi (chapter 7) that he was a long-term member of. When I interviewed Tahara-san and his wife, who was also a participant in the group's activities, I asked him about the group's aims and motivations. He was silent after my question, and it seemed that he had a hard time formulating his answers. Raising her eyebrows, his wife asked, "yes, *I* would also like to know what indeed the goals are?" Soon after this question, Tahara-san went to the toilet and I continued the interview with his wife. She seemed amused by her husband's reaction and said to me in a friendly manner, "it is good that you are here asking all these questions so he must answer."

This does not undermine the fact that the aim of the Kodanarie illumination was indeed to arouse positive feelings and strengthen the local spirit or that the new chairman of Tanemaki Kaigi did have goals in mind, regardless of his difficulty articulating them. However, this highlights the intersubjectivity of the knowledge that is produced in the fieldwork situation where the researcher is embodied as a part of the studied social relations in which the registered acts and articulations are at least partially reactions to the researcher's presence and inquiries (Hastrup, 2004b, p. 460). Amit (1999) has noted that "there is surely no other form of scholarly enquiry in which relationships of intimacy and familiarity between researcher and subject are envisioned as a fundamental medium of investigation rather than as an extraneous by-product or even an impediment" (Amit, 1999, p. 2). Being a part of the lived worlds of the research participants provides not only analytical opportunities but also limitations that I will discuss here while introducing the data collection methods.

4.2.1   Participant observation

The method of participant observation includes very practical participation in events and activities, so much of my fieldwork was spent in various local events, meetings, community spaces and activities. However, it also implies participation in the lived realities of the everyday lives of the people being studied and is often perceived as a method for understanding experience (Knibbe & Versteeg, 2008, p. 51). We are warned, however, against stepping into the trap of overemphasizing this particularity and idealizing the social relations and lived worlds in the field as bounded, cultural wholes, or as "a warm bath in which an anthropologist can submerge herself and then step out of at will" (Amit, 1999, p. 6; Knibbe & Versteeg, 2008, p. 60). Participant observation thus interestingly condenses the double role of the researcher in the fieldwork: On the one hand, researchers seek to immerse themselves in the lived worlds of the participants to be able to study "with" them (Geertz, 1973, p. 23). On the other hand, researchers observe the studied reality and eventually construct

an analytical narrative of these observations that, as an integrated, logical whole, is a product of imaginative processes (Moore & Sanders, 2014, p. 15).

I sought to understand how people both experienced and enacted their vision of the community. Part of the fieldwork focused on *machizukuri* (community building, see chapter 7) activities. This included both the formal town-initiated *machizukuri* councils in the new compact city relocation areas and a resident-initiated group Doyōbinokai (chapter 6). These were the only place-based community groups explicitly committed to *machizukuri* activities in Yamamoto at the time of the fieldwork. The town had not established a *machizukuri* system before the disaster. As I have argued (Posio, 2019b), these groups offered a window to observe how the residents envisioned their community's future and how they sought to pursue that vision. I was able to participate in these groups' meetings after being introduced to the key actors of the Doyōbinokai and *machizukuri* consultants of the Yamamoto reconstruction station (*Yamamoto Fukkō Sutēshon*). I mainly attended the meetings in Shinyamashita and Shinsakamoto and only a few in the Miyagi hospital area due to the overlapping schedules of the formal *machizukuri* council meetings in the compact cities. I often participated in Doyōbinokai's meetings, eventually attending nearly every Saturday when I resided in Yamamoto.

I did not just sit still for hours in meetings and drink gallons of green tea during my fieldwork. I also engaged in other activities ranging from soba noodle making to Nordic walking. Being emplaced and embodied in the local social and physical environment offered an opportunity to share the people's experiences and emotions constructed through movement in a shared space (Lee & Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008; Hastrup, 2010; Desjarlais & Throop, 2011). During the Nordic walking tour around the Yamashita area, for example, I not only comprehended how the locals often organized their spatial understanding through their immediate districts when they remarked how I seemed to know the names of areas better; I also experienced the lively chattering and laughter that was said to have increased in significance in the post-disaster times.

Furthermore, there is a burgeoning scholarly interest in the concept of affect as a non-conscious, often bodily sensation, in contrast to its discursively conceptualized and transmitted counterpart of emotion (Massumi, 1995; Skoggard & Waterston, 2015). When studying both emotions and affect, fieldworkers should pay attention to the sometimes unexpected sensations that are not always fully explainable through discourse (White, 2020, p. 394) and the ways these are sought to be transmitted through narration (Wetherell, 2013; Vainio, 2020b). This research is not deeply involved in the conceptual study of affect, yet I also focused on emotionally charged expressions, both bodily and discursive, during the fieldwork. Soba workshops, for example, invited me to concretely taste how delicious the noodles were. More importantly, I was able to partake in the practice of soba-making that offered an

immediate shared sense of comfort, accomplishment and togetherness surrounded by the sensorial atmosphere of whirls of flour, steam from boiling water and occasional shouts of "*oishiiiiiii ne*!?" ("Delicious, isn't it!?") that encouraged communication. In contrast to this, the tenseness of the bodies and voices was observable in the *machizukuri* meetings when criticisms were voiced of the town reconstruction policy or a controversial topic was addressed. Furthermore, I noticed in the interviews, that the interviewees' speech and body language paused and became still when talking about their disaster experiences.

Hastrup (2010) argues that immersion and emplacement in the field may produce unmediated experiences, so-called raw moments, that enable researchers to fully experience the lived reality (Hastrup, 2010, p. 207). However, there were moments that underlined the difficulty particularly of relating to the local people's emotional experiences. For example, I was sleeping on a futon on the second floor of Sensei's traditional Japanese house on an early spring morning when I suddenly woke up with a shaky feeling. It had been a windy night, so I first thought that an extremely strong wind was battering the house. My still sleepy brain only slowly started to process what was happening as the shaking continued, became stronger and the town loudspeakers started to play earthquake information. My thoughts were interrupted by a phone call from Miyata-san, my acquaintance and a disaster evacuee who had just recently moved to a new house in the new inland Shinyamashita area. She had kindly called to assure me that there was no need to evacuate and that I could remain with peace of mind in my current location slightly less than one kilometer from the very same Pacific Ocean that was the origin of the devastating 3.11 tsunami. She was trying, yet not really succeeding, to conceal her own distress that was reflected in her alarmed voice. Meanwhile, I did not really manage to share the anxiety, because it was difficult to fully realize the actuality of the threat of tsunami, although I had spent months at a location ravaged by one. That phone call concretized to me the importance of the personal and shared life history and their interpretation projected onto the imagination of the future.

In many ways, participant observation resembled how I "ate my way in" in the field (cf. Pink, 2008): I ate things that sometimes I did not even recognize, but I tried to show my eagerness to share the locals' enthusiasm when they offered these delights. I shared the taste and smells and partook in praising the food – although, admittedly, I did not always share the sensation of deliciousness. Thus, when participating in the local people's experienced and lived realities, I sought "to be educated to participate in this experiential common ground" as "an apprenticeship." I aimed to create knowledge intersubjectively through these more or less shared experiences (Knibbe & Versteeg, 2008, p. 52), the latter of which also sparked analytical insights. However, experiences cannot be used as evidence of phenomena or particular situations as such, but they should always be interpreted (Hastrup,

2004b, p. 466). Thus, "to understand even 'personal experience' requires a capacity to shift between epistemologies of intimacy and of estrangement" (Keane, 2003, p. 23). I was still, ultimately, an observer whose final goal was to interpret, abstract and, thus, objectify the insights from participating through academic language (Knibbe & Versteeg, 2008, p. 60).

4.2.2   Interviews and textual data

It is important to consider not only how they are experienced but also how these experiences are interpreted, shared, communicated, even propagated and acted upon. Thus, although immersion in the field through participation offered ways to comprehend the lived experience, an ethnographer's access to such situations has always been more or less limited. Amit (1999) has argued that "the ethnographic 'field', therefore, has always been as much characterized by absences as by presences." This creates a need for a variety of "corresponding methods— interviews, archival documents, census data, artefacts, media materials and more— to explore processes not immediately or appropriately accessible through participant observation" (Amit, 1999, pp. 11–12). In addition to participant observation, I gathered textual primary data and conducted several interviews. These sources helped me to analyze how shared but also competing and persuasive narratives of community were constructed to interpret the past and envision the future (cf. Hastrup, 2011; Samuels, 2019; Vainio, 2020b, pp. 49–50).

The textual primary sources I collected consisted mainly of local newsletters, Yamamoto reconstruction plans and information pamphlets and various advertisement leaflets. The largest set of textual data was the newsletters published by *machizukuri* groups (Shinyamashita news n=15, Shinsakamoto news n=19, Doyōbinokai's *Ichigoshimbun* n=37). The analyzed newsletters covered all the publications up to August 2015, tracing the pre- and post-fieldwork developments (available at the Kahoku Shinbun (2016) website). These newsletters, as I have described in a separate article on *machizukuri* activities, painted a picture of multivocal, critical conceptualizations of reconstruction, security, residents' roles and power structures (Posio, 2019b). The reconstruction plans and town PR brochures, then again, offered a window into analyzing the officially framed version of the recovery and the community. These texts are not separate representations of meanings but are regarded as an integral part of the meaning-making process in themselves (Pink, 2012, pp. 33–34).

I utilized a snowball sampling method to recruit interviewees. Participant observation helped to accumulate research participants, who in turn introduced me to their friends, contacts and neighbors. For instance, by participating in the *pasokon aikōkai* computer classes throughout my fieldwork, I gained new contacts,

interviewees and, among other things, the possibility to participate in the preparations for the annual Kodanarie illumination festival previously mentioned. I had a chance to meet a volunteer from Tokyo by being willing to freeze my fingers when hanging Christmas lights into strawberry and bamboo shapes on several weekends. He introduced me to my key contacts in the Hanagama District who, in turn, introduced me to new people and also organized, for example, the opportunity to reside at Sensei's house and a bicycle to handle the fieldwork logistics with. Fortune and unexpected opportunities both play a role in shaping the fieldwork process (Reader, 2003; Crapanzano, 2010; Klien, 2020a), and these kinds of contact chains were undeniably strings of lucky coincidences and invaluable sources of help.

Having said that, these chains also embodied the locals' social networks. The proponents of snowball sampling have argued that it has empirical value in itself when it helps to chart such networks (Noy, 2008) that are also deemed essential in disaster recovery and resilience (Aldrich, 2012; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Akbar & Aldrich, 2018). Snowball sampling may add social pressure to the interviewees by highlighting the normative expectations of the networks, yet recruiting participants through introductions can also improve the interviews' quality by establishing rapport. Japan scholars have found that if a researcher's intentions are introduced beforehand by a trusted person, the interviewee may feel more comfortable in discussing even contentious issues (Bestor *et al.*, 2003, p. 14; Tagsold & Ullmann, 2020, p. 216; Yamaguchi, 2020, p. 202). I also utilized purposive sampling and refocused my research mainly on the inundated areas by interviewing, for example, the leaders of the administrative districts and some residents active in community building at the coast after I had developed an overall picture of the community relations.

<u>Interviewee background information</u>

Gender

Women	33
Men	48
Total	81

Age

18–25	1
26–35	5
36–45	8
46–55	16
56–65	21
66–75	21
76–85	9
86–	0

Household members

Couples (9) and family (1) as one household

1 person	6
2 persons	17
3–4 persons	19
5– persons	13
Not reported	15

Damage to home

Full	38
Large-scale	8
Half	1
Partly	12
None/did not report	24

Permanent residency after the disaster

Same as pre-disaster in Yamamoto	36
・of which in tsunami area	18
Same outside Yamamoto	2
Moving within Yamamoto	
・Compact cities	17
・Other areas	15
Moving from Yamamoto	5
Moving to Yamamoto	0
Not decided/reported	6

Table 1   Interviewee background information.

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The strength and comprehensiveness of the ethnographic data is in its quality and intensity rather than in its quantity, which does not follow the logic of territorial representativeness or representative sampling (Hastrup, 2010, p. 198). Nevertheless, I include some numeral data about the interviews here (Table 1). Several small snowballs I had pushed started rolling in intensified speed towards the end of the fieldwork and resulted in 62 thematically structured interviews with individual residents, couples or groups of three. Among the interviewees, 48 were men and 33 were women, and many of the 81 interviewees were older adults. Their positions and occupations included town officials, farmers, local entrepreneurs, reconstruction and community building consultants, teaching staff, Buddhist monks and Shinto priests, housewives, company workers, pensioners, staff of the local radio station, community building council members, district leaders, local civil society actors and volunteers. The majority of the interviewees were directly affected by the tsunami and were now living in old, new or restored houses or still in temporary housing. In addition, I also interviewed some town residents who had moved permanently or temporarily away from the town or were residing outside the damaged areas. All interviews except one were conducted in Japanese, and their length varied from 30 minutes to three hours. The majority of the interviews was recorded while I took also notes; I later relistened and then selectively transcribed them as part of the analysis process (Brumann, 2020, p. 199). Numerous informal individual and group discussions also provide complimentary perspectives.

Yamamoto is a rather small town, yet I felt it was still a very large setting for one researcher with a bike and a limited amount of time. Thus, this inevitably characterized the fieldwork and directly influenced whose desired futures and aspired communities are accentuated in this thesis. Many of the interviewees were actively participating in various community-building activities. Community consciousness has been found to relate to the motivation to participate in community-building activities in Japan (Ishimori, 2004). Thus, the participants in this research offer valuable insights particularly into the negotiation, alignment, mobilization of shared aspirations and their challenges. This, however, leaves the silent group of those who had secluded themselves in temporary houses unrepresented in this analysis. For example, those who were still living in the temporary housing presumably had different immediate concerns about the future than those who were already living in their post-disaster homes. These residents are reportedly experiencing a prolonged state of liminality and feeling that their lives were put on hold (Gagné, 2020a). Their situation thus would most probably contribute to a very different story of experienced temporality, social relations and aspiring due to this. These people were ambiguously presented both as risks and victims to be secured to the community sphere by the more active residents (chapter 8). This therefore implies that participating in collective aspiring includes elements of power.

Furthermore, as I will discuss in the following chapters, the community recovery differed in the Yamashita and Sakamoto areas. The geographical analysis is "thicker" in the Yamashita area: Its districts of Ushibashi, Hanagama and Kasano have remaining coastal communities, one of which is where I resided. In contrast, the former residents of the Sakamoto coast were dispersed to temporal housing outside the town because the construction of the new Shinsakamoto area was still ongoing.

4.2.3   Presence in the field as *yosomono*, *wakamono*, *bakamono*

Fieldwork is not only about engagement with the studied "reality;" it is also about establishing a presence in the field that is shaped by the researcher's positionality, socio-demographic features and physical appearance. My main logistical means when residing in Yamamoto was a bicycle kindly loaned to me by my research participant's neighbor. The bike was indispensable for many reasons: First, it gave me the logistical means to freely travel to interviews and events in a town dominated by private cars. Yamamoto's local bus service established after the earthquake was also limited. Traversing the town by bike concretized to me the lived environment of the town (cf. LeBlanc, 1999; Lee & Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008) in which the aging population was highly concerned about transportation and access to the services in their daily life. The bike also enabled experiencing the drastically changed lived environment in Yamamoto. I cycled from Ushibashi to Iso and back, from the coast to the mountains and back. I visited shrines and cemeteries and tried to imagine the pre-disaster landscape when viewing the empty plots in the desolated neighborhoods at the barren coast.

This brings me to the other benefits of having a bicycle: the possibility to establishing a presence in the field through the opportunity for random encounters. I encountered not only places but also people while cycling around the town, and the possibility to wave at acquaintances was a benefit. I especially remember one misty morning towards the end of my fieldwork. I had scheduled an interview at the town's community center, but I was awfully tired because I had returned home late the previous evening from a *machizukuri* meeting on the other side of town. Both the weather and my spirit were gloomy, but I took my bike and headed to the community center located next to the town hall. I met three acquaintances during the short ride of less than ten minutes, and each of them waved to me smiling and then stopped their car to say good morning. My mood was up again, and I felt like I was really *there* as I drove along the narrow and short main street of the Yamashita district.

This visibility helped to establish the rapport that enabled me to better understand the underlying logic of actions (Tagsold & Ullmann, 2020, p. 212). I was able to

experience first-hand, for example, these casual encounters that the locals regarded as highly important for the community (chapter 8). Thus, not only did I see, but I was also seen when cycling. One spring day, Shibue-san, whom I had known since my first visit to Yamamoto, and I were driving to have a lunch. We chatted while driving about casual issues relating to my fieldwork experience and her future plans. One anecdote she mentioned to me was that on her commute she often passed a reconstruction site guard standing at one compact city entrance every day. They had the habit of chatting occasionally, and one day that spring, the excited guard had told her, "I saw a blue-eyed girl riding a bike!" I only once encountered another adult riding a bike in the town, and he did not wear a helmet. I was, hence, an oddity as I rode the bike no matter what the weather was and wore a helmet (normally associated mainly with children), a curiosity that evoked amusement among the locals. A few of my informants later said to me when I arrived at the interview, "Aaaa, so *you* are the foreigner riding a bike!"

I often laughed with many locals that I certainly filled all the requirements of the three things argued as being essential for creating new innovations and change: *wakamono* (young), *yosomono* (outsider) and *bakamono* (fool, stupid).[13] I was aware of the critique of this popularized notion and was not there to create innovations, but I was certainly an outsider. I was "foreign" because of my motivations as a researcher (Aldrich, 2009, p. 299), but my blue eyes and non-Japanese appearance were the most obvious features that distinguished me from the local residents. I was also a rather young female in an aging community, researching activities that were participated in mostly by elderly residents. Furthermore, particularly the participants of formal activities were elderly men. Adding to this socio-demographic bewilderment was that I was accompanied by my husband who had taken a sabbatical year from his work just to travel to Japan with me. Many of my contacts were amused when I turned our gender roles around and referred to him as my "full-time househusband" (専業主夫, *sengyō shufu*) because the pronunciation of the word is the same as housewife (専業主婦) (Posio, 2021). Our arrangement was regarded as an unimaginable by many because of the prevailing idea of the rigid

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[13]   These three categories of people with great energy and critical perspectives outside the traditional frameworks and values were first introduced in the business management book "The Young, the Fools, the Outsiders: Innovation will start from them!" (Makabe, 2012). These were also applied in the rural revitalization, especially after the 3.11 disaster (Toyokeizai, 2013). The research on post-disaster Tohoku has also shown that new incomers in the region have been actively engaged in revitalization (Klien, 2016). The same phenomenon was also seen in Yamamoto, for example, in the strawberry business and in the rhetoric of some active locals. However, these three categories seemed to be mainly a catchy slogan for innovations that nevertheless can be critiqued for presenting the locals as passive and stagnated.

Japanese working culture and gender roles (Imamura, 2010; Ogasawara, 2016). In addition, my non-native Japanese language obviously struck them as something that set me apart from the locals.

However, these aspects of positionality in terms of both my bodily appearance and socio-demographic status, luckily proved not to be obstacles for bonding with the local residents. On the contrary, I feel that they benefitted my fieldwork. Sharing identity can sometimes provide an easier access to the researched community – an assumption that can, however, prove to be more complicated than it seems (Ali, 2015). However, I consider that being different in so many ways actually distanced me from pre-existing categories and expectations. This gave me a certain freedom, as it has for many other foreign Japan scholars, to ask "stupid" questions that did not always meet the social norms. I was able to seek explanations for even the most self-evident things the locals were doing and also to be taught (Reader, 2003; Aldrich, 2009; Klien, 2016; Dales & Yamamoto, 2018). However, even the research participants have not always articulated these taken-for-granted ideas or ontologized reality to themselves, as noted in a previous section's example about the organizer of the Kodanarie illumination event who came up with an explanation of "*kokoro no yutakasa*" (richness of heart and spirit) for the event in response to my question.

I was not only a bit "stupid" but also "young" and needed to be taken care of, which helped me to learn the local ways. The locals were eager to invite me to their events and activities, and my inclusion was often characterized by a certain pride about somebody being interested in listening to and learning the local stories and concerns. This impression of a welcoming attitude was obviously not caused by or limited only to my particular position: I was also a part of a wider phenomenon of sharing the experiences in order to be heard after the tsunami. This also reflected the surfacing post-disaster sense of attachment to the hometown. Some locals explained the background factors in their helpfulness, inclusiveness and openness to me by the experience of the immediate tsunami aftermath and the volunteer efforts. First, many stated that they needed to pass on the good will they had received after the tsunami. This reflects the feeling of indebtedness that is reportedly often shared by the receivers of help following a disaster (cf. Daimon & Atsumi, 2018, 2020). Second, Yamamoto was described as generally having become more open after the tsunami after having received many outsiders as volunteers (cf. Shindo, 2015).

One particular encounter with one of my key contacts in Hanagama perhaps describes my position as "young" in relation to my elderly research participants: I was once again cycling through the neighborhood, and Kaneko-san, a man in his late 60s, was working on the community vegetable field he had established with his wife. I stopped to chat and was just receiving a bunch of onions and fresh greens when another Hanagama resident whom I had not met before drove to the field. Concealing his mischievous grin well, Kaneko-san introduced me with a serious face: "*Kocchi*

wa musume, ne" (Here is my daughter). The other man burst into friendly laughter, yet I wondered, hands full of vegetables, whether this sort of positioning me as a young female in relation to older men affected my credibility as a researcher. I was, after all, well aware that the gendered division of labor was perceived as persistent in rural Japan: Women were mainly positioned as responsible for household management as a legacy of the patriarchal family model of *ie*, which Meiji government institutionalized as a part of the national ideology (Imamura, 2010; Vainio, 2019). The significance of gender and age in the fieldwork are naturally relative to the context (Culter, 2003, p. 226). However, Goodman (2020) has argued that being a young, foreign female can have in general notable benefits when studying the male-dominated Japanese society, because they are more likely to be ideally patronized and have things "explained (mansplained?)" to them (Goodman, 2020, p. 31).

Furthermore, the researchers whom the Yamamoto locals had been in contact with prior to my fieldwork had been mainly male Japanese university scholars. These Japanese scholars often conducted intensive, short-term interview visits for a few days along with young student assistants. One of these scholars visited the town twice while I was staying there and managed to immediately arrange more interview appointments than I had had by that time. This experience also reflected their academic authority (Culter, 2003, p. 227). My small-scale anxiety was relieved, however, by a comment from one of my contacts who credited me for my long-term presence in the town: "You are here. You live here, you stay here for a long time and you see the coast." This utterance reveals the coastal residents' grievances about the reconstruction and positioned me vis-à-vis the planners who were felt to have ignored the area. However, it also shows how being a (Western) [14] foreigner, investing time and money to actually live for a moment in Yamamoto in that particular situation legitimized my research in many ways.

This rather clear-cut positioning as an outsider also partly spared me from the difficulty of balancing between the roles of an insider and an outsider, yet it also excluded me from the benefits of self-reflection in relation to being a part of the same society, culture or community (Ali, 2015). I was welcomed, yet I was partly treated as a guest, sometimes enjoying special attention and effort. The locals cooked food for me, offered tea and pastries and took me places. This certain distance may have limited the level of confidence and the depth of emotions that were reached in some of the interviews. This may have directed those interviews to discussions, for example, of community activities and their goals.

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[14]   For example, Japan's post-war relations with China and Korea have been quite tense (Berger, 2018), whereas Finland has enjoyed a positive country image in Japan for a long time (Ipatti, 2018).

My Japanese skills also both estranged me and brought me closer to the locals. Some locals spoke with a heavy Tohoku dialect, especially when speaking with each other. These discussions were trickier to follow the more informal they became. It has been argued that, during an ethnographic stay at a rural community where people are eager to tell their story, mutual understanding can fortunately be achieved when motivation compensates limited language proficiency (Culter, 2003, pp. 215–219). Furthermore, non-natives can be well prepared for the data analysis because they have to work harder to understand the contents (Ciavacci, 2020, p. 309). Many of my research participants seemed to pay attention to the language they used both in interviews and otherwise to ensure smooth communication. My position as an outsider and willingness to listen to the stories may also have made it easier for them to confide some emotional experiences and more critical views in me without feeling the pressure of normative expectations. Thus, being a "blue-eyed girl riding a bicycle" in the field not only had some benefits, but it also included some pitfalls. After all, most often "the difference revolves upon novelty, so our otherness tends to fade rapidly, especially if we engage in multiple contacts over time with the same informants" (Aldrich, 2009, p. 299).

4.3   …And back again.

On a train back to Sendai after my first weekend in Yamamoto, I recollected the several introductory tours I had been taken on to see the ruins of its destroyed train stations, renovated community centers, the barren coast and its frighteningly massive seawall blocking the sight but not the sound of the ocean. This made me ponder how my own experiences of the pre-disaster Yamamoto coast would be limited to the stories and pictures shown by the locals and to visits to the desolated sites. "My" Yamamoto may have been characterized by the empty slots in the abandoned neighborhoods, the desolated seaside and the presence of the sea, but the residents possessed many overlapping mental imageries of their town: The memories of the pre-disaster town with direct access to Sendai, bustling neighborhoods and coastal greenery. This was contrasted with their experience of the current living environment that was constantly changing as the reconstruction proceeded. The reconstruction and everyday life of the locals continued after I left Yamamoto in May 2015 to return home. This highlights the temporality of fieldwork that is characteristic of all ethnography (Dalsgaard & Nielsen, 2016; Kumar, 2016) but of which one comes acutely aware, especially in the case of drastic changes, such as the disaster's destruction and reconstruction.

Crapanzano (2010) has noted that anthropological work based on the ideal of long, immersive fieldwork "carries detemporalization and simplification to absurdity" (Crapanzano, 2010, p. 59). This is done not merely through writing in the

ethnographic present but also through the analysis that continues the intersubjective knowledge production. This also highlights the role of the researcher who participates in the act of objectifying and stabilizing meanings. Hastrup (2005b) summarizes this relation of emergent object, stabilizing analysis and the necessity of transcending the ethnographic moment through vertical generalizations of the processes (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 143):

> If the anthropological object is emergent, as discussed above, and has no fixed ontological status, be it as a culture, a society or a community, outside of local perceptions of 'givens' and 'rules', the field has to be continually redefined. Evidently, when it comes to analysis, a sense of closure must be attained… implying a temporary objectification of relational knowledge (Hastrup, 2004b, p. 458).

Theoretical analysis therefore requires a narrative imagination "that figures out how parts and wholes are constructed and how individual acts and communal images are both mutual preconditions and challenges." This analytical narrative imagination is ideally expected to follow the imperative of narrative ethics by taking the studied perceived realities seriously and being true to them. This means that not all theoretical connections are plausible, and they cannot bypass the local knowledge (Hastrup, 2004b, pp. 468–469). This, however, raises questions of representation and authority in presenting "the other." The ideal of immersive fieldwork seeks to overcome the researcher's absolute authority (Hastrup, 2010, p. 206). Nevertheless, Thomas (1997) argues that the intersubjectivity of knowledge continues to its reading: Research is more widely available nowadays, so the people studied are able to read and to contest the anthropologist's authority and capability to represent this "local knowledge" (Thomas, 1997, p. 335). Furthermore, the very notions of temporality in ethnography can imply unequal power relations if the future is associated with the ideas of modernity and progress or when "their" time is contrasted with the anthropological present (Kumar, 2016).

Thus, ethnographic analysis carries with it the questions of representational power and the capacity of establishing agency by giving it a voice. Bearing this in mind, I analyzed the data by staying grounded in the multivocality of local utterances and insights. Furthermore, I approached temporality as dimensionality in social practices (Schatzki, 2009, 2010b; Ringel, 2016) instead of progress, modernity or development while also acknowledging the role of analytical narrative imagination and representation.

4.3.1   The spiral of data analysis

It is essential to note that theory and analysis are present in all stages of ethnography, although the discussion on the data analysis is the last section of this methodology chapter. The theoretical understanding also guides but does not limit the data collection (Lofland, 1995; Snow *et al.*, 2003; Davies, 2008; Emerson *et al.*, 2011). The initial interpretations, analytical steps and familiarization with the literature started before and continued during the fieldwork. This continuous analytical process shaped the interviews' themes, which led me to focus, for example, on following the accumulating leads of the perceived importance of gathering places or the sense of security in the neighborhood (chapter 8). Furthermore, analysis is neither a linear (although often described that way) nor a value-free process: It always requires decision making based on one's background. In addition, regional scholarly orientations occasionally direct the theoretical focus (Thomas, 1997, pp. 337–338; Elliott, 2018). This research also connects to the concept of community predominantly through the anthropological debates in so-called Western countries and English language literature, but this is not to understate Japanese scholarly discussions or contexts. The reoccurring themes in the ethnographic analysis of the community disaster recovery in Yamamoto called for reconsideration of these particular conceptualizations of community.

After returning from the field, I analyzed the collected data thematically by drawing from Attride-Stirling's (2001) idea of the thematic network. This analytical frame consists of three levels of basic, organizing and global themes and the network of their relations (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The model provides structured guidelines for organizing the data, although it is developed mainly for text analysis and aims to produce a rather rigid description of the networks and their interpretation. I also borrowed insights from the coding and cumulative abstraction practices of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) without forgetting the dialogue with the existing literature in abductive reasoning (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012).

Coding precedes the forming of thematical networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392; Saldaña, 2021, p. 258). I started the analysis by using in vivo coding, which is often used in the grounded theory approach. The practice of in vivo coding that uses the participants' exact words or expressions helps the analysis to stay connected to the participants' worlds (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 55–57). I conducted the analysis manually by using separate pieces of paper for each identified utterance and excerpt from the interviews, fieldnotes and newsletters as its grounding units. These codes were then organized into what Attride-Stirling calls basic themes, the meanings or incidents connected to specific notions that derive their significance mainly from their context (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

The focus in this phase was not only on the identification of the meanings the locals give to their lived reality but also on keeping them in connection with the

various ways and instances in which the people sought to construct, argue for and enact these meanings. These were often presented in a narrative form that structured the participants' understanding of the temporal dimensions: the pre-disaster past, the projected future and their connections. Narratives are a way to organize one's experiences of being in the world and also an embodied way of (re)making the everyday in the post- disaster setting (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2011; Hastrup, 2011; Samuels, 2019; Vainio, 2020b). Thus, I sought to preserve these narrative elements in the analysis while tying them to the practices they were connected to. This includes also persuasive elements when various actors are engaged in convincing others to join their visions of the desired futures. Additionally, observations and descriptions of how community was enacted in place were connected with the basic themes.

These basic themes were then arranged into groupings that formed the foundation of the thematic networks. These were then analyzed to find an organizing theme for them as in focused coding in grounded theory. This coding, dubbed substantive coding, is done at a conceptual level and was still mainly descriptive (Meagher, 2020, p. 332). These organizing themes were then connected by a global theme (Attride-Stirling, 2001) that proceeded from focused coding to theoretical coding on the level of abstraction. This theoretical coding helps to detect the relations between the established substantial themes or codes and to craft an analytical story of their relations (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 57–67). For instance, the claims of privacy and social connections under the theme of a sense if security were connected to the theoretical theme of aspiration as affectively charged yearning in this analytical process. However, neither the basic nor the organizing themes are connected to only one thematic network, but their interrelation is more complex: For example, theoretical clusters of aspiration as affective yearning and active pursuing were abstracted as the core elements for understanding community as a process. Both of these included analysis of the thematic categories of place and security as the main organizing, substantive aspects.

Both grounded theory and thematical networks claim to proceed from data to abstraction. However, no research is purely inductive, but the abductive research cycle it is present at all stages and it characterized especially the last phase of abstraction in this analysis. Abductive research cycle refers to the iterative process of data analysis and engagement with the existing literature in which "pushing the data against existing theories will likely identify changed circumstances, additional dimensions, or misguided preconceptions" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 179). Analysis is thus an organic and emergent process in which one can return to initial interpretations after new conceptual, theoretical or analytical insights (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 57–59). In the case of this research, the puzzlement about multiple overlapping and sometimes contradictory ideas of community in the field turned into

a suggestion for a readjusted conceptual lens to understand community because the existing frameworks did not fully capture these observations. The following chapters in this thesis are not, hence, merely thick *description* but the end result of both a thematic analysis conducted in an abductive fashion and a writing process characterized by narrative imagination.

4.4   Conclusion

McConnell describes (2003) anthropology as "nothing more than going to new cultures and getting headaches—but the key lies in keeping track of the headaches" (McConnell, 2003, p. 126). This chapter's discussion shows that massive headaches can be caused by various issues of representation, interpretation and power relations that I have sought to openly acknowledge and reflect here. The mutual emergence of the field and analysis as well as the acknowledgement of the epistemological stance shaping the research object (Hastrup, 2004b) are essential when claiming to study the community of this and that locality. Furthermore, the valuing of immersion as a feature of anthropological fieldwork that aims to understand the studied people's lived reality and experiences brings forth the considerations of how this experience can be captured.

I have reflected here various aspects of this question and explained how I adopted a kind of apprentice position. I sought to share and learn about the affectual experiences through participant observation while simultaneously acknowledging that I do not exactly share the same experience and lived worlds. Many of these observations about my intertwined yet not fully shared experiences, my contemplations about the temporality of fieldwork, and my reflections on my positionality also served as a spark for analytical insights. Furthermore, the discussion on my positionality also underlined the fact that, in socio-demographic terms, my main research participants were mostly elderly adults, the majority of whom were male. Collective aspiring as discussed in this thesis is therefore associated with this particular kind of segment of the locals that is by no means a unified social group. Thus, my narrative of all my dealings with Yamamoto and the analysis in the following chapters is as "faithful" as it can be, when taking into consideration the multivocal spatial and temporal construction of the field as well as the researcher's double role as an explorer immersed in the lived realities and as an analytical agent constituting an academic narrative. This discussion sets the ground for the following chapters that present this analytic narrative of post-disaster Yamamoto communities.

5 Tohoku: The internal colony of aspirations, the rich land of hope

On April 25 in 2017, over six years after 3.11, the disaster reconstruction minister Imamura Masahiro from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) made a controversial comment about how it was "a good thing that the disaster hit Tohoku (*Tōhoku de yokatta*)" rather than the metropolitan area around Tokyo. The original comment, aired nationally on the NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) news on the same evening, caused a public outcry on social media and outrage about how insensitive the minister in charge of reconstruction was to the Tohoku people's hardships. Minister Imamura apologized and tried to defend his words to reporters later that day by explaining how the already now huge damage would have been unimaginable if the disaster had hit the Tokyo area. The following day, the tremblers caused by this gaffe also reached Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, who took the responsibility of having appointed such an inconsiderate person. He regretted the resulted cracks in the trust towards the reconstruction authorities and announced that Minister Imamura had resigned from his post (Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet, 2017; The Japan Times, 2017).

Meanwhile, the social media outrage was channeled through a hashtag #Tohokudeyokatta that was first used with messages expressing anger and disappointment. After the initial reaction, however, the hashtag transformed into highlighting Tohoku's positive features: The social media posts celebrated Tohoku's food, historical sites and natural scenery, evoking an imagery of a picturesque countryside, timeless tradition and unique local cuisine (The Mainichi, 2017). Minister Imamura's incautious remark and the reactions to it in 2017 illustrate how the political and social aftershocks of 3.11 continue long on many levels in the society. It also shows how Tohoku's reconstruction is shaped by social and political imageries and practices beyond the drastic events on March 11 in 2011. Thus, to understand community recovery in Tohoku localities such as Yamamoto, it is essential to relate it to both the historical contexts of the political, economic and social practices constituting the center-periphery and urban-rural divisions and the aspirations associated with the Tohoku region.

I discuss in this chapter how the reconstruction of post-3.11 Tohoku is a site for two overlapping yet contradictory aspirations of development and preservation. These aspirations not only outline the blueprints for the desired futures of national and local rural communities, but they also shape the reconstruction of Tohoku and, consequently, Yamamoto. This makes it important to understand Tohoku as the historical, political and social context of Yamamoto's community recovery. The inherent tension between development and preservation is a result of the long-standing practices of peripheralization, problematization and nostalgization of rurality in Japan in general and of Tohoku in particular (Morrison, 2013; Kawanishi, 2015; Lützeler *et al.*, 2020). This has created an ambivalent position for Tohoku that is simultaneously at the center and in the margins of the Japanese national community. Hence, this chapter is also an analysis of aspiring of national community of Japan. Here, the idea of aspired Japanese national community comes close to Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities*, yet I insist on a more future-oriented dynamic idea of national community based not only on static abstractions but also on actualized social interactions and enacted desired futures in social practices, such as political peripheralization and rural revitalization.

The first half of this chapter explores the tension between development and preservation in relation to promoting the development of *New Tohoku* (Reconstruction Agency, 2015) for the bright future of the whole Japanese community. I compare the national appropriation of 3.11 in post-disaster rhetoric with Tohoku's longstanding peripheralization in relation to central Japan. The area has historically been targeted by continuous demands about the necessity of its modernization, yet its backwardness was continuously maintained in the public's imagination and state policies. This has kept Tohoku in a subordinate position as an internal colony that provides for the national center's needs for resources, food, manpower (Oguma, 2011; Hopson, 2013; Kawanishi, 2015), energy (Iwata-Weickgenannt, 2019), and now, as New Tohoku in post-3.11 Japan, the desired bright future.

The latter half of the chapter discusses the imageries of Tohoku as part of the nostalgized national rural *furusato* (hometown) representing the essential Japaneseness. The post-3.11 rhetoric drew from this when it presented Tohoku locals showcasing the virtues of the social relations embedded in the Japanese community. Basing reconstruction on idealized notions such as the *kizuna* (human bonds) in a local community (Yoshihara, 2013, 45–46; Gerster, 2019) reflects the yearning for a sense of belonging symbolized by the timeless tradition and community of *furusato* as a utopian future (Ivy, 1995; Schnell, 2005; Morrison, 2013). However, this reproduces Tohoku's position as a peripheral, *furusato*-like "Japan's materially poor, spiritually rich homeland" (Hopson, 2013, p. 8). It also generally pushes responsibility to the locals not only for their disaster recovery (Barrios, 2017a; Faas,

2018) but also for their viable future when attributing the locals' feelings of attachment and pride as the main prerequisites for success in revitalization (Dilley *et al.*, 2017). It is necessary to comprehend these dynamics of development and preservation that maintain rural Tohoku both as a threat and an opportunity for the national community's future to understand the national and local reconstruction goals, policies and practices. Furthermore, these also shape the collective aspiring and community recovery in Yamamoto, for example, in the contestation of the idea of disaster as an opportunity for development (chapter 6), the delineation of agency in the pursuit of recovery (chapter 7) and the yearning for a sense of place, belonging and security in the hometown (chapter 8).

5.1   Internal colony of aspirations

The devastation of 3.11 forced orienting to a post-disaster future in a period when the Japanese national community was seeking ways to deal with social and political anxieties and insecurities. These were created by the precarities of contemporary social structures, the demographic timebomb of rapid aging and dim economic prospects. Japanese society had been characterized by the sense of a socially and economically insecure future since the early 1990s. This shared, affective temporality can also be called as the "Times of Precarity," following Bryant and Knights' (2019) argument of shared vernacular timespaces (Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 32–35). The bursting of the real estate and stock market bubble that ended Japan's high-growth era in the early 1990s pushed Japan into the so-called lost decades of recession. Japan's economy has still not fully recovered from this and it continues to suffer from chronic uncertainty (Arbatli *et al.*, 2022). The effects of this economic downturn degraded the common trust in society, politics, security and the future altogether when unemployment, social inequalities and the general uncertainty grew. Thus, Japanese society was in a need to re-establish its sense of having a future altogether when the 3.11 disaster hit Tohoku (Allison, 2013; Baldwin & Allison, 2015b).

The future prospects of the Tohoku region seemed even darker. Tohoku and other rural areas have been suffering for an extended period from depopulation and aging, the symptomatic features of Japan's demographic timebomb. Population growth had continued in Tohoku until 1995, although it had already been rapidly decelerating largely due to the rural exodus fueled by Japan's post-war urbanization and economic growth. The region has been suffering since the mid-90s from an accelerated depopulation due to outflow of its workforce and businesses as well as from a natural population decline caused by its increasingly aging population (Tohoku Bureau of Economy, Trade and Industry 2018, pp. 6–7). This has created a

downward spiral of aging and depopulation in local communities that makes Tohoku even more vulnerable.

The imageries of rurality as a stagnated backwater characterized by degrowth persist in politics, research and the public's imagination. This is despite the recent trends of the lifestyle migration of young, creative, entrepreneurially-minded urbanites to the countryside that reflect the gradually developing ideas and experiences of rurality as a site of experimentation and envisioning of opportunity (Klien, 2020b, pp. 48–49; Lützeler *et al.*, 2020, p. 2). These trends still have much work to do to turn the tide of the realities of the acute shortage of taxpayers that is causing a significant decline in municipalities' revenues and an increase in elder-care expenses that, consequently, translate into a lack of workforce, jobs, and services. This leads to a general darkening of the prospect for a bright, viable future for rural localities (Lützeler *et al.*, 2020, p. 17).

Against the odds, the declining Tohoku suddenly became framed as the beacon of hope for Japan's bright future after 3.11. Reconstruction policies and media called for the opportunity to develop New Tohoku in the immediate disaster aftermath (Reconstruction Agency, 2015). Calls for unity and solidarity circled the nation, and slogans for "*Ganbatte, Tohoku*!" and "*Ganbatte, Nihon*!" (Fight or hang in there Tohoku and Japan) appeared side by side (Hopson, 2013, pp. 7–8; Samuels, 2013, p. 39). The 3.11 disaster, on the one hand, shattered the belief in the national community of Japan, exposed its limited capability to provide security to its members and created alternative ways to imagine it (Shindo, 2015; Shaw, 2017). On the other hand, this fueled the national aspiring for a utopian future by the whole Japanese community (Morris-Suzuki, 2017) that was crystalized in the rhetoric of New Tohoku. Thus, the post-disaster reconstruction and recovery not only involves the local communities in the disaster-stricken areas but was also expanded to enacting and envisioning tomorrow's prosperous Japan and Japaneseness, the aspired national community.

Tohoku's position in the Japanese community, despite its moment in the spotlight, is constructed through persisting in the urban-rural and center-periphery divisions of power and prestige. These were also reflected in Reconstruction Minister Imamura's incautious remark. The long-lasting practice of peripheralization that has maintained Tohoku in continuous need of development had kept it in a marginal position (Akasaka *et al.*, 2011, pp. 15–17; Oguma, 2011; Hopson, 2013; Kawanishi, 2015). Post-3.11 Tohoku was also reconstituted as an internal colony of aspirations when the disaster reconstruction fed the national post-growth aspirations to finally step into a new era of prosperity after a long recession. I describe in this section how the post-3.11 New Tohoku, as a part of the Japanese national community, is constructed in a dialogical process with the center-periphery dynamics and historical practices of peripheralization. New Tohoku's double role

offers hope and opportunities for the future of the national community through development, but it poses threats of backwardness and aging at the same time. As such, it needs to be revitalized and dealt with as discussed in the latter half of this chapter.

5.1.1   Envisioning New Tohoku for New Japan

The government was preoccupied with handling the immediate crisis after the disaster hit Tohoku coast on early Friday afternoon on March 11 in 2011. Having learned from the criticism of inept and slow reactions to the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995 Kobe, the government immediately started organizing massive rescue and relief operations while the Fukushima nuclear disaster was still unraveling and the extent of the destruction of the tsunami-inundated areas was unclear. The prefectural authorities had requested mobilization of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). The SDF was mobilized to its maximum level when the tsunami hit ashore, and nearly half of its troops were organized in rescue and relief action to help the local fire fighters, police and coast guard in the largest mobilization in Japan's post-war history. However, disaster governance was complicated because many of the localities hit by the tsunami had lost the majority of their administrative staff. Volunteer activities begun in the disaster-stricken areas and volunteer centers were established in the aftermath of the devastation to coordinate, for example, mud removal, disaster waste disposal and food supply (Suzuki & Kaneko, 2013, p. 43). The government was mostly praised for its reaction, yet discontent was expressed about Prime Minister Kan's[15] disaster governance measures. They were accused of being fracturing when he established several committees and headquarters and personally engaged in their management without sufficient expertise (Samuels, 2013, pp. 9–16).

Soon after the immediate relief and rescue period, envisioning started for the post-disaster future and the practical preparations for reconstruction. Three weeks after 3.11, on April 1 in 2011, Prime Minister Kan held a press conference that addressed the disaster aftermath, the supplementary budget and reconstruction. Emphasizing the national implications of reconstruction, Kan stated ambitiously that the government will "go beyond a mere reconstruction, creating an even better Tohoku and even better Japan." According to Kan, this "big dream" will be the core

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[15]   Kan had advocated for the separation of politics and bureaucrats since he came into power after the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ's) exceptional 2009 landslide victory. The dissatisfaction with Kan's leadership was one factor that enabled the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to regain its long-held position as the ruling party of Japan in 2012 (Kushida & Lipscy, 2013).

of the reconstruction plan (Kan, 2011). Thus, post-3.11 Tohoku was already envisioned in these early statements as the symbol of opportunity for a new, prosperous Japan. These calls for reforming Japan through "building [Tohoku] back better" were echoed in the two main documents outlining the central guidelines for reconstruction: Reconstruction Design Council's report *Towards Reconstruction: Hope Beyond the Disaster* (Reconstruction Design Council, 2011) and Reconstruction Headquarters' *Basic guidelines for reconstruction in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake* (Reconstruction Headquarters, 2011). These documents drew the basic framework for organization, governing and execution of reconstruction.

Three months after the disaster on June 25, Prime Minister Kan established the Reconstruction Design Council that consisted of academic specialists, political leaders and public intellectuals and various other experts. The Reconstruction Design Council submitted its report *Towards Reconstruction: Hope Beyond the Disaster* to the Prime Minister after hearing the findings of the Reconstruction Design Council's study group. The report drafted by the Tokyo-based council outlined the main principles and framework for the reconstruction that aimed to build a nation resilient to disasters (Suzuki & Kaneko, 2013, pp. 84–85; Leheny, 2018, pp. 173–174). The report echoed the ambitions of a prosperous future for Japan voiced by Prime Minister Kan in the disaster's immediate aftermath. Principle Five in the document especially outlined the mutual dependence of the Tohoku region and the rest of the Japan on their economic restoration:

> Japan's economy cannot be restored unless the disaster areas are rebuilt. The disaster areas cannot be truly rebuilt unless Japan's economy is restored. Recognizing these facts, we shall simultaneously *pursue reconstruction of the afflicted areas and revitalization of the nation* (Reconstruction Design Council, 2011, p. 2, emphasis added).

The legislative basis for the reconstruction was laid in the Basic Act on Great East Japan Earthquake Reconstruction that finally passed in the Diet on June 20 in 2011. As a result, the already existing Reconstruction Headquarters[16] was officially formed as an organization a few days later on June 24 (Iuchi *et al.*, 2013, p. S486). The Reconstruction Headquarters was responsible for drafting the *Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake* that continued to envision Tohoku's reconstruction and the revitalization of the whole of Japan as parallels:

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[16]   The Reconstruction Headquarters later ceased to exist when the formal Reconstruction Agency made its debut finally in February 2012 (The Japan Times, 2012).

The nation must mobilize all its efforts towards recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake, then towards reconstruction with future vision for the purpose of advancing social and economic restoration and rebuilding people's lives in the disaster area as well as *revitalizing vibrant Japan as a whole* (Reconstruction Headquarters, 2011, p. 1, emphasis added).

Furthermore, the ultimate goal of the reconstruction policies and measures was to build communities in which the risk of future disasters is minimized and where people can reside in safety and with peace of mind (*anzen-anshin*, see chapter 6). However, this is not limited to the actual disaster areas in the rhetoric of the guidelines but is extended to the Japanese nation as a whole. This builds a sense of national community sharing the same aspirations of a secured future:

The office and ministries of the Government as a whole will collectively engage in comprehensive and systematic implementation of the following policies and measures for reconstruction, in order that the nation will implement firm community planning aimed at minimizing risk for similar tragedies in the future and at creating an environment where people from all walks of life can live in safety and with a peace of mind, thereby providing hope and courage to residents in the disaster areas by overcoming the disaster's effects on the society, economy, and industries as well as *restoring Japan into a prosperous and vibrant nation, shared by the entire people* (Reconstruction Headquarters, 2011, p. 8, emphasis added).

I focus here mainly on the envisioning of the nation in the central government's post-disaster rhetoric and media framing, although the 3.11 disaster evoked attempts to renegotiate the Japanese national community also in other facets of the society. Shaw (2017) notes that "reimagining the nation has also unearthed complex and contradictory imaginings of community and home, social obligations, and protections" (Shaw, 2017, p. 64). In contrast to national unity, this envisioning drew from the notion of sharing and the communal experiences of disaster, living together and political solidarity. 3.11 also caused feelings of urgency and a critical evaluation of the state among the citizens outside Tohoku that ignited a rebirth of social movements which mostly engaged in anti-nuclear protests. These post-3.11 movements not only demand policy changes but also "aspire toward a new nation— a collective struggle born out of the trauma of disaster" (Shaw, 2017, p.61). Shindo (2015) has likewise argued that international volunteers together with Tohoku locals engaged in reimagining community through the shared experience of loss of home and thus expanded the boundaries of Japanese community beyond ethnicity (Shindo, 2015). These alternative imaginations created cracks in the state's dominant

narrative of a Japanese community, but they also contributed to the momentum of embracing the disaster as the flagship of a reimagination of unity of the national community and its desired future. This envisioning and national appropriation of 3.11 was done, however, in relation to the well-established historical practices of peripheralization and exploitation of the Tohoku area and, thus, it reinforced the national center-periphery hierarchy.

5.1.2   Historical roots of Tohoku as the internal colony

Post-3.11 Tohoku's membership card in the Japanese national community came with a condition: development. The Reconstruction Agency presented reconstruction as an opportunity to upgrade Tohoku communities to qualify as full-fledged members of modern Japan:

> Central to the basic philosophy and vision outlined in the Act is a commitment to restoring *communities that are appropriate for a modern, mid-21st Century Japan*. This should be accomplished through the promotion of measures that promote a revitalized and vibrant Japan that does not limit itself to simply restoring or replacing facilities to their original state, and which provides the conditions to allow each individual to overcome the disaster and lead prosperous lives (Reconstruction Agency, 2012, emphasis added).

This echoes the central government's persistent concerns over Tohoku's backwardness as well as the long-standing ambitions to modernize the region while still maintaining its subordinate, peripheral position (Akasaka *et al.*, 2011, pp. 15–17; Oguma, 2011; Hopson, 2013; Kawanishi, 2015). Projecting expectations about Tohoku's future onto Japan's prospects as a whole also strengthened the position of rural Tohoku as the counterpart to urban, developed Japan: Failing to reconstruct and develop this rural region would also threaten the future of the whole Japanese community as represented by the center-dominated narrative. For Barrios (2017), this kind of striving to develop is problematic and reflects modernist, neoliberal thinking and hierarchical power-relations in which the developer defines the to-be-developed (Barrios, 2017a, p. 9).

These relations have historical roots in Japan: The Tohoku region dramatically entered into the global awareness surfing on the tsunami's tidal waves, but it has had a long-standing role mainly as the mirror of urban Japan. Reflecting this, it was presented in 3.11 reconstruction rhetoric and planning practices as an essential part of, but also a threat to, the Japanese community's desired future: The region, as the backward outcast, needed to be dragged towards the centrally outlined, desired future on the timeline that the developed center and the primitive periphery were sharing.

Peripheralization is relational in spatial scale. It refers to the multidimensional process of constructing hierarchical, socio-spatial positions in terms of power and prestige. It can manifest as compromised economic viability, social inequalities and marginality as well as exclusion of political power and following dependency on the center. Furthermore, it has a temporal dimension often associated with the notion of development (Fischer-Tahir & Naumann, 2013; Kühn, 2015). In Japan, the position of Tohoku and other rural peripheries within the national whole was particularly in temporal terms through the notion of civilization (*bunmei*) and its development. Tohoku was already part of a regional hierarchy in the Edo period (1603–1868), but its peripheral position was especially reinforced by the Meiji government's (1868–1912) efforts to establish Japan as a modern nation-state, a homogenized but nevertheless center-dominated state that had a strong regional hierarchy. The center and the peripheral areas were portrayed as sharing the same timeline of the historical trajectory, yet the peripheral areas were depicted as being on an earlier stage of development (Morris-Suzuki, 1996, p. 90; Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 19–23) with ancient linguistic and social structures (Crowe-Delaney, 2020, p. 94). This constituted a strong foundation for the idea that development is the prerequisite for Tohoku to be included in the modern Japanese community and also contributed to the idealization of rural Japan as a sphere of tradition and of the unchanging, essentialized Japaneseness elaborated later in this chapter.

In this setting, despite its long history and established culture, Tohoku became associated with a negative image of an uncivil and primitive outlandish area that needed to be "civilized" or "developed" from its feudal practices, dialect and culture. From the early Meiji period onwards, this imagery was distributed widely in newspapers and other contemporary accounts, entering the negative image of the region into public's imagination (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 19–23). Disasters and hardships also played a role in the historical formation of Tohoku's image. The devastating Meiji Sanriku Tsunami that hit the Sanriku coast in Tohoku in 1896 and later the Showa Great Sanriku Tsunami in 1933[17] reinforced Tohoku's negative image and the divide between the center and the periphery. The reports of the destruction and aid efforts after these disasters again emphasized the uncivilized nature of the Tohoku people, their barbarian ways of living and their incomprehensible language. In addition, series of crop failures struck Tohoku's Eastern coast in the early years of the 20th century. The region suffered from massive famines due to these repeated poor rice harvests, especially in 1913 and in 1934 in the wake of the Great Depression, which also resulted in a serious recession in the

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[17] As a response to this tsunami, a "total tsunami mitigation system" was developed as comprehensive tsunami countermeasures. This system is also the foundation for the reconstruction policies after 3.11 (Shuto & Fujima, 2009, see chapter 6).

Tohoku region. This stagnated Tohoku's position and image as a peripheral area economically, politically and socially at the low end in the regional hierarchy as a suffering, poor and miserable area (Hopson, 2014, pp. 151–152; Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 112–113).

The post-3.11 reconstruction rhetoric and the following reconstruction policies stressed development. However, it is argued that this aspiration carried with it the legacy of the historical central interests to preserve this backwardness of Tohoku to maintain it as Japan's "internal colony" (Hopson, 2013; Kawanishi, 2015, p. 148). The Tohoku region was presented during the early Meiji period not only as "uncivilized" and "barbarian" but also as a "frontier" and a "rich land." As such, the region had a central part in the agenda of the Meiji government's aspiring national expansion: The government invested in Tohoku's development to secure its agricultural production that benefitted central Japan. Furthermore, Tohoku was seen as a gateway to the development of Hokkaido, contemporary Japan's northernmost island. It offered resources to strengthen the Meiji government's ideal "strong nation, strong army" and offered access to trade contacts.

This all resulted in a sense of mission, in which the lines between helping the backward area to develop and exploiting it were blurred (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 28, 43–45, 143). However, in the 1910s, the urbanization of Tohoku was proving to be slow and the modernization skipped the region. Thus, since the Meiji period, Tohoku's position as the "internal colony" producing food, cheap labor and, later, electricity for the central regions has been solidified in historical writing and political rhetoric and practices (Oguma, 2011, pp. 1–3; Hopson, 2013, pp. 5–10; Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 146–148). This position continues to shape contemporary Tohoku, whose decline was further reinforced by the effects of the government-led, post-war economic growth that increased out-migration and magnified the demographic crisis in the area (Matanle & Rausch, 2011, pp. 86–89; Oguma, 2011, pp. 1–2).

The backwardness and isolation were not only outside definitions of the region, but Tohoku residents reflected on them. These definitions became a part of their self-understanding and they were also used as leverage. Self-acknowledgement of its backwardness has granted Tohoku resources and a central role in the development policies. This special position was used to demand more support, aid and investments, for example, to develop its transportation infrastructure (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 41–47). Thus, the perception of Tohoku as an outland is a product of the prolonged dialogical engagement between the center and the periphery: Tohoku's position is not only a one-sided suppression by the center nor a helpless dependence by the periphery; it is also a mutually constructive narration in which the ideas of the Japanese nation and the distinct Tohoku region reinforced each other (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 7–8; Solomon, 2017, p. 8). The idea of distinct characteristics of the Tohoku region laid the groundwork for movements demanding a more central role

for the region or even its independence as part of a so-called "Tohoku nationalism" in the last decades of the 19th century (Kawanishi, 2015, p. 75). Hence, Tohoku had to be "uncivilized" and "backwards" not only to "develop" and "prosper" but also to gain "freedom" and "independence" (ibid., pp. 47–48).

This critical evaluation of a homogeneous Japan and of Tohoku's position as an "internal colony" was a part of the re-evaluation of history in Japan. The rising acknowledgement of the existence of the diverse, unequal and "multiple Japans" has been an increasing trend in Japanese history writing and society after the 1990s recession (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 1–2). The 3.11 disaster fueled the reinterpretation of Japan's post-war history that entered into the mainstream publications, especially in the form of criticism of Fukushima's position as the subaltern "energy colony" (Love, 2016, p. 113; Iwata-Weickgenannt, 2019). The disaster also prompted evaluations of the ways to break away from the criticized center-periphery relation (Yamashita, 2013). The studies of Tohoku had been particularly cultivated in the field of "Tohoku-logy" (*Tohoku-gaku*) initiated famously by Akasaka Norio. Tohoku's long history, culture, folklore and character had been highlighted in these studies that were now re-examined in reflections on the reconstruction of Tohoku and post-3.11 Japan (Akasaka *et al.*, 2011; Akasaka, 2012).

Another example of the enduring echo of 3.11 in reconceptualizing the Japanese national community and its internal divisions has been the 2020 Tokyo Olympic games. The promotion of Tokyo's 1940 Olympic campaign and the 1964 Tokyo Olympics relied on representing Japan as a developed non-Western country that was nevertheless different from other Asian countries. In contrast, the discourse on the 2020 Tokyo Olympics reproduced the internal otherness brought forward by the 3.11 disaster: Domestic and international criticism of the nationalistic tone in the Olympics framing and the flow of investments to Tokyo to dispense on reconstruction stole the show. This critique overshadowed the repeated attempts to frame the 2020 Tokyo games as an opportunity to showcase national unity and Japan's revitalization through "reconstruction Olympics" (*fukkō gorin*) (Tamaki, 2019; Gagné, 2020b, p. 119; Holthus *et al.*, 2020, p. 2).

The idea of Tohoku as a unified region also lives on in post-3.11 Japan, although the aspirations of Tohoku nationalism died after the famines and fracturing of the region in the early 20th century (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 75, 122–123). Despite its landmass of nearly one third of Honshu, the main island of Japan, and its diversity of localities, culture and traditions, the narration of Tohoku often still portrays it as "a single geographical and ideological space" that has a specific shared regional identity and common history (Kawanishi, 2015, pp. 3, 7). This neglects the fact that the region itself consists of six prefectures and several diverse areas, such as the Sea of Japan side and the Pacific Ocean side (map 2, p. 18).

The post-3.11 discourse seems to have a tendency to associate Tohoku with the three affected prefectures, namely Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima – not to mention dubbing 3.11 as the "Fukushima disaster" that associates the disaster mainly with the nuclear accident, failing to recognize the severity of the earthquake and tsunami. On the one hand, referring to the geographical disaster-stricken territory "as Tohoku" makes it carry the burden of the historical and political perceptions of the region and the associated prospects for the future outlined earlier. These are practiced in the localities through the reconstruction policies, for example. On the other hand, the developments in these particular disaster-stricken locations participate in constructing the overall narrative "of Tohoku" that is projected to other Tohoku localities outside the disaster areas. As mentioned already, the aging and depopulation in the disaster areas especially resonates with the insecurities of the declining rural Japan in general. For example, the disaster reconstruction in the affected localities has become a playing field of testing nationally promoted ideas, such as compact cities (Sorensen, 2010; chapter 6), to handle the demographic crisis also beyond the disaster areas.

The national community of Japan enacted and envisioned through 3.11 was thus based on the desired future of the overall economic, political and social security. However, reconstruction became largely a means only to boost the national economy mainly through massive reconstruction projects despite the initial enthusiasm for New Tohoku and New Japan (Dimmer, 2014). The immediate post-disaster ambitions or the national reconstruction planning did not succeed in envisioning futures that would resonate with the Tohoku locals' experiences (Curtis, 2012; Yoshihara, 2013). Furthermore, the disaster and ambitious implemented reconstruction projects accelerated the depopulation trend in the region (Edgington, 2017; Nagamatsu, 2018): Between 2000 and 2010, the population in the three tsunami-hit prefectures Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima had already shrunk by 3.4% from 5.9 to 5.7 million people. After the disaster, the population decline between 2010–2019 in the three prefectures totaled 5,8% in a population of 5.38 million people (Japan Statistic Bureau, 2021). The future prospects of Tohoku in terms of population development seem even gloomier because the population of these prefectures is projected to drop by 19.7%[18] to 4.3 million by 2040 (The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2018). Sendai, the biggest city in the region, has attracted people from the surrounding areas that have especially suffered from the loss of young, working-aged residents, leaving the older residents in the affected rural municipalities.

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[18]   The whole population of Japan is projected to decline by 12% between 2019 and 2040 (The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, 2018).

This decline of the rural regions that is considered politically and economically problematic, has been sought to be solved, for example, through revitalization practices. These practices aspire development, yet they draw from the ideal imagery that turn the "primitive" and "uncivilized" rurality into timeless containers of essentialized Japanese tradition and culture worth preserving. This double role of Tohoku became visible in the aftermath of 3.11, discussed next.

5.2 *Furusato* Tohoku: The rich land of hope, attachment and nostalgia

In addition to being an internal colony of aspirations, post-3.11 Tohoku was also presented as a rich land of hope, attachment and nostalgia: These sentiments would pave the way for the bright future of the Japanese national community while preserving its essence. I discuss in this section how aspirations of development and preservation connect to a range of affects and practices. The scale of the emotions and expected mindset about the post-3.11 recovery goals were not based on the disaster experience alone but drew from the utopian ideal of nostalgized *furusato* (hometown) and essentialized Japaneseness. As such, the post-3.11 reconstruction is argued to have an inscribed aspiration of preserving Tohoku's position as peripheral, *furusato*-like "Japan's materially poor, spiritually rich homeland" (Hopson, 2013, p. 8). In contrast, the tsunami-stricken depopulating area has been seen for a long time as a problematic, undeveloped region in desperate need of revitalization through rediscovery of the affective attachment to and pride for the hometown (Love, 2013; Dilley *et al.*, 2017). These affects have been harnessed in rural revitalization practices implemented in response to the political, economic and social insecurities created by the declining countryside. Thus, also the idea of *furusato* Tohoku reinforced in post-3.11 Japan has an inherent tension of preservation and development.

The post-disaster narratives presented in the national and international media embraced a discourse of a pronounced "Japaneseness" in post-disaster news coverage. The reports from Tohoku highlighted the ordered, socially respectful and calm behavior of disaster victims that was acclaimed as a trait of the Japanese cultural mentality or character (Hopson, 2013, pp. 7–8). As Richard Samuels (2013) describes:

> The people of Tohoku were repeatedly (and by all accounts deservedly) applauded for their selflessness and resolve. They were widely admired – almost to the point of essentialist caricature – for their patient and persevering nature (*gaman zuyoi*) and for their acceptance of what had befallen them . . . On this account, the people of Tohoku embodied what it meant to be Japanese – they

formed a community (*komyunitei*) connected (*tsunagu*) by bonds (*kizuna*) and human contact (*fureai*) that sustains solidarity (*renkei*) through common struggle (*Ganbarō Nippon*!). (Samuels, 2013, p. 39)

This is by no means the first occasion when disasters were used to construct imageries of the national community and appropriate Japaneseness. The Great Nobi Earthquake in 1891, the first "national disaster," served the Meiji government's nation-building goal when the newly established national media published reports of the weaknesses of the Western-style infrastructure. Not only the infrastructure, but also the contemporary West's admiration crumbled in the earthquake and it was replaced with the nationalistic propaganda about the superiority of the Japanese technology (Clancey, 2006). Later, after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, Gotō Shinpei, Tokyo's mayor at the time, sought to seize the moment and revive the country through fully restructuring Tokyo. However, Gotō's and his fellow modernizers' plan failed from being overambitious (Schencking, 2008; Weisenfeld, 2012) and, instead of development, the picture painted in post-disaster reports in 1923 was one of chaos and confusion. It fueled violence and rumors especially against Korean minorities (Weisenfeld, 2012) and was harnessed in the governments' campaigns to cultivate moral values such as courage, loyalty and self-scarification. This propaganda drew on the essentialized, homogeneous Japaneseness and aimed to foster a sentiment of national unity and dedication to benefit the nationalistic goals of militarization pre-World War II Japan (Borland, 2006; Schencking, 2008).

Over a century later, a set of readjusted values of unity were highlighted in the aftermath of the 1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in Kobe: Framed as the birth year of Japanese civil society, volunteering, community bonds (*tsunagari*) and mutual aid emerged to characterize the rhetoric of Japanese society's future in the midst of the economic recession (Avenell, 2010). Morris-Suzuki (2017) perceives these as forms of a disaster utopia, but they also represent building blocks of the visions of an aspired Japanese community. Furthermore, these post-disaster community utopias are also enacted and as such, they have had very concrete effects: This is reflected in the intensified militarization after the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 (Schencking, 2008), in changes in civil society legislation and the establishment of NPOs after the Kobe earthquake (Avenell, 2010), and now, in post-3.11 reconstruction planning when Prime Minister Kan referred to the ambitious developer Gotō as the role model for Tohoku's reconstruction (Kan, 2011). This also shows how disasters create a momentum in which conceptualizations of community and a range of related affects can be not only challenged but also enforced or imposed.

A rhetorically and politically imposed "hegemony of hope" (Leheny, 2018) shapes Tohoku and its localities when expectations of accepted affects are being formed. Leheny (2018) illustrates that the rhetoric of the Reconstruction Design Council's report, *Towards Reconstructon: Hope Beyond the Disaster* (2011), reflects the language of The Social Science of Hope, *Kibōgaku*, a five-year project initiated in Tokyo University's Institute of Social Science. The *Kibōgaku* project aimed to offer hope as the countermeasure for the social, economic and political insecurities of the post-growth Japanese society. One of *Kibōgaku*'s most prominent promoters, Genda Yuji, was a member of the Reconstruction Design Council's study group. Hope consequently became the expected mood on the way to the desired future of both the Tohoku communities and of Japan as a whole. Hope was seen as a tool, a "method of temporal readjustment," to deal with temporal frictions. However, it is also a rhetoric loaded with normative expectations of positive emotion, leaving little room for critical examination and dissenting voices questioning what actually constitutes hope. The Disaster Reconstruction Council recognized these perils of unbalanced relations of the center speaking for the affected localities, yet the council's final report nevertheless highlighted hope as the dominant emotion related to reconstruction (ibid., pp. 174–180). Thus, hope became a powerful, affectively-charged tool to intertwine the local and national desired futures that drew from the temporalities of post-growth Japan and its insecurities.

The recovery's narration from the early reports onwards has stressed community solidarity, self-help and resilience (Curtis, 2012). These have been coupled with the subsequent emphasis on hope (ibid., pp. 174–180), *kizuna* (Gerster, 2019) and the decentralization trend in Japan (Love, 2016). This has not only pushed the responsibility for their recovery to the locals in the tsunami areas (ibid.), but it has also created expectations for realizing the central visions of the desired future for the whole of Japan. These post-disaster narratives in the media and political rhetoric can shape the response to the crisis. The 3.11 case of the calm and well-mannered Japanese celebrating *kizuna* is strikingly opposite to the framing of the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 in New Orleans: The post-disaster reports there constructed a narrative of exaggerated looting, violence and social chaos resembling a war-state. These narratives shaped the state's disaster response that relied more on military intervention than on humanitarian aid (Tierney *et al.*, 2006).

The imposed hegemony of hope and essentialized Japaneseness may arguably also limit the discussion on the locals' social, psychological and economic hardships and the controversies created by reconstruction. Thus, how the disaster and its aftermath are narrated and how reconstruction is envisioned are not trivial questions (cf. Sun & Faas, 2018). On the contrary, by delineating the threats, aspired futures and agency and their responsibilities, these narratives actively construct the disaster response, the recovery experience and the communities both nationally and locally.

They also draw from existing practices and imageries of the communities, such as the notion of *furusato* and the rural revitalization practices discussed next.

5.2.1   Preserving unchanged Japaneseness

The social media response to Minister Imamura's gaffe turned into a celebration of Tohoku and its characteristics that underlines the urban-rural divide in Japan. The pictures posted in social media with the hashtag #Tohokudeyokatta were dominated by imagery of landscapes with wide rice fields reflecting the surrounding mountains, cherry blossoms arching over rivers, and old *torii* gates. They also included winding roads on seashores and mountains bathing in the intense colors of fall foliage without forgetting regional delicacies. This kind of imagery is associated with the notion of *furusato* that translates literally as "old village." The lack of a human presence is not problematic in these imageries: On the contrary, it is an admired state in contrast to the realities of urbanized areas where 91.7% of Japanese live (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019). The extremely densely populated Tokyo, the biggest city in the world, can especially be seen as the ultimate symbol of urban life. Its crowds, neon lights and continuous traffic form an extreme counterpart to the static, tranquil imagery of natural beauty where the human presence is mainly represented by traditional houses, scarce but idyllic inhabitation or pictures of traditional festivals and food.

The direct translation of *furusato* does not, however, fully capture the significance of the word as a spatial, but not place-bound, trope. *Furusato* has come to symbolize the feelings of longing and attachment to a nostalgic and unchanged countryside "home" or "native place" in the minds of urbanized Japanese (Robertson, 1988; Ivy, 1995; Schnell, 2005; Morrison, 2013). *Furusato,* as the idealized representation of countryside, also embraces the ideals of social relations and their formation in a tight-knit village community.[19] However, the timeless, nostalgic countryside does not only appeal to the individual sense of longing for social belonging: *furusato* is also presented as symbolizing and preserving the essence of an unchanged Japanese identity, culture and tradition (Robertson, 1988; Ivy, 1995; Creighton, 1997; Dilley *et al.*, 2017). In 3.11, the narration of Tohoku as the rural periphery and the *furusato* of Japan took various forms, which each shape the position and power of the disaster-stricken areas both nationally and locally.

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[19]   The construct of nostalgic countryside is not unique to Japan. For example, in England, rural villages and communities evoke an imagination of a "thick," small and close-knit community in idyllic natural surroundings that triggers a "longing to belong" (Neal & Walters, 2008).
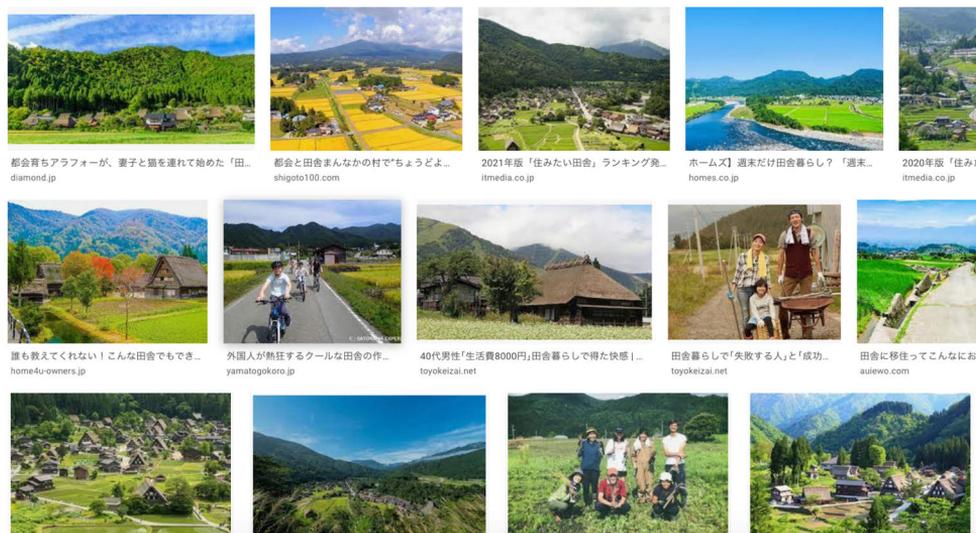
Figure 2　A screenshot of Google picture search with a keyword *inaka* (countryside).
Most of the search results presented lush, mountainous greenery and traditional housing. When people were present in the pictures, they mostly represented togetherness. A rising trend of young lifestyle migrants or so-called "U-turners" returning to the countryside is also observable in these pictures (Klien, 2020b).

This stereotypical image of the Japanese countryside (figure 2) also prevails in contemporary Japan in the public's imagination because of its long history, affective appeal and the practices that are continuously reproducing it. This idealized imagery is heavily dominated by rice-based agriculture and traditional houses, and it neglects the actual variance of often mountainous rural regions and the increasingly suburban character of rurality in contemporary Japan. The Meiji government's nation-building efforts had already institutionalized the idealized, traditional village as the foundation of Japanese cultural identity, social structures and values, which contributed to the monopolization of typical *furusato* scenery. This perception was further reinforced by both populist and scholarly *nihonjinron*[20] writings. These texts sought to discover the unifying essence of the Japanese argued to be based on the institutionalized social relations in the countryside and its households (*ie*), their harmony and reciprocity of social structures (Robertson, 1991, pp. 13–17; Ivy, 1995). Furthermore, *furusato's* appeal is argued to be increased by the insecurities and a shared "fundamental alienation, a severance from 'home'" caused by the rapid

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[20]　A popular genre of "theories of the Japanese" that treat the nation, ethnicity and culture interchangeably and advocate a set of shared core values on which the fundamental Japaneseness is supposed to be based (Sugimoto, 1999).

modernization and urbanization, the subsequent pre-war growth and, finally, the post-growth precarity (Ivy, 1995, p. 105; Schnell, 2005). *Furusato* is thus carefully preserved also various contemporary practices: For example, travel companies cultivated the idea of *furusato* in their campaigns that both created and addressed the needs of urban dwellers to visit their spiritual origins in a nostalgic yet imaginary countryside hometown (Creighton, 1997; Morrison, 2013; Crowe-Delaney, 2018).

However, the discourses that spread, for example, through the mass media construct also a sustained narrative of vanishing *furusato:* It is portrayed as being continuously threatened to vanish in the high tide of modernization, urbanization and now, rural decline accelerated by the disaster. This threat of disappearance is argued being essential for enabling the reproduction of the Japanese community: Keeping certain cultural constructs constantly on the verge of disappearing enables the maintenance of nostalgia according to Ivy (1995). This offers security when navigating modern lives by reimagining the past, Japan "as it was." Thus, the notion of *furusato* provides a sense of comfort and continuity during times of anxiety and insecurity. It is this constant reimagination of the traditional past that constructs an imagery of the Japanese nation and its unique and incommensurable identity (Ivy, 1995; cf. Bauman, 2001).

Thus, in essence, *furusato* is not only a spatial but also a curious temporal construct that is simultaneously the past and the future: It embraces an imagined, nostalgic past represented by the traditional countryside, but it promises a return and reconciliation in the future (Ivy, 1995, pp. 111–115; Creighton, 1997, pp. 241–242; Morrison, 2013, p. 2). The rhetoric about utopian future prospects as the fulfillment of longing is often framed as a narrative of a development from the dark past to the bright future (Ivy, 1995, p. 114) – a storyline that resonates with post-3.11 discourses and Tohoku's transformation from the uncivilized periphery to the developed post-disaster national hope. The concept of furusato crystalizes how Tohoku and also Yamamoto as part of rurality are simultaneously both at the margins and at the center in the envisioning of Japanese national community and culture

Thus, *furusato* evokes a specific experienced temporality and spatiality, or timespace (Schatzki, 2010; 2020), characterized by the tension between development and preservation of the nostalgized countryside and its community. This leads to a contradiction of the interests of developing New Tohoku and preserving *furusato* Tohoku: As described above, the rural counterpart has been preserved both politically and socially to boost the hegemony of urban and central Japan. Rurality is simultaneously seen as a target of modernization and now, in the aftermath of 3.11, of development. Tohoku as rurality is arguably essential for preserving the Japanese national community and Japanese identity (Schnell, 2005; McMorran, 2014); thus, developing Tohoku too much or in the wrong way would endanger its characteristics as the nostalgic, yet vanishing *furusato*. Hence,

development would symbolically threaten the Japanese national identity and also the center-periphery division. This makes *furusato* a contradictory yet convenient political motif, for example, to legitimize nationalistic cultural rhetoric and the central interests of maintaining Tohoku in its continuous, to-be-developed state (Hopson, 2013, p. 8).

Furusato inevitably renders meanings and expectations on the envisioning of the post-3.11 local communities in Tohoku. For example, as an affective, temporal ideal, it resonates with the heightened, post-disaster sense of attachment to the hometown and the yearning to return to their nostalgized pre-disaster community (chapter 8). However, rural does not directly translate as community-ness nor does urban translate as community-less either in the public's imagination or in the Tohoku locals' experiences: The notion of rural community needs to be constantly sustained and recreated in everyday discourse and practice (Neal & Walters, 2008). The idealized temporality, spatiality and social community represented by *furusato* is enacted in various practices in contemporary Japan, such as, city development planning and promotion strategies (Ivy, 1995, pp. 109–117) and rural tourism that offers packages of "authentic" traditional experiences (Crowe-Delaney, 2018, 2020, p. 78). Post-disaster tourism also relies on *furusato* as an affective temporal trope when the past is preserved as a presentation for outside visitors in disaster-stricken localities (Littlejohn, 2019). Moreover, rural revitalization has been using the appeal of *furusato* to mobilize locals and govern by affect for decades (Robertson, 1988; Love, 2013; Dilley *et al.*, 2017), as the following section discusses.

5.2.2   Revitalizing problematic peripheries

Associating depopulation with degrowth has contributed to the imagery of the rural regions as stagnated backwaters and threatening problems, as described above. The understanding of Japanese rurality is slowly breaking free from these deterministic structural ideas and focusing more on adaptive, innovative and versatile activities in the heterogeneity of rural spaces (Lützeler *et al.*, 2020), yet the negative perception still shapes the implemented policies and also the possible future trajectories that are seen as plausible in the rural localities. In this setting, *furusato* continues to shape the imageries of locality and rurality in various practices as a romanticized yet stagnated ideal (Ganseforth & Jentzsch, 2022, p. 3).

As such, also furusato creates a curious mix of visions of rurality as timeless fountains of tradition to be preserved and problematic declining peripheries to be developed through affectively charged activities. For example, in rural revitalization practices, the feelings of pride, attachment and longing associated with *furusato* legitimize policies, revitalization measures and agency when assigning of roles and responsibilities. Thus, the logic of rural revitalization draws from metaphors of

mobility and temporality: stagnation and past that are contrasted with activity and future, often defined from the outside. This refers not only to progress on an envisioned temporal timeline towards the desired future but also to the actual increase in local activities of rediscovery. The notion of rediscovery includes an assumption of the locals' stagnated, passive agency that depends on outside help for their activation (Love, 2013; McMorran, 2014; Dilley et al., 2017). Similar dynamics of agency can be observed in local activities in Yamamoto (chapter 7).

Rural reimagination is not the exclusive right of this so-called Times of Precarity in post-90s Japan, but the late 1920s and early 1930s were also times of uncertainty and lack of trust in the future. Rural revitalization had already entered the state agenda in the 1930s as a response to the economic and social crisis brought by the Great Depression. Japan faced a rise in social discontent and anxiety that was spread through the newly emerging popular culture. The political parties' inability to handle the national and international political situations, diplomacy and the economic recession simultaneously paved the way to Japan's militarization preceding World War II (Smith, 2001, pp. 3–5). The dynamics of rurality and the nationally desired future thus were also manifested in the wartime efforts that aimed to build a prosperous empire.

This meant drafting rural revitalization and development campaigns to mobilize national support for the "Japanese community" as well as initiating aid programs and legislative changes to secure the countryside as the food supplier. The modernization of the farming industry and the emphasis on community solidarity were also efficient tools for the wartime mobilization at the local level. The questions regarding the relation between rural and urban, tradition and modernity and the practicalities of maintaining a sustainable countryside as the food supplier were thus actively processed both in national politics and local life. Rural revitalization campaigns sought to address the stress caused by modernization and urbanization, the widening gap between urban and rural and the transformation of working life as the self-aware public began striving towards modernity and public participation (Smith, 2001, pp. 16–18).

The legacy of post-war politics is echoed in the largely top-down, orchestrated post-3.11 reconstruction that keeps the localities on the leash of economic dependence (Cho, 2014; Love, 2016; Cheek, 2020; chapter 6). Japan's construction state pork-barrel politics during the post-war high-growth period was largely based on spending on the massive public works in remote regions. This construction was implemented in the name of securing the future of the rural localities and this rhetoric was repeated in the promotion of the massive post-3.11 reconstruction projects (chapter 6). However, the projects offered questionable actual benefits to the declining region: Instead, they mainly boosted national economic growth and solidified the power of the ruling triad of LDP politicians, bureaucrats and big

businesses. The financial incentives implemented to support the declining regions created a twisted dependency between the central government and the shrinking areas: The financial assistance from the government became so significant in many communities that they needed to maintain a depopulating municipality status (Matanle & Rausch, 2011, pp. 233–239).

The decentralization policies were devised to manage the declining regions after the financial crisis of the 1990s. These policies were promoted under the rhetoric of increasing local power. The Koizumi administration in the 2000s was especially known for aiming to idealistically dismantle the center-directed public planning system (Matanle, 2013, pp. 241–242; Hijino, 2016, pp. 221–223). However, the decentralization and privatization policies also backfired. Many municipalities were left in weak economic situations due to a shortage of tax revenues when the state's support was reduced (Matanle & Rausch, 2011, pp. 252–253). A similar threat of dependency looms in the distant future of the long-term recovery of the disaster-stricken Tohoku localities where the region's shrinking challenges the reconstruction planners (Matanle, 2013). The dependence on the limited period of state reconstruction support to realize the massive reconstruction projects creates uncertainties about the future viability of the disaster-stricken localities that are further weakened by the accelerated post-disaster depopulation (Edgington, 2017; Nagamatsu, 2018; Chapter 5). The post-disaster measures have been criticized as inefficient also due to the long-established structural problems relating to Tohoku's position: Reconstructing Tohoku as it was would only replicate the inherent problems in the area and make the ambitious urban development plans meaningless (Oguma, 2011, pp. 8–10).

More recently, the political emphasis on decentralization was toned down and the affective dimensions of idealized rurality have become emphasized. The rhetoric of the statements of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Prime Minister Abe Shinzo during his second administration 2012–2020 utilized the affectively-charged appeal of *furusato*. The LDP rhetoric drew from Japanese cultural identity when it was aiming to "take back (the lost) Japan (*Nihon o torimodosu*)" in its campaign for the 2012 elections. Thus, the nostalgic temporality of *furusato* was suitable for Abe's nationalistic tone that emphasized the essentialized homogeneous Japaneseness (Morris-Suzuki, 2013; Nakahara, 2021). Instead of center-led decentralization policies, "a passion for *furusato*" and promotion of local products were advocated as the foundational means for vitalizing rural economies (Abe, 2017). A combination of economic incentives and pride for local products has been capitalized in the "furusato tax" system initiated in 2008 as a part of this trend. Invoking the sense of connectedness with – or even moral duty towards – one's imaginary countryside roots embedded in the idea of *furusato*, the system allows consumers to donate specific amounts to a chosen rural locality and receive local products and tax

deductions in return. This system had reached wide popularity by 2016 despite of its criticism (Rausch, 2017b, 2017a).

This kind of appeals to affect has thus been utilized for decades in rural revitalization practice. It has cemented the ideal of both, the local community as the officially sanctioned social unit and as the means of revitalization. Various financial and legislative campaigns have been initiated since the 1930s, mostly by the national government. These emphasized local mobilization, self-revitalization, self-help and social harmony that have shaped the vision of the countryside's future and resonated with the local aspirations of development and modernity as noted above (Smith, 2001, pp. 170–174). Local governments and entrepreneurs initiated model projects in the 1970s, such as the "One Village, One Product" (*isson ippin*) movement. These projects aimed to achieve self-sustainability of the rural localities based on promotion of a selected local product. Additionally, various local activities in the name of *mura okoshi undo* (village revival movement) were commenced after World War II. Sometimes initiated by local actors, these revitalization movements also became supported, encouraged and often initiated by the authorities (Fujimoto, 1992, p. 12; Knight, 1994, p. 640). The state's policies turned into investing in large-scale tourism development by the mid-1980s through state stimulus programs, including the 1987 Resort Law and the 1988–89 *Furusato* Creation Plan (*furusato-zukuri*). Both offered fiscal aid to localities for bottom-up projects to improve their infrastructure to make it capable of attracting tourists, but many of these projects failed in stopping population decline (McMorran, 2014, p. 7).

A similar ethos of self-help and local mobilization continued in locality studies (*chiikigaku*) that grew in popularity after the 1990s recession. These locality studies programs and workshops that encourage locals to participate in the "rediscovery" of their valuable regional characteristics, sites, food and other qualities speak in two languages: On the one hand, the practice empowers the locals and seeks to evoke pride, attachment and a sense of belonging. This nevertheless has the downside of presenting the locals as passive and in need of help from outsiders to "rediscover" the good qualities of their hometown (chapter 7). On the other hand, attempts to mobilize the local residents is pushing the responsibility for managing the declining localities to the residents themselves within the national framework of a recessionary and aging Japan. This tendency follows the already mentioned trends of Japanese policy development that focuses on decentralization and self-help (Love, 2013).

This questions the success and motives of the revitalization approaches when *furusato* is utilized as a mobilizing, normative affective construct "to make agreeable sense of the persistent downward spiral of villages and towns against the grain of national growth trends" (Love, 2013, p. 115). The political appropriation of affects in the rural revitalization campaigns diverts the attention from structural problems, such as the lack of schools and services when it attributes the reasons of rural decline

to the lack of the locals' affect and attachment to their hometown (Love, 2013; Dilley *et al.*, 2017). According to McMorran (2014), this creates an idea that "any rural village could be revitalized if only the residents were sufficiently cooperative, interdependent, hardworking, and innovative." Thus, the *furusato* theme becomes "a source of local identity for one village and a normative force admonishing other rural villages for not realizing their inner *furusato* in contemporary Japan" (McMorran, 2014, p. 13). This mobilization and targeting of affect in these practices "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 simultaneously deeply tied to the objectives of the state through the very core of their subjectivity" (Dilley et al., 2017). In the context of disaster recovery, the sense of place, belonging, attachment and pride also continue as influential blueprints for the desired and normatively expected futures of aspired countryside communities when shaping strategies, social agency and emotions.

5.3   Conclusion

I have discussed in this chapter how the reconstruction of Tohoku occurs in the crosscurrent of the aspirations to develop and preserve that have long historical roots. The inherent tension between these largely top-down directed aspirations shaping the national community of Japan helps us also understand the features and controversies of community recovery in Yamamoto. The notion of the national appropriation of 3.11 does not deny that the disaster was indeed a devastation that touched the whole of Japan, even the world. However, as the gaffe of Reconstruction Minister Imamura and the public reaction to it described in the opening of this chapter shows, an idealized rural imagery in Japan and a division between the center and the periphery prevails in Japan. It also highlights that the delicate (im)balance of this regional hierarchy and, consequently, illustrate how drafting and executing the visions of the future Tohoku are difficult issues to tamper with.

In the disaster's aftermath, it seems to be impossible and counterproductive to rebuild the infrastructure and social structure as they were before the tsunami (Oguma, 2011, pp. 8–10; Kelly, 2012). However, reinventing and redirecting the economy and communities of the region towards a totally new direction also appears to be beyond the capacities and sometimes the wishes of the region (Kelly, 2012, p. 2). This thesis also shows that the national reconstruction plans have not been very successful in resonating with the experiences, feelings and hopes of the Tohoku locals (e.g., Curtis, 2012; Yoshihara, 2013; Littlejohn, 2017; Gagné, 2020a; Vainio, 2020b). Therefore, if reconstruction relies on preserving these pre-disaster center-periphery, urban-rural roles as Oguma has argued (Oguma, 2011), the idea of Tohoku's development evokes many contradictory issues that the localities need to

deal with. Hence, these political, economic and social aspirations introduced in this chapter and the politicizing of the disaster-hit regions and their demographic situation shape the embodied experiences of the community both locally and nationally.

In a way, this chapter's theme is present daily in Yamamoto: One evening towards the end of my fieldwork, I was cycling back to Sensei's house on the coast after a community event on the mountainside. The paddy fields were basking in the golden light of the sun setting behind the mountains when, like every evening at seven o'clock, the town loudspeakers started to play the nostalgic melody of the song *Furusato*, The Hometown. The lyrics of the still-popular song from 1914 echo the sentimental aching for one's rural hometown and paint a picture similar to that presented by the #Tohokudeyokatta posts:

> I chased after rabbits on that mountain.
> I fished for minnow in that river.
> I still dream of those days even now.
> Oh, how I miss my hometown.
> Father and mother, are they doing well?
> Is everything well with my old friends?
> When the rain falls, when the wind blows,
> I stop and recall of hometown.
> Some day when I have done what I set out to do,
> I'll return home one of these days.
> Where the mountains are green, my hometown,
> Where the waters are clear, my hometown.

While I traversed the countryside, depending on my location in relation to the multiple loudspeakers, the timing and sound of the melody differed. It echoed around causing dissonance and sounding like it would be played in canon. The Yamamoto locals' experiences of the recovery and reconstruction of their hometown, *furusato*, also varied greatly depending on their spatial and social location, as the following chapters will discuss: The collective pursuing in the local's activities reflected the delineation of agency in rural revitalization (chapter 7) while the collective yearning was also characterized by *furusato*-like nostalgization of the pre-disaster community and environment (chapter 8). However, the experience of hearing the song *furusato* was not contingent on my spatial location but on the pace of my movement and the feeling of approaching home (cf. Adam, 2005, p. 511; Amit & Salazaar, 2020, p. 2). Furthermore, the memories of hearing the song before and knowing what it symbolized structured the particular moment. The Yamamoto locals' experience of the reconstruction is similarly relational and constructed in interaction with other

people, the material environment and the experienced temporality. Next, I will move on to discuss how this experience is shaped by the national and local reconstruction plans and the aspirations embedded in them.

6 Conflicting secure futures: Administrative disaster in the town with one heart

One of the first places I visited in Yamamoto was the old Yamashita station of the Japan Railways (JR) Jōban line in Hanagama District (figure 3). It used to be the heart of coastal Yamashita area. Now the new station was being built in the new residential relocation area of the Shinyamashita compact city when the Yamamoto section of the Jōban Railway Line was moved inland. Tanaka-san, one of my contacts who was born in Yamamoto and now lived in Sendai, took me on a sunny afternoon to see the old station's ruins. Little did I know at the time my feet landed on the ruins of the station square for the first time that it was the epicenter of the coastal grievances and controversies surrounding reconstruction. Standing on the remaining rundown platform, Tanaka-san explained that the reconstruction was a complicated issue. Waiving his hand first to the mountainside and then to the coastal side of the old railway, he noted that the views differ *there* and *here*. In this chapter, I discuss these controversies and how they shape the post-disaster communities in Yamamoto.

Figure 3   The platform of the now-demolished Yamashita station in October 2014.

After this introduction, we continued to a shop run by Nakamura-san next to the old station and also visited a photograph exhibition in a warehouse opposite the shop. The exhibition showed pre-disaster pictures of the surrounding area as both tangible proofs of the pre-disaster coastal neighborhoods' existence and as reminders of the dramatic tsunami experience. I also saw pictures of the station before and after the tsunami, and Nakamura-san emphasized how it was only partially broken by the tsunami and would have been fully remediable. I occasionally visited Nakamura-san's shop later during the fieldwork, and there were often some locals sitting and chatting about the state of affairs at the coast and the planning activities. Nakamura-san summarized these discussions in an interview by complaining how "those who design and execute the reconstruction plans only use the road on the mountainside and never visit the coast" and how "the leadership is bad (*toppu wa warui*)." These remarks by Tanaka-san and Nakamura-san were only a prelude to the concerns over town leadership's tactics to secure the future of a town that was suffering from accelerating depopulation and aging. Around the town one could hear similar discontented comments about how "the town does not listen to residents," "the top's way of thinking is bad and causes discrimination" and "the future of the area does not change unless the mayor will change." Many locals referred to the mayoral elections earlier that spring 2014 as evidence of how the reconstruction policies had divided the town: The ruling mayor who promoted the compact city policy had won only by approximately 200 votes.[21]

Sensei's house stood a stone's throw away from the old Yamashita station along the now overgrown railway line. Sensei was a university retiree in his 70s and he had bought and renovated the house after the destruction of his family's home nearby in the Disaster Hazard Zone 1 where rebuilding was now prohibited. He spent few days a week in Yamamoto and the rest of the time with his wife in temporary housing in the neighboring town. I resided during the latter part of my fieldwork in the upstairs of this old wooden building that was one of the few left standing in the barren area where the empty lots of pre-disaster houses were now covered by weeds. On one Sunday morning, I was sitting in Sensei's living room drinking my morning coffee as usual. I was gazing at the landscape past Sensei's garden that he nurtured to increase the greenery in the area. As on many other mornings, the flow of construction trucks passing the house on the road leading to the seashore (figure 4) caught my eyes. These trucks traversed tirelessly everywhere in the town, carrying land from the mountains to the seashore restructuring sites and to the compact city land elevation project areas, no matter the day of the week.

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[21]   A shorter version of this vignette appears in an earlier publication (Posio, 2019a, p. 446).

Figure 4   Reconstruction trucks

The trucks not only moved land to realize the town's visions of security based on the national reconstruction guidelines of seawalls and relocation to higher ground; they also carried with them the emblems of contradictions inherent in the social and spatial envisioning of aspired town community. Banners on the front of the trucks stating "*We love Yamamoto*" or "*Yamamoto, towards one heart*" spread the glorious message of a unified town with the shared goal of a prosperous future. These official reconstruction slogans were propagated in various contexts around the town but were in apparent contrast to the claims of town division. Likewise, a closer look to the truck banners would reveal that they specifically indicated to which of the three compact city construction projects the land was being transferred. These three urban-style compact cities were the flagships of Yamamoto reconstruction and were being built not only to provide safe housing for disaster evacuees but also to increase the town's attractiveness by constituting "the new face of the town" (Yamamoto, 2011, p.13). Of these three areas, however, this rhetoric seemed to reflect the position of Shinyamashita as the biggest and most advanced area with various services. The other two, the smaller Shinsakamoto and the still-delayed Miyagi hospital area, hardly managed to live up the expectations of increasing their town's attractiveness with their limited services and aging residents.

Sensei was one of the vocal critics of these compact city reconstruction policies. The friendly smile and gentle voice of this man with a great interest in gardening and environmental restoration were the soft facades of Sensei's sharp words and even sharper pen when he engaged in criticism in a column of the monthly newsletter published by the coastal resident group *Yamamotochō Fukkō o Kangaeru Jūmin no Kai* (hereinafter Doyōbinokai). Doyōbinokai's members all shared Sensei's main concerns about reconstruction: They perceived it as the mayor's dictatorial promotion of relocation of the residents and the railway stations to the newly built compact cities while neglecting the coast. This, according to Sensei, had endangered Yamamoto's future. Ironically, his house stood directly next to the old railway line

defining the boundary between town-designated Disaster Hazard Zones 2 and 3, another central theme in Doyōbinokai's criticism of how reconstruction had divided the town. Therefore, Sensei often argued that "without rebuilding the coast, there is no disaster recovery of Yamamoto town," appealing simultaneously to the town-level community and a notion of coastal community.

Under the slogan "*Team Yamamoto, towards one heart*," manifold territorial and social divisions of the desired future and community thus emerged within Yamamoto during the course of reconstruction. How did reconstruction lead to these kinds of fractures, discontent and polarization, although the leading aspiration both nationally and locally for the officials and the residents alike was "safe and secure community development" (*anzen anshin no machizukuri*)? I discuss in the first half of this chapter how controversies arise from the divergent future orientations. Differing spatial understandings are often, yet not always, a feature of conflicts, but "all conflicts, however, are characterized by divergent temporalities," including divergent interpretations of pasts and visions of desired futures (Schatzki, 2002, p. 92). Disaster was seen in the national level reconstruction plans and rhetoric as a chance to build a prosperous Japan with a bright future and, hence, to transform Tohoku from a threat into an opportunity (chapter 5). Meanwhile, the disaster-stricken localities and their residents sought to realize their desired futures within the limits of the national reconstruction scheme. Thus, these post-disaster domains can be seen as battlefields of the future visions (Gotham & Greenberg, 2014, p. 9).

Risk and security in the post-disaster setting are understandably central concerns in the present and future. I argue that, although stressing security, the official reconstruction relies in practice more on the future orientation of anticipating risk. In contrast, the locals' recovery experience focuses largely on aspiring security and also the constituents of this security vary. Thus, multifaceted, relational and affective security seems to be left in the shadow of risk, which creates conflicting, divergent desired secure futures. I first zoom in from national reconstruction policies to the local, post-disaster Yamamoto. Next, I discuss how the Yamamoto locals were navigating their way to the future in the crossfire of their fears of decline, depopulation and aging and the expectations of development, growth and a viable, sustainable future.

I explore in the latter half of this chapter how the divergent desired futures and perceptions of aspired security lead to a myriad of emerging, multilayered conceptualizations of communities. This is illustrated in this chapter through analysis of the claims for the unity of the town level community and the construction of the coastal, *hama*, community. The multivocality in desired futures also reveals the politicized, power-related dimension of aspiring and security: the controversies over for what and for whom the secure future is constructed. The analysis of the

hama community in this chapter is largely based on earlier published articles (Posio, 2019a, 2019b).

6.1   Aspiring security, anticipating disaster and decline

The 3.11 disaster forced the affected municipalities that lacked manpower and expertise to draft reconstruction plans quickly. They were bombarded in this process by the national and prefectural reconstruction guidelines' requirements, the demands for quick, yet participatory recovery and efforts to realize the municipalities' own visions about land use and development. The conceptualizations of security in these plans penetrate from the national to the local levels and shape the local communities' everyday recovery. It is necessary to understand the basic aims and methods of realization outlined in the reconstruction plans before exploring the locals' interpretations of them because they set the layout for both the physical and social recoveries.

The local reconstruction plans' details varied greatly, but they all arguably aimed for the same result: *fukkō*, reconstruction, that indicates development and improvement in contrast to mere restoration, *fukkyū*. *Fukkō* in these plans general rely on principles of "safe and secure community development" (*anzen anshin no machizukuri*) and "compact and sustainable community development" (*konpakuto de jizoku kanōna machizukuri*) (Ubaura, 2018, pp. 57–58). The Yamamoto disaster reconstruction plan also outlines "Community development for being resilient in disasters and living in safety and with peace of mind" (*saigai ni tsuyoku, anzen – anshin ni kuraseru machizukuri*) as the first of the three fundamental principles guiding the reconstruction (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 5). The ultimate goal of the future-oriented development, *fukkō*, is thus secure future.

The word pair *anzen-anshin* (safety - peace of mind) illustrates how security is a multifaceted concept. The members of Doyōbinokai drafted a grant application in one of their meetings for local reconstruction activities. They wrote down security as one of their main goals, and they spent a moment recollecting which one comes first, *anzen* or *anshin,* to increase the application's credibility in the context of reconstruction. In Japanese, *anzen* refers to objectively measurable safety and *anshin* refers to a value-based, subjective peace of mind or sense of security (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015). Doyōbinokai's application drafting illustrates not only that *anzen-anshin* was often used as a set phrase in disaster reconstruction rhetoric but also that their order hints towards prioritization of measurable security over the sense of security in reconstruction.

However, also *anzen* is also relative and subjective, as the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster shows: The cracking in the trust in the officially defined

anzen of safe radiation levels did not provide *anshin* (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015), which led to the redefinition of trust, expertise and of security and a reshaping of the of authorities' legitimacy (Figueroa, 2013; Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015; Vaughan, 2015; Yoshida *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to spend a moment discussing how security and risk are approached here to understand how security, a prevalent aspiration, shapes the community in post-disaster Yamamoto. This research focuses on future orientations and community and security has a mainly instrumental, analytical value for understanding collective aspiring. Therefore, reviewing the full breadth of risk and security studies is out of this chapter's scope.

The locals' criticism about the reconstruction plans focused heavily on dooming the town's plans of large-scale material disaster reduction measures as risks to Yamamoto's future and not representing their desired future. In contrast, the research participants' narration of the desired, secure future especially at the remaining coastal communities draws upon the importance of strengthened social relations as the basis for security. Thus, I understand here both risk (Boholm & Corvellec, 2011) and security as a relative (James, 2014, p. 86) mutually constitutive socio-spatial processes that are both produced and productive: Social actors in their contexts define and construct security, but security as a social and spatial productive process is simultaneously shaping cities, nations, institutions or social life, environment and actors in general (Glück & Low, 2017). I focus on the process of its situational and value-laden social construction defining what valued object is to be secured, from what, how and why (cf. Boholm & Corvellec, 2011). As such, security delineates what is perceived as a risk and also shapes communities, as elaborated later.

This directs the attention from material security to social power and to security as experienced, felt and embodied in social life and everyday practices. These sides are both products of and producing what Glück and Low (2017) call the "states of security". On the one hand, states of security refer to a mode of governance and power that are contextual, historical and socially constructed. This associates security with, for example, national security, political measures and governance both at the national and local scales (Glück & Low, 2017, pp.286–288). However, as Sternsdorff-Cisterna reminds us, security is a social relation (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015). On the other hand, the notion of states of security encompasses thus subjective, affective and bodily experiences (Glück & Low, 2017, pp.286–288). These two facets are intertwined and also reflect the multidimensionality of the Japanese word pair *anzen-anshin*. Here, however, instead of treating security as a static *state,* I understand it as an evolving process of the collective negotiation of security and the method for its realization. Therefore, I argue that security ought to be understood as dynamic and experienced, constantly constituted in everyday social interaction in lived environments.

6.1.1   National plans shaping the local secure future

The reconstruction decisions in Tohoku needed to be made quickly in a compressed timeframe: What is characteristic of this time compression and disaster recovery is that decisions need to be made before future uncertainties can be resolved at a time when the institutional structures, interrelationships in decision-making processes and access to resources are distorted (Olshansky *et al.*, 2012). As early as in his press conference on April 1 in 2011, Prime Minister Kan set the direction for reconstruction by naming relocation to a higher ground (*takadai iten*) as one means to achieve successful reconstruction and to ensure protection from future tsunamis. Kan also envisioned the future Tohoku as a global example of sustainable, new forms of towns catering to local needs:

> In some areas we will level parts of mountains in order to create plateaus for people to live on. Those residing in the area will then commute to the shoreline if they work in ports or the fisheries industry. We will create eco-towns, places which use biomass and plant-based fuel to provide natural heating. We will outfit cities with infrastructure to support the elderly. We aim to create new kinds of towns that will become models for the rest of the world. (Kan, 2011)

The ambitious rhetoric cultivated in the reconstruction plans is decorated with appeals to construct a shared experience of national community while developing the localities (chapter 5), but it soon became evident that "rebuilding better in Tohoku meant rebuilding safer and stronger to resist tsunamis" (Iuchi & Olshansky, 2018). In other words, the aim was to decrease the possibility of similar damage to the areas in case of future disasters; hence, a disaster of the scale of 3.11 emerged in the realm of imagination, yet the future's uncertainty became accentuated because the limits of imagination had already been tested by the massiveness of 3.11 that was dubbed as being beyond imagination (*sōteigai*). The reconstruction policies promoted under notions of sustainability and security nevertheless relied heavily on calculations and evaluations of future tsunami risks and advocated "building back better based on the narrowest interpretation of the term—rebuilding with reduced risk to a specific hazard" (Maly & Suppasri, 2020, p. 174).

The reconstruction plans thus function on two different realms, namely, that of anticipation of risks in uncertain futures and aspiring security in the desired future. The first dominates the latter in reconstruction practice: seawalls were built, land-use was readjusted, massive building projects were commenced, and coastal residences were relocated in the name of security but by following the logic of anticipating risks in uncertain futures. I suggest that this is a foundational cause of local discontent and controversies.

Risk is often presented as the counterpart to security, but this representation has analytical weaknesses. On the one hand, this either presumes "a clear choice between [a] secure state of affairs and the one that is not," making it counterintuitive for somebody to choose the undesirable conditions. On the other hand, if risk is associated with danger, the quest for security is overshadowed by a focus on potential future losses and decisions leading to it, hence highlighting the future orientation of anticipation over aspiring. Thus, risk and security are not opposites, which further accentuates the divergence of these future orientations: Security and insecurity are connected as states of being, whereas risk is a language of probabilities (Rabinow, 2008, p.27). Furthermore, insecurity can penetrate the whole society and endanger human security in many ways, taking many tangible forms, such as unemployment or social problems in the precariousness of post-growth Japan (James, 2014, p. 78). This makes security more than an issue of material protection. It also underlines how offering risk reduction as security neglects the relativity of security by ignoring its affective dimensions when focusing mainly on loss.

The disaster area is so wide so that one reconstruction principle is argued to be unsuitable to be applied to the whole region (Shiozaki, 2013, p.12). Customizing the reconstruction to local needs and understandings of relative security was, however, a difficult task, and the local governments largely became the realizers of the national visions of desired, secure future. This was despite the fact that the Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction emphasize that the "uniqueness of each disaster area be the base line for reconstruction" (Reconstruction Headquarters, 2011, p. 4), and the national reconstruction plans allocated the main responsibility of reconstruction planning and execution to the municipalities (Reconstruction Design Council, 2011, p. 18). However, the top-down drafted reconstruction scheme did not really produce substantial tools for the local government. In practice, the national power was underpinning the reconstruction in the form of reconstruction guidelines and financial reconstruction support structures (Cho, 2014; Mochizuki, 2014; Cheek, 2020).

The designated "special affected areas" needed to draft a set of reconstruction plans to reduce the risk of severe future tsunami destruction. These were based on the 40 key programs for reconstruction and their sub-projects drafted top-down by the Reconstruction Agency that also reviewed the plans and granted funding. Reconstruction strategies varied in the municipalities, although many local governments chose to focus particularly on collective relocation to inland, land readjustment and elevation, public housing programs and programs supporting disaster management in fishing communities (Iuchi & Olshansky, 2018, pp. 95–97; Nagamatsu, 2018, p. 40; Onoda *et al.*, 2018, p. 6; Cheek, 2020). The majority of these programs were already a part of the disaster countermeasure scheme but were

now executed on a large scale (Shuto & Fujima, 2009; Sato, 2015; Nagamatsu, 2018, p. 40).

The emphasis on anticipation and risk calculation was cemented by the nationally defined, two-tiered tsunami protection approach: The government programs included building a protective seawall against a "Level-One tsunami" caused by a magnitude 8 earthquake estimated to happen once in a hundred years. A protective levee against a "Level-Two tsunami" triggered by a magnitude 9 earthquake once every 500–1000 years was also to be built. Determining the height of these protective levees and other potential protection measures such as land use patterns (based on national guidelines) has been the main task in prefectural reconstruction planning (Iuchi *et al.*, 2013, pp. S487–S488; Nagamatsu, 2018, p. 39). Decisions were made based on the estimated tsunami heights resulting from computer simulations. The results were often simplified due to resource and time limitations, and many municipalities adopted the results as they were presented by the prefectural governments without modifying them to fit the local topography.

This tsunami simulation was extended to the so-called Two-Two Rule in land use planning: The two meters deep inundation areas of Level-Two tsunami simulations were declared to be high-risk-zones (Onoda *et al.*, 2018, pp. 5–6). This disaster hazard area policy made local governments define the exact territorial the boundaries of risks in their areas. This land use strategy differentiates the reconstruction after 3.11 from other disasters, such as the 1995 Kobe earthquake, in which it was possible to return to the original locations after a displacement period. The factor prohibiting return in the case of 3.11 was not the physical environment's devastation but the calculated risk defined by the authorities that also drew the outlines for the community form and location.

This reconstruction vision offered by the central government was criticized for being a one-size-fits-all format that caused an economic and structural burden to local governments and delays in the reconstruction. The delays led to extending the project deadlines funded from the Reconstruction Budget beyond the initial deadline of fiscal year 2015 (Akimoto, 2018, pp. 25–30). Seawall building and land elevation projects are expensive and draw resources from other projects. Their effectiveness and necessity are also debated. They are considered to have negative effects on the fishing industry, environment and general livelihood of the areas and to generate a false sense of safety (Bird, 2013; Littlejohn, 2017). Furthermore, while the controversies related to the massive seawalls attracted considerable media attention, the Two-Two Rule policy also created challenges in land use and complicated the adjustment of the reconstruction plans to local communities' cultural traditions and geographical conditions (Onoda *et al.*, 2018, p. 9).

Thus, the top-down directed reconstruction scheme, unclear role division and lack of coordination between the national, prefectural and local levels led to various

problems and an overlap of national and local interests. It also complicated the establishment of an effective system to take the perspectives of local residents into consideration (Mochizuki, 2014; Akimoto, 2018, p. 32; Cheek, 2020; Vainio, 2020a, 2020b; Chapter 7). The most pessimistic evaluators of these reconstruction policies note that the lesson from 3.11 is that national appropriation of the disaster for national development (cf. chapter 5) is a crude fact because "the spirit of the Basic Reconstruction Law is 'no reconstruction without the revitalization of Japan,' and the people may be sacrificed for the survival and prosperity of the nation" (Kunugiza *et al.*, 2016, p. 177).

6.1.2   Yamamoto reconstruction plan

The Yamamoto reconstruction plan followed the national guidelines and aimed to secure the town's future through anticipating risks. The chosen reconstruction policies were justified with scientific estimations of the risks not only of future tsunamis but also of depopulation. Yamamoto's first fundamental reconstruction principle, "Community development for being resilient in disasters and living in safety and with peace of mind" (*saigai ni tsuyoku, anzen – anshin ni kuraseru machizukuri*), was directly associated with disaster risk and damage reduction:

As one of the lessons learned from the earthquake disaster, it is very difficult to prevent all disasters. From now on, we will focus not only on disaster prevention but also on "disaster reduction." Even if a disaster occurs, we will aim for town development that can restore damage as soon as possible and minimize damage. (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 5)

Yamamoto chose mass relocation from the coastal areas to inland (*takadai iten*) and land rearrangement as its main policies from the nationally funded programs to realize this aim of risk and damage reduction. In practice, Yamamoto reconstruction plan and projects focused predominantly on three large-scale inland building projects: the three new, urban-style residential "compact cities" (*konpakuto shiti*) of Shinyamashita, Shinsakamoto[22], and the Miyagi hospital area (map 3, p.83).

Compact cities were already a part of the development visions in Yamamoto before the disaster. Thus, they can be seen as a continuum of pre-disaster urban planning wrapped in the rhetoric of security. However, they mainly address the risk of depopulation accentuated after the disaster. The idea of densely populated,

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[22]   *Shin* translates as "new." Thus, the names of the compact cities, New Yamashita and New Sakamoto, imply novelty and development in contrast to the old Yamashita and Sakamoto areas.

environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient compact cities has been promoted nationally in Japan as one of the important premises of urban policy since the early 2000s as a part of the global discourse on sustainability (Wongbumru & Dewancker, 2018; Gondokusuma *et al.*, 2019). In Japan, the idea of compact cites is modified to serve the purpose of securing the nation not only from environmental problems but especially from the threats posed by the demographic crisis. It is used as a tool to intensify land use and focus resources in both urban and rural areas (Sorensen, 2010; Suzuki, 2010). Now, these compact city areas in Yamamoto are a presented as a way to provide residential land for tsunami evacuees while constituting "the new face of the town" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 13) and "the center that the town did not have before the disaster" (interview with the leader of the town reconstruction section). As such, they are hoped to increase the town's viability and attractiveness in the face of an accelerating depopulation. Unlike the mountainous Sanriku coast in northern Tohoku, Yamamoto has a coastal plain near the mountains to use for reconstruction. However, also the new areas required land elevation, and thus the mountains were "cut", and the trucks transported land tirelessly to the compact city areas to provide material to create secure land. According to some locals' observations, this not only transformed the landscape on the town's mountainside, but it also led to changes in the rain patterns and the wild animals' behavior.

Relocation to the compact cities was promoted, for example, by directing larger recovery subsidies for those moving to the new areas that consisted of rental public housing and plots for privately built houses. Furthermore, resident-initiated group relocation to land outside the compact cities was set to require a minimum of 50 households compared to the minimum of 10 stated in the central government's guidelines (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, n.d.). Yamamoto's land rearrangement policy of designating tsunami-inundated areas as Disaster Hazard Zones (DHZ) 1–3 (map 3, p.83) based on the national Two-Two rule in land use policy (Onoda *et al.*, 2018) was also implemented to direct evacuees to relocate away from the coast.

This policy forbids building any new residential buildings in the hardest-hit DHZ 1 on the coast, whereas elevations are required for new buildings in zones 2 and 3 (Yamamoto, 2012). Seven municipalities in the Miyagi prefecture set similar limitations on the use of the inundated areas. Six of these regulated building for a specific time period, whereas Yamamoto declared DHZ 1 as hazardous and *permanently* prohibited reconstruction (Iuchi *et al.*, 2013). The coast of Yamashita and the majority of Sakamoto's flooded areas will thus remain uninhabited because they are defined as DHZ 1. The Yamashita area has considerably large areas of DHZ 2 and 3 and, thus, relatively populous communities of returned tsunami evacuees, especially in the Hanagama and Ushibashi Districts and some in the Kasano District. The old Jōban Railway Line is the boundary between Zones 2 and 3. Construction

on both sides of the old railway has limitations, but the financial reconstruction support from the town differs for the residents of these zones: The town offers to purchase land for rezoning from Zone 2 but not from Zone 3, which encourages relocation away from the first and leaves the residents of the latter the option of returning with limited support.

The reconstruction projects aim to provide security mainly through material and technical solutions, yet there can never be complete freedom from insecurity and risks (James, 2014, p. 72). As a probability, risk always exists, but the hegemony of technical control over risk merely shapes insecurity differently. The (over)reliance on technological solutions is especially turned into insecurity when these solutions prove to be unreliable and experts fallible (ibid., p.83). The tsunami eroded the trust in this concrete, material security when it crushed the existing seawalls. New horizons of risk concerning natural disasters were opened – or rediscovered, because the region had previously experienced several historical disasters (Smits, 2011) – and they necessitated renegotiation of the constituents of security (Littlejohn, 2017; Posio, 2019b).

Furthermore, the physical structures, especially in conflict situations, often highlight threat and fear and fail to increase the perceived security (Boano, 2011, p. 51). Therefore, the technological solutions for disaster risk reduction are inherently connected to the sense of security and trust they create in people. Perhaps even more important are the ways people respond to them: The role of protective technologies and the (false) sense of security they provided became evident when the tsunami hit the Tohoku coast. Overreliance in many localities on the protective capability of the seawalls against a tsunami was reported to having led people to ignore evacuation (Ando *et al.*, 2011; Nakahara, 2011; Suppasri *et al.*, 2013). The situation in Yamamoto was described as even worse when the overall awareness of tsunami risk after the earthquake was said to be nonexistent:

Author: Was the tsunami awareness then low in Yamamoto?

Sensei: No. Because there was not any [awareness]. (*Iya. Ishiki wa zenzen nakatta.*)

Thus, the chosen reconstruction policies put Yamamoto's local government in a demanding role to manage land purchase, consensus building, the use of public funds and smooth mediation between national and local government (Iuchi *et al.*, 2013). These also forced the town authorities to define the desired future as well as risk and security. The reconstruction company representative I interviewed stressed that building housing quickly and efficiently for the tsunami evacuees was the main reconstruction priority. However, despite this emphasis on speed and efficacy, the

reconstruction challenges led to delays that consequently reduced the number of residents actually choosing to wait to settle into the new areas. Those residents who initially considered building their own houses in the compact cities also faced rising building costs. Therefore, many opted for either to move to public housing or outside the town. The housing plans for compact cities eventually proved to be excessive and many lots have remained vacant. Furthermore, the majority of relocated residents were elderly in the first place, which led to an increase in vacancies due to demographic aging (Ubaura, 2018).

Furthermore, Yamamoto received temporary staff from non-affected municipalities due to its lack of manpower and expertise, and the town divided reconstruction into four administrator units. However, this fractured reconstruction organization in Yamamoto made resident participation meetings "little more than information-sharing sessions" and generated a lack of collective vision (Onoda *et al.*, 2018, p. 11). This complaint was often also voiced by the participants of this research, highlighting the relativity of security and the importance of a shared desired future.

6.1.3 The administrative disaster endangering the future

The construction project of the new Jōban Railway Line was proceeding at the time of my fieldwork, and the elevated railway track to be built only in the Yamamoto part of the line dominated the landscape (figure 5). The new stations of Shinyamashita and Shinsakamoto in the compact cities were also built on the level of these tracks, and they would serve as the main transportation hubs of the town together with the new highway intersection on the mountainside. The elevated and relocated railway track arching over the rural landscape embodied the leading reconstruction themes introduced earlier: massive reconstruction projects of relocation away from tsunami risk, the higher the better.

Figure 5   Jōban Railway Line construction site in Shinsakamoto in April 2015.

The new railway line and its stations were portrayed as essential cornerstones of Yamamoto's future: Reopening of the train connection, especially in the Sendai direction, was seen not only as a concrete indicator of the town's full recovery. It was also portrayed as a symbol of the future hope of turning the tide of decline by stopping depopulation and increasing the town's attractiveness:

> If Yamamoto town does not take any measures for reconstruction, the tendency of population decline will be the same as before the earthquake. As a result, it is estimated that the population will decrease to 12,918 by 2020[23]. In the future, although a gradual decline in population is inevitable, eight years after when the planned reconstruction period is ended in 2018, *the residents that have moved out will return because of the construction of a new housing complex and the reconstruction of the JR Jōban Line. Furthermore, the expected decrease in population will be small*, the population is estimated to be 13,700 in the future, which serves as a basic indicator of the reconstruction plan of this town (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 3).

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[23]   As I write this in February 2022, the population of Yamamoto is 11,927, which is in stark contrast to the expectation of a population of 13,700 by the year 2018 (Yamamoto, 2011a). Furthermore, Yamamoto's population ranks as the third oldest population in Miyagi prefecture (Miyagi prefecture, 2021). The trend of decline this seems to continue despite, for example, the reopening of the railway service.

Meanwhile on the coast, the old Jōban Railway Line and its Yamashita station in Hanagama that used to signify access, viability and centrality had now turned into a symbol of lost security and division for the decreased yet relatively populous communities of Kasano and Ushibashi and especially the Hanagama District. Mitsuki-san, a local history enthusiast, explained that the railway, now again a central issue, had shaped the historical development of Yamamoto and its regional controversies. The original pre-disaster railway was initially planned to run on the mountain side of the town. However, the wealthy silkworm farmers objected the plan because of omissions; thus, the railway was built closer to the poorer coastal plain where the grape farming was not as much disturbed by it. Coastal Hanagama consequently flourished grew to be the biggest district in Yamamoto thanks to the railway station opened in 1949. Mitsuki-san noted that some proponents of post-disaster railway relocation now argue that the station is in fact returned to its originally intended location near the mountainside.

Looking back to the pre-disaster time, Hanagama district leader Abiko-san reminisced about how the area used to have several restaurants, shops, lively streets, sounds of life and commuters and school children using the train. He regrets that the number of households in Hanagama had dropped from the pre-disaster 1007 households to approximately 350; the streets have turned silent when the old people drink tea at home, there are no children, greetings between neighbors have disappeared and coastal residents can only follow from a distance the development of services in the compact cities. The reconstruction plan does mention the remaining coastal residents but mainly in the contexts of their opportunities for inland relocation, the designation of Disaster Hazard Zones and coastal evacuation routes. The DHZ policy was regarded as unequal by many at the coast in Yamashita, and it had raised criticism, especially among the residents of Zone 3. They argued that the recovery of DHZ 3 was harmed by the unnecessary negative image of risk, while the residents were left with only minimal support and no practical benefits.

District leader Abiko-san describes that the boundary marked by the old railway line has created '*an invisible Berlin Wall*'. This means that despite equal damage, a neighbor on one side of the street may face different financial and legislative difficulties to rebuild than one on the other side. This had caused a sense of inequality within the remaining community, creating what Gerster calls hierarchies of affectedness (Gerster, 2019). Buffer-zone policies implemented in the name of security have also created similar conflicts, fears and feelings of discrimination in the reconstruction of other disaster areas (Hyndman, 2008). The remaining coastal population was officially positioned to be dwelling within the sphere of risk and endangering not only themselves but also the secure and viable future of the town when not relocating. However, for the remaining residents themselves, security appeared as a more multifaceted experience than mere move away from the sea: It

included, among other factors, calculation of financial security, acknowledgement of disaster evacuation practices, social connections and continuity of ties to old communities.

The prioritization of relocating the railway and residents to the new compact city areas was not representing security for Sensei; instead, it formed a severe risk for the town's future. Sensei was not alone with his criticism. One thing was certain about Sensei, who was rather liberal and relaxed in his doings, or not so "typical Japanese minding the manners" as he described himself: Every Saturday evening when the clock was approaching seven, Sensei packed his bag and notified me, "It's time, let's go." He drove us one kilometer to the nearby Fumonji Temple, where the coastal resident group Doyōbinokai ("Saturday's meeting") had been gathering to discuss the state and progress of Yamamoto's reconstruction every Saturday since 2011, hence the name. Doyōbinokai had started from casual meetings in Nakamura-san's shop next to the old Yamashita station, but it was helped to organize more formally by the members of Tohoku Institute of Technology (see Xue *et al.*, 2014).

No matter what the weather, there seemed to always be at least five or six members of the group present in the meetings taking place in the Japanese-style room on the first floor of the residential building of Fumonji Temple's chief monk. The meetings of Doyōbinokai rarely included anything beyond the formal issues and a serious discussion about the agenda topics. Everyone gathered around the table to sit down on the *tatami* floor. The majority of the members were men aged 50–70 from the coastal Yamashita districts of Hanagama and Kasano, some of whom were acquainted before the tsunami and some united through their mutual concerns about the post-tsunami situation. Some women, younger locals and residents from the Ushibashi District and the Sakamoto area also participated occasionally. The chairman announced the meeting open and started the recorder. Doyōbinokai records all its meetings and circulates the responsibility for transcribing the most important parts and decisions. The new meeting was always started by reviewing the main points from the previous meeting. After that, the meeting followed the issues on the agenda, heard reports from the activities the members had taken part in during the bygone week and, for example, planned the next issue of the group's widely distributed monthly newsletter, *Ichigoshinbun*, in which Sensei often published his critical column.

A newspaper reporter planning to write about the groups' activities was present at one of the group's meetings that I participated. The reporter started asking questions of the participants after the formal part of the meeting and inquired if Doyōbinokai was against compact city policies. Sensei explained that they were not objecting to the idea as such, but the method of its realization at the expense of the tsunami-inundated areas was what they were critical of. He summarized Doyōbinokai's main argument against these policies by emphasizing that the

prioritization of compact cities was only accelerating the town's decline. This was argued to be largely because the relocation inland delayed the reopening of the railway that would have been quicker if the old station would have been repaired instead as Doyōbinokai had advocated. This opinion reflected the thoughts of many coastal residents of Yamamoto and was already stated often in the group's newsletter. Echoing similar observations about reconstruction elsewhere in Tohoku (Edgington, 2017; Akimoto, 2018; Nagamatsu, 2018), Doyōbinokai claimed that massive relocation projects accelerated depopulation and prolonged the reconstruction period:

> Making the town compact and ignoring the surrounding area based on the mayor's arbitrary decision has accelerated the decline of Yamamoto by causing population outflow (Doyōbinokai, 2014a, p. 1).

Sensei later explained to me this in an interview by explaining how the town policies had turned "the natural disaster (*shizen saigai*) into an administrative disaster (*gyōsei saigai*)." This resembles remarks of "the disaster inside of the disaster" (Greenberg, 2014), "secondary disaster" (Fernando *et al.*, 2010) and especially "reconstruction disaster" (*fukkō saigai*) (Shiozaki, 2014), all referring to the negative consequences caused by the chosen reconstruction polices.

The reporter continued with a follow-up question, inquiring if it was Japan Railways (JR) that decided not to repair the old station. This provoked a strong reaction: "No, it wasn't JR, it was the mayor!" everyone around the table stressed with loud voices. Sensei continued explaining how compact cities were already planned before the disaster, but there had not been a way to build them. Sensei, leading the chorus, told that "the mayor was delighted about the disaster" and quickly ordered the relocation of the railway, justifying the decision by the tsunami's inundation height. The rest of the participants accompanied this narrative when they quoted in unison the mayor's disapproved speech in the immediate aftermath of 3.11 in which he had declared that "for Yamamoto, disaster is a golden opportunity that may happen in only once in a thousand year (*senzai ichigū no chansu*)." This statement was strongly despised as being disrespectful of the tsunami victims.

The following discussion also emphasized how the reconstruction of disaster-stricken areas (*genchi saiken*) was essential for the town's future. Doyōbinokai's members shared a pessimistic view of the accelerated population decline and aging: Those who had already moved away, especially the young residents, would not return, and eventually the compact cities would be areas for the elderly who would not need the train for commuting. The chief monk of Fumonji concluded the discussion by remarking that now the reconstruction has endangered the future of the town and fractured its community:

If the old station would have been repaired, the railway would have been reopened two years earlier. Now the result is only depopulation and destruction of the town (*kekka wa, jinkō genshō, kekka wa machi o kowasu*).

Thus, reconstruction has revealed a myriad of clashing conceptualizations of security and risk that sprout from the divergent future orientations of anticipation and aspiring. The attempts to provide security through *anzen*, objective and measurable security, focused on anticipating risks and material protective solutions. This illustrates how security is often defined in negative terms through risk, threat and danger as "freedom from" want or fear (James, 2014, p. 75) or as "a modality of constructing danger, enemies, fear and anxiety, and the measures taken to guard against such constructed threats" (Glück & Low, 2017, p.282). Furthermore, security often remains associated with military security or is reduced to material security. This ignores existential security that relates to "sense and sensibility," and, hence, resembles *anshin*, a peace of mind sense of security. More than just a psychology of safety, existential security is founded upon a sense of place, a sense of engagement [and] a sense of meaningful relations" (James, 2014, p.77–78). Thus, a definition for security in positive terms seems to be difficult to find (ibid., p. 75).

As such, security is similar to community, a paradox of desire (Brent, 2004), constantly elusive yet tirelessly sought after. It is therefore necessary to consider not only "whose risks are being prioritized and who decides which risk reduction measures will be implemented" (Heijmans, 2009, pp. 28–29), but also how conflicts originate from divergent future orientations and the following divergent desired futures, as the discussion above illustrates. Furthermore, these desired futures and renegotiated constituents of lived, experienced security in the disaster-affected localities are very influential in shaping the emergent communities.

6.2   Communities of desired security

The discussion of security as a future-oriented temporal project encompasses the continuous process of negotiating both security as objective and the method for its realization. Security is a very strong, situational and value-laden probe in evoking definitions of "we" that need to be protected, from what, how and why (Stern, 2006; cf. Boholm & Corvellec, 2011). This makes security both the product and productive of social life, power, and affective, bodily states (Glück & Low, 2017) and hence, of the interpretations, experiences and feelings of community. However, security has often been overshadowed by risk and its emotionally charged counterparts, threat and danger, as an explanation for social cohesion. Risk, threat, danger and insecurity are argued to have politicized social functions: They are used to define boundaries and to create social structures (Douglas, 1966, 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983).

Furthermore, the framing of insecurities is analyzed as constructing and strengthening shared national identities (Weldes *et al.*, 1999a). The constructed boundaries are also material when protection against perceived threats is used to justify, for example, building gated communities to further enforce the social boundaries (Low, 2001). The logics of the concept of securitization as an act comes close to the relativity of security discussed here; nevertheless, security has remained largely a concern of political science and international relations that often focus on the designation of threats as legitimizing the measures taken for national security (Waever, 1995; Taureck, 2006; McDonald, 2008).

However, I contend that analyzing community and forms of sociality only through risk paints a limited picture largely because it ignores collective aspiring. Aspiring animates the notion of security as multifaceted, relative, political yet also affective and experienced in everyday life. It also helps us to understand how security and risk/insecurity are mutually defining and work in tandem in the process of ontologizing community as a social reality. In terms of subjective experience, a community defined, characterized or ruled by fear and insecurity is far from the idealized community as the safe haven of belonging and trust that is longed for (Bauman, 2001; Brent, 2004; Neal & Walters, 2008; Blackshaw, 2010). Therefore, there is no absolute security but, instead, a promise and the objective of a sense of security, as the previous section discussed. Security may never be reached in totality and the freedom from insecurity is never complete (James, 2014, p. 72), yet collective aspiring towards it can contribute to creating a narrative of a community demarcated by spatial and symbolical boundaries.

Thus, security as an aspiration ontologizes community through constant collective reinterpretation of the past and orienting towards the future, and this shared process in itself is also a source of a sense of security. Aspiring security accordingly constructs a temporally stabilized collective identity of a particular group as "certain throughout time as self-identical to the subject as it was 'then', as it is 'now'" and, most importantly, "as it will be into 'the future'."; This also includes particular strategies to overcome the threats posed by "the Others" to this group (Stern, 2006, pp. 193–194). The enactment of the strategies to defeat the insecurity also maintain the promise of future security immanent (Dunmire, 2016), and hence enforce the "we-ness" created though striving towards the desired, shared secure future. However, this also strengthens the divisions between "Us and Them" (Stern, 2006), and thus evokes the so-called dark side of the community (Blackshaw, 2010, pp. 45, 151–156). However, it also highlights how threats come to be defined through the perceived, felt and especially aspired security. These lines between secure and insecure are, however, blurry and situational (chapter 8).

Next, I explore how security as a temporal project constructs we-ness in the Yamamoto reconstruction plans and how the local research participants experience

that officially outlined town-level community and its desired secure future. As has become evident, this story is not only about unity, since the reconstruction policies focusing on *takadai iten* and disaster danger zones drastically shaped the spatial reformation of the communities and polarized the mountainside and the coast (Kondo, 2018). I continue from the aspired town-level community to a discussion about *hama* (the seashore or coast).

6.2.1 The town with one heart

The Yamamoto reconstruction plan includes several explicit and implicit notions of how community is both understood in reconstruction and envisioned to be functioning during the reconstruction and in the future. The Yamamoto reconstruction vision focuses on constructing an ideal of a future town-level community to which the residents are expected to commit and contribute. However, sources of security, such as vitality, are not qualities or objectives of the existing communities *per se* in this vision. They are rather presented as something that will be attracted there or brought in from outside in the form of, for example, new or returned residents.

The three fundamental principles of reconstruction in the town's reconstruction plan enhance the affective sides of Yamamoto's physical and social community, yet they still rely on the notion of threats posed by depopulation and aging. The first principle, "Community development for being resilient in disasters and living in safety and with peace of mind" outlines a general desired future as just discussed. The second principle is "Community development for making a town where everybody wants to live" (*Daremo sumitakunaruyōna machizukuri*). It aims to tackle the problem of depopulation by both developing new residences and town infrastructure and by increasing the feel of "attraction and comfort. The third principle of "Community development that is valuing connections" (*Tsunagari o taisetsu ni suru machizukuri*) highlights the social community. This reconstruction principle associates social bonds with the history and traditions of local communities, although they are to be fostered to serve as a tool to attract the vitality from outside:

> Yamamoto town has always valued "human bonds" (*hito to hito no kizuna*) such as "human connections" (*tsunagari*) in the history and culture of local communities. Even during the reconstruction, we will build new linkages by utilizing the linkages we have cultivated so far, so that we can hone the *charm of the town* and *bring in vitality* (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 5, emphasis added).

These three fundamental reconstruction principles together aim to fulfill the future vision that continues to appeal to the affective experience of living in Yamamoto and its community. Central to this future vision is the recovery of local resources, such as strawberries (chapter 7), apples and Sakhalin surf clams, in addition to the infrastructure resources such as the Jōban Railway Line and National Road No. 6:

> By regenerating these resources as soon as possible and further improving them to *increase added value, we will bring people back to the town* and create *smiles and excitement*…   In addition, each resident plays a leading role in reconstruction. By taking pride in the community and working together to improve the community, we can create a bond and demonstrate our great power for recovery. In the future, we will create *a revived and a new Yamamoto town* while inheriting the culture and traditions of our predecessors, and we will continue to create a town full of hope (Yamamoto, 2011b, p. 6, emphasis added).

Thus, the reconstruction paints a picture of the imagined prosperous future town community that is envisioned to be valued and worth securing instead of the current one. These reconstruction ambitions are present in the proposed and final titles of the reconstruction plan: The Yamamoto plan proposal was first entitled "*Yamamoto Disaster Reconstruction Plan: Towards Reconstruction and Further Development of 'Team Yamamoto' towards one Heart*" (*Yamamotochō shinsai fukkō keikaku: fukkō to saranaru hatten e 'Chiimu Yamamoto' kokoro wo hitotsu ni*) (Yamamoto, 2011b)*,* whereas the final version is entitled "*Yamamoto Disaster Reconstruction Plan: Sparkle Yamamoto! Town of Everybody's Shining Hope and Smiling Faces*" (*Yamamotochō shinsai fukkō keikaku: Kirari Yamamoto! Minna no kibō to egao ga kagayaku machi*) (Yamamoto, 2011a). The first proposal for the title especially captures several temporally dynamic notions that summarize the controversies surrounding reconstruction that appear in this chapter: First, it stresses striving not only for reconstruction but also for even further development. Second, it underlines the compelling notion of the town-level community of "Team Yamamoto" that is oriented *towards* unity of "one heart"[24]. This particular slogan was often used in town reconstruction and PR materials all over the town. The final version reflects the national discourse on hope when it embraces the ideas of hope and happiness as the idealized shared mentality on the way to the town's bright, shining future.

Both of these titles reflect the vision of the town community's unity. While the togetherness highlighted in the reconstruction plan is undoubtedly important for

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[24]   The particle *ni* at the end of the tittle indicates direction ("towards," "to" or "into"), but can denote also purpose ("for") and role ("as").

recovery, this kind of notions of local community often become mobilized and used politically when various actors call for community reconstruction while communities are simultaneously expected to be the main source of their resilience (Bruun & Olwig, 2015; Barrios, 2016). The Yamamoto reconstruction plan stresses that reconstruction is not something that can be achieved only by the power of administration; cooperation and a shared vision realized by residents who "work as a team working for one thing" are necessary. This highlights the perceived importance of a shared mindset of dedication to the reconstruction project:

> *It is essential that each town resident shares this future vision*, concentrating the power of participation in community development *with love for one's hometown and with passion*. For this purpose, town residents and administration will jointly contribute wisdom and strength together and promote cooperative community development. (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 6, emphasis added)

Participation and cooperation were indeed wished by many locals including the members of Doyōbinokai, yet in practice the opportunities remained limited (chapter 7). Furthermore, arguably the plans' rhetoric subordinate local diversity and critical opinions by underlining the necessity of unity. The rhetoric of the plan thus focuses heavily on the town residents' joint efforts and dedication for the one, officially determined future objective and vision of a community. Consequently, dissenting opinions could be framed as threatening to the town's future security. This is especially the case when reconstruction responsibility is rhetorically given to the residents and emotional attachment is appealed to: Criticizing the joint mission for the bright future of the Yamamoto community would not only oppose the authorities but would also pit the residents against each other in their level of dedication and love for their hometown.

This officially promoted future vision puts both the remaining aging residents and also those residing in the Disaster Hazard Zones into the sphere of unwanted risk and threat. This setting is strongly reflected in how the locals experience reconstruction and recovery. Many of the locals I met stated how it seemed that the town lacked a visible, clear goal, despite the reconstruction projects being initiated in the name of a bright, secure future. Many felt that "the future was lost" or "the future has become dark" in their everyday life. The local residents did, however, share their concerns about the future, one that is heavily affected by the accelerated population decline, aging and outflow of young people as well as the lack of job opportunities. Kobayashi-san, a strawberry farmer and the district leader of the now-uninhabited Shinhama District, reflected the desperate situation of the town that now faces what he considers an inevitable decline in population:

The road to future for us, for this town is unthinkable. Every month, every month, population declines by 30 people. How? If you think about the intersection, nobody chooses to come here. Every month, 30 people less. The town is restrained, right? How will things turn out? In this town, places to work are the town hall, two or three companies, agriculture, and that's about it. Workplaces and also money… It is like a town becoming a big retirement home in Japan. Then, elementary school is now being built, but the population doesn't increase no matter what is built. So, why is that? If there is money, it is in the budget, but still population will not definitely increase. [Because] 30 people [leave] every month.

Local concerns often reflected pessimism towards the town policies based on the just-described vision of an attractive town centering around compact cities. Gotō-san, another strawberry farmer and a member of a town council, summarized the worries of many residents: "The mayor is speaking about if we will make a splendid town, people who have left will return… but if one moves to Sendai or to another convenient place, they will not return here." The Fujita couple active in the compact city area community development reflect a similar discontent about neglecting current residents and communities: "The mayor is acting for the future, but support should be directed to those who are suffering now and who are here now." These sentiments resonate with a metaphor of reconstruction disaster: "In the front of the fishbowl that was destroyed by the quake, I left the struggling goldfish alone and made a noise about how to fix the fishbowl" (Kinoshita, 2015, as quoted in Kunugiza *et al.*, 2016, p. 168).

Thus, there was a gap between how the residents and the town defined the community and their desired futures worth being secured. This left the residents feeling that it was not *their* future the town policies envisioned and acted upon. This manifested as the worries over the continuity of the existing communities and the felt unfamiliarity of the envisioned attractive town filled with returnees that the reconstruction policies were perceived to be crafted for. This kind of felt general or personal futurelessness can produce a sense of endless liminality, the never-ending presentness of disaster aftermath leading to social isolation (cf. Bryant & Knight, 2019; Gagné, 2020a). This illustrates how divergent desired futures can be also socially fracturing. For many of the remaining coastal residents who had experienced the disaster, a newly defined notion of the *hama* (coast, seashore) community served to balance the difference with personal experiences of disaster and reconstruction and also challenge the desired futures of Yamamoto with one heart.

6.2.2 *Hama*: reorienting to coastal community

The feeling of not relating to the visions of the desired future presented in the town reconstruction scheme made many locals feel insecure and frustrated. This feeling of being left out of the future ignited envisioning and enacting of redefined communities, especially in coastal Yamashita. Doyōbinokai was active in this process of renegotiating the future, security and community at the coast. The group drew from the locally widely used territorial terms *hama* ("seashore") and *yama* ("mountain") that were already used before the disaster to describe the distinct areas separated by National Road No. 6. The tsunami flooded most of the *hama* side, leaving the *yama* side, which experienced only some damage caused by the earthquake, mostly intact. Reflecting the reconstruction experiences of many returned coastal residents, the group simultaneously envisioned and enacted the tsunami-stricken coast as a distinct community and also as a prerequisite for the town community: They argued that the recovery of the newly defined coastal *hama* community is fundamental for the town's recovery. In short, without reconstructing the coast, there is no reconstruction of Yamamoto. As Sensei formulated the claim in the Doyōbinokai's newsletter, the coast equals Yamamoto:

> Without rebuilding the tsunami-affected area, there is no disaster recovery of Yamamoto town. The formation of a new urban area called a compact city has accelerated the decline of the population, the falling birthrate and the aging of the population. Ignoring the tsunami-affected area causes turmoil in the eastern districts, compromising the survival of Yamamoto town. (Doyōbinokai, 2015, p. 1)

The chief monk of the Fumonji Temple explained to me in an interview that the group's motivation arose from insecurity and anxiety (*fuan*), the opposite of *anshin*:

> If the town would do good community building, the group would not have to meet every Saturday. Once a month would be sufficient to gather the local opinions and to have some co-operation with the town for example through the district leader. Now, because our voice is not registered (*todokenai*), we decided to act with utmost effort (*isshōkenmei*).

This sense of abandonment of the coast and prioritization of the compact cities resonated with many of the town residents I met during the fieldwork. The situation was the most acute for the few remaining residents of DHZ 1 and 2. Even the town's inability to clear snowy roads on the coastal side of the old railway created anxieties and was argued to signal ignorance and lack of awareness by the administration, as the chairman of Doyōbinokai from Kasano describes in the group's newsletter:

"The route was decided based on the information from the year 2011" was the reply from the town hall when I went to ask why the snowplows did not come. In other words, is there a perception in this town that immediately after the disaster up to this day there would not be residents on the eastern side of the old railway? …This is the Yamamoto I like very much. I would like to somehow return to the town that was easy to live in. That feeling that all residents were thought to be equal. For that, I will continue doing the things I can. Still, I will continue to think what is needed for the revival and reconstruction of this town (Doyōbinokai, 2014b, p. 2).

These felt insecurities in everyday life created by the perceived ignorance of on-site rebuilding (*genchi saiken*) were contributing to the redefined notion of *hama* community. Doyōbinokai's main grievances and activities were often specified as focusing on the limited areas of the coastal Yamashita districts of Hanagama, Kasano, and Ushibashi. However, the group builds and acts upon a narrative of a geographical and political reconstruction periphery of tsunami-inundated *hama* community united by the tsunami experience, shared history in a rural landscape and the feeling of being excluded from secure future.

However, *hama* community refers not just to restoring the pre-tsunami community that was often said to be limited to the immediate neighborhoods or administrative districts. Instead, Doyōbinokai participates in envisioning newly defined borders of a community that are based on the geography of the tsunami instead of administrative districts. According to the chief monk of the Fumonji Temple who also hosted a monthly community café and other community events, "the walls of the district communities have disappeared" after the 3.11 tsunami at the coast. Doyōbinokai portrays all the coastal districts Ushibashi, Hanagama, Kasano, Shinhama, Nakahama and Iso as connected through the tsunami experience:

There is only a graveyard in Shinhama and we heard that no one will return and rebuild their lives there. But anyway, it is important to gather and share information and create dense horizontal ties between the residents of the same town, from Ushibashi in the north to Nakahama and Iso (Doyōbinokai, 2012a, p. 1).

The coastal road *Hamadōri*, which traverses all tsunami-hit districts, is often referred to as a symbol of this community. Doyōbinokai aimed at "Hamadōri on-site rebuilding" (*Hamadōri genchi saiken*) in their community building workshops in the wake of the disaster:

After thinking about the future of Yamamoto and the overall image, Hamadōri's rebirth becomes a big theme. This workshop will make as its goal an investigation of participatory Hamadōri reconstruction *machizukuri* (Doyōbinokai, 2012b, p. 1).

Furthermore, by calling the coast the "heart's hometown" (*kokoro no furusato*), Doyōbinokai enforced the affective historical continuity of the *hama* by appealing to pre-tsunami place attachment of both remaining and relocated residents. As the "heart's hometown," the coast was connected not only to shared history but also to the abundant nature and local lifestyle that was to be cherished through particular "countryside *machizukuri*" (*inaka machizukuri*). The participants together with many local residents perceived these specific social and material rural characteristics of the coastal community as valuable, especially now that they were lost. This idealized countryside landscape was often contrasted with the new, town-like compact city areas. The chairman of Doyōbinokai expressed his frustration about the spoiled rural landscape and noted that the compact city areas are "the general face of Japan, but not the face of Yamamoto," reflecting the *furusato* discourse about one's nostalgic, rural country home (Robertson, 1991; Ivy, 1995).

However, not only the extent of devastation but also the way in which the variation of destruction is interpreted affects the community's response (Miller & Rivera, 2010). The tsunami-inundated area in Yamamoto had become a relevant spatial marker especially for the residents who have returned to Yamashita's coastal Kasano, Hanagama, and Ushibashi Districts. The interpretation of the experience-based geography of the tsunami not only shaped territorial ideas of the emergent *hama* community, but it was also reflected in the social relations of individuals who experienced the disaster. Many locals described that the relationship of *hama* and *yama* had been quite friendly before the disaster despite perceived differences in mannerisms and styles of speech. However, *hama* came to signify not only the geographic area but also a shared victim identity constructed *vis-à-vis yama* as the interview with the Matsuo couple and their friend, Otsuka-san, living in Hanagama, illustrates:

Mr. Matsuo: They totally differ [*yama* and *hama*], because of what was happened here, it is said.

Otsuka-san: For good, it is said. People up there are talking about the sorrow in their hearts, but what do they know about that?

Mr. Matsuo: Here, everything was flooded. Up there, there was only the earthquake. And they say it's the same.

Otsuka-san: Here, it was the earthquake and the tsunami—both of them.

Mrs. Matsuo: And the earthquake tremors were different for us here and for them there. Here, everyone's houses collapsed and broke, but there, the houses didn't.

Otsuka-san: So, the mountain (*yama*) people, they don't understand the death, that kind of horror.

Kaneko-san, a returned resident of Hanagama and a member of Doyōbinokai, explained how, in addition to divisions, these kinds of shared, spatially grounded tsunami experiences generated interaction and social cohesion between spatially close but socially distant neighbors (cf. Solnit, 2009) and, thus, fueled the enacting and envisioning of community:

Around here, everybody suffered from similar damage. So, people who stayed, like people living near my family, would not have had such solidarity [without the disaster]. Before the tsunami, there were not really local bonds. After the disaster, that kind of major experience, all of the neighbors were in the same situation, and so they started seeing each other often. Before, I didn't know the neighbors, but now the situation has changed, so we can talk. I've started to appreciate the characteristics of the neighborhood.

However, Kaneko-san regretted that the felt social cohesion eroded in accordance with decreasing sense of crisis and proceeding reconstruction (cf. Hoffman, 2020). Furthermore, the insecurities created by divergent temporalities of reconstruction were also imbedded in the material living environment as experienced spatiality. After the immediate post-disaster period, the drastic change in the physical living environment began to dawn for the residents and the related insecurities grew: Many felt an increased loss of and heightened yearning for community, because the population of the area was decreased and the distance between neighbors had grown due to many demolished houses. In response, new ways and normative expectations of how, why, and where existing or new social relations should be made in the altered living environment were collectively visioned both at the coast and in new compact city areas (chapter 8).

Thus, the social and spatial experience of the disaster itself and the transformation of the living environment was not only a past event. Instead, recovery was characterized by their constant reinterpretation that directed enacting and envisioning community in relation to the desired future. For Kaneko-san, the memory of fellow residents' grief after the disaster still brought tears to his eyes in our interview after four years. This otherwise always cheery and humorous man

suddenly turned serious when I asked about the motivation to conduct these community activities on the coast. He recalled his experience on the way back to his house after the tsunami:

> I saw many people coming back from the shore. They were physically and emotionally crushed. They were crying. Some said "my mother was gone." Or others, even if they didn't say anything, their eyes had changed. I was really surprised that such people got over, climbed the debris to walk towards the mountains. That scene, I really, really don't want to see again. Remembering that scene makes me really down, even now.

Kaneko-san's example illustrates how disasters can generate participation in community-building activities (Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015), and he said that after the disaster he had dedicated time to establish community spaces and organize various activities. Thus, these kinds of experiences have motivated the remaining residents to enact *hama* community in community activities, such as in disaster prevention practice, that contribute to the renegotiation of security. These practices strive towards providing an alternative secure future and overcoming the insecurities created by the future offered by the town policies.

For example, for the last few months of my fieldwork, Doyōbinokai's members were busy preparing a survey about disaster prevention (*bōsai*) at coast under a slogan of "*machizukuri* for safety and peace of mind" (*anzen, anshinna machizukuri*) for "the reconstruction of the coastal road (*Hamadōri*)" (Doyōbinokai, 2015, p. 2). Sakamoto as DHZ 1 had no residents, so the survey was distributed to the remaining 596 households in the Ushibashi, Hanagama, and Kasano Districts shortly after I had left Yamamoto. Here again, security was embedded in the experience of the community's material environment when the survey was aimed at charting the local experiences of the measures taken by the town to construct, for example, evacuation roads. The existing and planned roads were criticized for being inept and as such intensifying the insecurity of living in the Disaster Hazard Zone. Doyōbinokai also arranged practical disaster prevention activities, such as disaster evacuation drills, to compensate for the the support provided by the town felt inefficient. Furthermore, intensification of community bonds for mutual help within the community was regarded as important for disaster prevention (chapter 8). Thus, while enacting *hama* community in the disaster drills, Doyōbinokai simultaneously practiced the alternative security and sought to create *anshin* at the coast. This was perceived to help achieve the town's and the coast's desired future by improving disaster and evacuation awareness, which were also regarded as essential components of fast recovery and, consequently, prevention of population outflow.

Thus, the post-disaster *hama* community is a combination of a reorientation to the geographic division of destroyed, desolated neighborhoods, the shared trauma of the tsunami, and a perceived lack of power. Moreover, it is constituted by the residents' envisioning and enacting of the desired secure future. It is one of the aspired communities constructed in various coastal practices aiming to increase the sense of security and belonging for the residents, as discussed here and in the following chapters. Doyōbinokai is one example of these activities. The group simultaneously embraces the discourses of a community exclusively for the coastal tsunami victims and the town-level inclusive community because both needed to be included to reach their objective of a secure future. This illustrates how interpretations of experiences of disasters and sociopolitical relations shape emerging post-disaster communities (Barrios, 2014) especially through the process of renegotiating the constituents of security as an objective of collective aspirations.

6.3   Conclusion

I have shown in this chapter how a plethora of interpretations, feelings, ambiguities, conflicts, arguments, anxieties and insecurities are unveiled under the shared objective of the desired post-disaster future and security when one zooms in on a local, lived recovery. I argued that national and local reconstruction plans were drafted mainly based on the logic of anticipating risks in an uncertain future, whereas the most immediate concerns in the lives of those residents living through the reconstruction were characterized essentially by future orientation on aspiring security.

This led to anxieties and criticism of the desired future the town community envisioned and enacted in the reconstruction plans and policies in post-disaster Yamamoto. Thus, the trucks rumbling tirelessly back and forth to the compact city building sites were materializing town's visions of security as a location away from the risks of future tsunamis. However, they were also carriers of a looming disaster and decline, especially in the eyes of the coastal residents who felt that they and their interpretations of a security were neglected and the future of the whole town endangered. The interpretations and feelings related to security remain one of the prominent themes in the following chapters, because it was featured in many ways in the locals' aspiring. Thus, security is not merely a *state* of security (Glück & Low, 2017): It is also a temporally evolving and constantly readjusted interpretation of the past and a striving towards the future in relation to both the social and material environments.

This renegotiation of aspired security is constructing new imageries of communities that are enacted and mobilized in social interaction. However, divergent desired futures also invite conflicts and controversies or feelings of

futurelessness. Thus, I have argued that instead of the focus on risk, threat and danger, exploring the role of shared aspirations of security is useful for understanding how communities emerge as an experienced social reality. I discussed the idea of "Team Yamamoto with one heart" that is fueled by dedication and attachment. It is promoted in the town's reconstruction rhetoric, although reconstruction in practice was particularly focused on the new compact cities. This reinforced the felt insecurities reinterpretations of security that were foundational in envisioning and enacting the redefined coastal *hama* community. The *hama* community extended beyond district borders to the geographical inundation area and the shared tsunami experience, but it was essentially based on aspired security for the coast in the future. This underlines how the past is only one aspect of community, and continuous aspiring is what animates these communities in the present.

Doyōbinokai's activities also constituted *hama*, while they also draw from the idea of a town-level community. However, the communities united by a disaster experience also have internal dividers in terms of, for example, hierarchies of affectedness (Gerster, 2019). Therefore, the emergent communities are multilayered and overlapping with fuzzy boundaries and are always contingent on the social practices and the existential temporalities and spatialities, or timespaces (Schatzki 2010; 2020) they are related to. Furthermore, Doyōbinokai's efforts to organize disaster prevention activities show that security was actively pursued in various practices. In realizing their version of security, they also delineated agency for the locals, which is a topic discussed next in relation to action-oriented pursuing.

7   Pursuing together towards edible futures

Having waived goodbye to Yamamoto at the end of my fieldwork, I headed off to spend my last few days in Tokyo. I visited Shibuya district like any other tourist and drank a coffee at Starbucks as I watched the endless pedestrian masses crossing the iconic "world's busiest intersection." It felt like an alternate universe after having spent time in such a strikingly different remote, aging and depopulating rural Tohoku not more than 310km to the north. I continued to the food court of the nearby Tōkyū Department Store where I encountered a different sort of intersection of these two realities. On the shelves of a crowded department store next to one of the most famous touristic spots in the nation's capital was the flagship of rural Yamamoto's strawberry industry: the perfect, shinning individual Migaki-Ichigo strawberry sold for 1050 yen (9.20 USD) a piece. The diamond logo of this "edible jewelry" proudly stated "made in Yamamoto" (Figure 6). I never tasted this edible jewelry during my fieldwork, but I was able to sample various views of how the future of individuals and communities in Yamamoto was estimated to be, what it was hoped not to be and, most importantly, perceptions of what the future ought to be. Moreover, these visions included assumptions for whom, by whom and how these desired futures were constructed. Thus, in Yamamoto, strawberries are not only pretty berries put on a Christmas cake, but they can also be perceived as embodiments of renegotiated visions of desired futures and ways of pursuing them.

Figure 6   The logo of Migaki-Ichigo.

I approach aspiring as collective pursuing, as a striving towards a shared objective in this chapter. What is essential in aspiring as pursuing is the very act of it as both enacting and envisioning fueled by the perceived importance of collective striving towards the envisioned future. Thus, this chapter's discussion highlights the efforts to (re)negotiate objectives and align desired futures and agency in this process. Focusing on these dynamic efforts in the post-disaster context responds to the mounting criticism of the prevailing theorization of community resilience as the capacity of a predetermined socio-spatial unit. This conceptualization is argued to neglect the emerging nature of communities and the role of agency in disaster recovery as the process of regaining the sense of subjectivity (Hastrup, 2009, 2011; Barrios, 2014, 2016; Sørensen & Albris, 2016).

However, as I stress in this thesis, neither the post-disaster communities nor the conditions just passively *emerge* – they are actively, yet not always fully intentionally, constructed, contested and also materially produced by various actors in social practices. Therefore, resilience in this context is understood as "a process of reorientation within local horizons of expectation and senses of being in the world." It highlights agency and, hence, is "thoroughly social" (Hastrup, 2009, p. 28). I discuss in this chapter collective aspiring as pursuing in connection to *machizukuri* (community building) activities, strawberry farming, rediscovery and pursuing without an objective to explore how the locals seek to act together to pursue their desired futures. Each of these constitutes visions of aspired socio-spatial communities that enhance the sense of subjectivity and delineate agency, yet these future imageries also reflect the ideals of rural revitalization and urban planning practices. The analysis of *machizukuri* practice is largely based on an earlier published article (Posio, 2019b).

7.1   Machizukuri as collective pursuing

Participation in reconstruction planning forms one of the most evident venues for collective pursuing in the post-disaster setting. The following analysis sheds light on how community building in this case is not necessarily about political power or influence in the public planning process but is about constructing a sense of subjectivity and agency by pursuing together. Furthermore, *machizukuri* practice in post-disaster Yamamoto contributes to the enacting and envisioning of a community defined strongly by notions of territoriality. The rhetoric of citizen participation was also embraced in response to the criticism of the top-down reconstruction in post-3.11 Tohoku, similar to the aftermath of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in Kobe in 1995 (Edgington, 2011a). The national Reconstruction Design Council nominated the municipalities as the main actors in the reconstruction in the basic

guidelines for reconstruction. The locals' role as their communities' experts was considered essential:

> The fundamental principle for reconstruction is that the main actors should be the municipalities themselves, as it is the residents who are closest to their communities and understand local characteristics best (Reconstruction Design Council, 2011, p. 18).

The main means to realize this vision to incorporate the local perspective into reconstruction was to encourage the establishment of "town and village community development associations" (*machizukuri kyōgikai*) (Reconstruction Design Council, 2011, p. 18). *Machizukuri* (literally "town making," often translated as community building or development) is a general term referring to citizen participation in planning and management of the local living environment. The reconstruction guidelines refer to the institutionalized *machizukuri* practice that originates from 1970s Kobe where air pollution problems triggered cooperation between the local residents, experts and authorities to improve the situation. *Machizukuri* practice is an institutionalized part of local governments' proceedings in contemporary Japan and is associated with various activities including urban planning initiatives and community welfare projects (Hein, 2001, 2008; Evans, 2002; Sorensen & Funck, 2007b, 2007a; Watanabe, 2007).

Thus, *machizukuri* councils are defined in the reconstruction guidelines to serve as officially sanctioned forums for the residents to establish a voice in the reconstruction process, in which various social actors seek to define the ideal immediate and long-term post-disaster futures (Oliver-Smith & Hoffman, 2002; Gotham & Greenberg, 2014). *Machizukuri* practice is at least ideally intended to assign agency to the residents, and it is promoted as a bottom-up activity when contrasted with *toshikeikaku* (top-down urban planning) (Hein, 2001). Yan and Roggema (2017) describe the community-based reconstruction planning in post-3.11 Tohoku rather optimistically as "co-creative reconstruction and community planning" in which "government, citizens, and experts, thought together about the future, without distinction or hierarchy" (Yan & Roggema, 2017, p. 17). The chairman of Shinyamashita *machizukuri* council also stressed in an interview the residents' momentum in claiming agency in envisioning Yamamoto's future:

> From now on, in this area, Yamamoto town, the people living here in their town need to start thinking what kind of a town they want. Whether they like it or not, the way this town will change a great deal and that is just the times we have now entered.

However, the majority of the *machizukuri* groups are initiated or sponsored by the authorities in practice. As such, they are circumscribed by political agendas and are often enforcing the power relations in top-down dominated urban planning (Evans, 2002; Sorensen & Funck, 2007b). The 3.11 disaster necessitated a quick response with limited expertise in contrast to everyday *machizukuri* that focused on gradual change (Evans, 2002, p. 449). Even today, the local authorities need to balance various interests in relation to complex governing and financial reconstruction structures (Mochizuki, 2014; Cheek, 2020). The reconstruction *machizukuri* groups in Tohoku consequently enjoyed only limited power in the planning process because deliberation and public consensus were argued to compromise the reconstruction progress. Thus, the legitimacy of the largely top-down reconstruction planning was solidified by the discourse of speed, expertise, and efficiency (Watanabe, 2007; Cho, 2014; Mochizuki, 2014). Speed was also emphasized by the Yamamoto reconstruction consultation company representative, who argued in the interview that those who felt ignored in reconstruction plans (chapter 6) did not fully understand the priority of efficiency. Participation in quick decisions for the future town was further complicated by the fact that the locals were themselves in the middle of redefining those very "communities and local characteristics" they were allegedly the experts of. They did this in the maelstrom of multiple aspirations, such as idealized social bonds and connections (*kizuna* and *tsunagari*), the nostalgic hometown (*furusato*) and disaster as an opportunity to build back better.

 Post-disaster *machizukuri* in Yamamoto offers a window into the locals' collective renegotiation of place and community that are regarded as essential for community recovery and resilience (Perkins & Long, 2002; Norris *et al.*, 2008; Lyon, 2014). Spatial and temporal aspects are inherently present in the practice: The word *machi* ("a town") refers to a small place (such as a neighborhood) and its tangible and non-tangible features of the everyday place-based social community, such as place identity, welfare and resident participation. *Zukuri* (the verb *tsukuru*, 'to do') means "making," and it refers to *a continuous process* instead of single acts (Watanabe, 2007, pp. 40–41; Hein, 2008)*. Thus, *machizukuri* practice can be seen as an organized forum for collective pursuing that especially sheds light on the power-relations in aspiring in its town-initiated institutionalized form.

This pursuing is also very explicitly tied to the physical living environment because *machizukuri*, by definition, is a practice in which the residents engage in the planning and management of their living environments at the neighborhood level (Hein, 2001; Sorensen & Funck, 2007b; Watanabe, 2007). However, these spatial and temporal aspects of *machizukuri* practice in relation to community processes are only briefly mentioned in prior literature (Ito, 2007; Watanabe, 2007; e.g., Hein, 2008; Ishii, 2014). The general and post-3.11 research on *machizukuri* has focused

mainly on the questions of citizen participation in urban planning and place governance (e.g., Hein, 2001; Evans, 2002; Kobayashi, 2007; Sorensen & Funck, 2007b; Edgington, 2011b; Kusakabe, 2013) and the challenges and limitations of institutionalized *machizukuri* (Sakurai & Ito, 2013; Hirota, 2014; Vaughan, 2014; Nii, 2017; Vainio, 2020a).

7.1.1   Reconstruction machizukuri in Yamamoto

In the Yamamoto reconstruction plan, *machizukuri* was, on the one hand, a synonym for top-down directed town planning of the infrastructure, housing and other features of the physical environment. This visible and tangible side of *machizukuri* was also striking in Yamamoto. When I cycled in the vicinity of the new residential areas, the compact cities of Shinyamashita or Shinsakamoto, the air seemed always to be filled with the sounds of construction work throughout the day: Trucks driving around, excavators moving landmasses, cranes lifting construction material and assembling the elevated railway tracks. These were accompanied by the sounds of constant drilling, sawing and hammering. The boundary between the new areas and the former paddy fields and neighborhoods was clear: The brand-new residential area was free of vegetation and the completed, identical prehab houses stood in straight lines (Figure 7). This was the rebuilding of the physical infrastructure in progress that was often referred to colloquially as the hard side of reconstruction. In the context of tsunami mitigation planning, the notion of the hard side is associated with disaster prevention through infrastructural measures, such as tsunami seawalls and relocation areas. In contrast, the soft side is connected to disaster risk reduction that encompasses, for example, everyday community preparedness for evacuation (Shuto & Fujima, 2009; Sato, 2015). The soft side of reconstruction generally referred to social recovery in everyday speech.

On the other hand, *machizukuri* was used in the Yamamoto reconstruction plan as a concept referring to the reconstruction of the soft side and the idealistic aims of community building: "*Machizukuri* for living in safety and peace of mind, for making everybody want to live in Yamamoto and for making relationships between people important" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 4). The rebuilding of the hard side proceeded and provision of housing to evacuees was a top priority, but social recovery, or the soft side, was still a challenge in a region where aging and depopulation were accelerated due to the prolonged reconstruction (Matanle, 2013; Yan & Roggema, 2017). According to the Yamamoto town official responsible for public housing management, the reconstruction in Yamamoto was initially "only hard. To build a house, get people to move in and that is the end. One sees that in other disaster areas." He admitted that the approach was soon realized to be "not wise, so community building was also included."

Figure 7   Compact   city   construction   sites   of   Shinyamashita   (above)   and
            Shinsakamoto (below).

The role division outlined in the reconstruction plan assigned the hard side reconstruction planning and execution to the authorities and, hence, to be orchestrated from the top down. Yoshihara (2013) argues that the attributes of and expectations for the community were also defined top down in reconstruction planning. However, these drew largely from the idealized desired community (*nozomashii komyuniti*) that was based on the extensive focus on post-disaster utopia and its social cohesion with less consideration given to the local communities' realities (Yoshihara, 2013, pp. 45–46). The main responsibility in realizing these visions and managing the recovery of the soft side was also expected from the Yamamoto residents. Furthermore, this community building was to be done within the formal framework of the reconstruction *machizukuri* system.

Yamamoto had no *machizukuri* system before the disaster. Three reconstruction *machizukuri* councils (*fukkō machizukuri kyōgikai*) were established after 3.11 in accordance with the national recommendations, one in each new compact city relocation area: Shinyamashita, Shinsakamoto and the Miyagi hospital area. This formal participation framework was thus a town-initiated project based on the Kobe

model of institutionalized *machizukuri*. However, as in Kobe after the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995 (Hein, 2001; Edgington, 2011a), incorporating resident participation into planning took time. The institutionalized *machizukuri* councils in Yamamoto were not established until 2013 after the construction of the compact cities had commenced according to reconstruction plans drafted largely in top-down fashion. The councils welcomed everyone interested in participating. However, due to their focus on the compact cities, the members were either current or future residents of the compact cities, especially in Shinyamashita, or residents from their immediate surrounding areas, such as in Shinsakamoto. *Machizukuri* general meetings that focused on informing the residents about the proceeding of reconstruction projects and socializing with future neighbors followed a similar participant pattern.

The planning and management of *machizukuri* activities and the communication between the local authorities and reconstruction *machizukuri* councils were mediated by the Yamamoto Reconstruction Station staff (*Yamamoto Fukkō Sutēshon*). The station's staff included a *machizukuri* consultant from Kobe, members of Miyagi University, and local staff members. Each council also published its own *machizukuri* newsletter. I participated in many *machizukuri* council and general meetings, especially in Shinyamashita and Shinsakamoto, interviewed several council members and *machizukuri* consultants, and analyzed *machizukuri* council newsletters.

The participants on the *machizukuri* councils sought to involve fellow residents as active stakeholders in community building. The *machizukuri* newsletters distributed in the compact cities and temporary housing encouraged the readers to participate in pursuing the desired futures by embracing active agency in the community building in dialogue with the town:

> It is a great meeting to test what I can do myself. Let's join the council, as many people as possible, with the awareness that "town planning is done by the townspeople as the main actor," and town residents will join the council one by one and deliver our voice to the town (Shinsakamoto machizukuri council, 2013, p. 1).

This mobilizing to join activities and the envisioning of the future was reinforced by pointing out the locals' needs and circumstances requiring improvement, ranging from access to welfare services to a shelter for garbage collection point. This also included outlining the activities necessary to tackle the defects in the new areas otherwise generally portrayed as good for living (*sumiyasui*), convenient, and safe, especially given their inland location. I have analyzed *machizukuri* groups elsewhere (Posio, 2019b) from the perspective of "place-framing". This approach perceives

place-based community groups as collective actors often enacting and envisioning territorial and social community as a response to place contestation (Martin, 2003b, 2013; Pierce *et al.*, 2011). Place-framing constructs a shared objective, the envisioned locality (cf. Appadurai, 1996). Thus, the place frames can ultimately be analyzed as result of a continuous process of negotiating collectively pursued objectives. As such, they offer a roadmap to the desired future as parts of organized collective action, yet they are also constantly renegotiated. Here, however, I focus on the social significance of the process of pursuing together as well as on how this process is shaped by the institutionalized *machizukuri* practice.

The development-oriented rhetoric of the Yamamoto town reconstruction plan especially envisioned the Shinyamashita area as the flagship of hope in the town's revitalization and attraction. This was despite the fact that the area was primarily a relocation site for dislocated disaster victims, the majority of whom were elderly residents:

> In addition to improving the convenience of urban areas and supplying residential land and housing that meet the diverse needs of each age group, we will effectively promote the appeal of the town and promote settlement (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 20).

In contrast to this, the Shinyamashita *machizukuri* council envisioned the future of the compact cities mainly in terms of the needs of the elderly, stressing welfare services and accessibility, for example. This crystalizes how versatile desired futures may exist in the same space and practice. This can, however, also lead to confusion, conflict or frustration.

The ambitious official development and population growth plans associated with the compact cities in Yamamoto also presented a similar paradox for the *machizukuri* council in Shinsakamoto. The locals there cherished the village-like atmosphere of Sakamoto but were also aware of the problems of a shrinking and aging population. This resulted in pondering whether to pursue a viable future through preservation or development (cf. chapter 5) and how to maintain the sense of a village community without risking it with population growth or decline. Wada-san, a member of Shinsakamoto *machizukuri* council, noted that "there are no children in Sakamoto, you cannot hear their voices." He replied to my question asking if more population was then wished for by saying, "no, not really, but improvement of infrastructure and having services, for example shops, demands people." Thus, pursuing a desired future, such as a viable community, can also be internally conflicting when the future is envisioned in relation to altering social and material settings.

The felt agony about the area's future prospects was further highlighted when compared to Shinyamashita and its position in the town planning priority hierarchy:

Shinsakamoto was often felt to be inferior to Shinyamashita in the reconstruction priorities according to the interviewees from Sakamoto. This was felt to be reflecting and enforcing the perceived power division and the differences that had already existed between Sakamoto and Yamashita before the merger of the two villages into the town of Yamamoto. The first was perceived as subordinate and more rural, the latter as more powerful, rich and open. This divide was felt to be accentuated during reconstruction and was considered to be delineating the future trajectories of the communities in these areas. These persistent, perceived differences between Yamashita and Sakamoto that had been merged into Yamamoto in 1955 reflect similar controversies and divisions relating to both the regional inequalities and the maintenance of pre-merger communities seen in other more recently merged villages (Doshita, 2011; Morikawa, 2013). The influence of the disaster prevention and reconstruction capacity on the mergers and the existent pre-disaster divisions in the municipalities is also debated (Kawamura, 2015; Matsubara, 2017).

Thus, *machizukuri* was practiced within the limits set by the town-initiated framework within which pursuing divergent future objectives for both livable compact cities for the elderly and attractive areas for young newcomers seem to exist side by side. However, *machizukuri* in Yamamoto was by no means conflict-free. A mutual understanding of the limits set by the official framework seemed to prevail, and explicit criticism towards the town policies surfaced only in individual complaints by the council members or in private communications. The expected and accepted conduct and aims occasionally became visible but only subtly, for example, when the *machizukuri* consultants reminded the participant residents that they would check the newsletters before publication to prevent too controversial content about the town that sponsored the activities. The need to preserve a co-operative atmosphere was also evident in cases when the participant residents grumbled together about administrative delays in a council meeting. While doing this, they nevertheless confirmed several times from the consultants the estimated arrival time of town representatives to stop the complaining in time. The consultants' task in this sensitive and conflict-prone situation was to both listen to the residents' frustrations and then process them into constructive feedback to the town, as was described by the leading *machizukuri* consultant who reflected their role as a mediator in an interview.

Disappointment and frustration arose for some participants from the subordinate role assigned to the residents because it was felt to compromise their sense of agency in crafting their individual and collective future. Instead of having actual power in the planning process, the residents were largely reduced, for example, to selecting the plants for compact city parks, organizing catering for community events, or commenting on minor details in otherwise-completed construction plans. I interviewed Katō-san, a member of the Shinsakamoto *machizukuri* council, after yet

another of this kind of meeting discussing park plan details. He sighed and noted bitterly that "everything is already decided!"

Thus, the alignment of the desired futures of both the reconstruction plan and the locals as well as among the locals may consequently result in frustration and conflict or in an experience of liminality and forced endurance (c.f. Bryant & Knight, 2019) when some participants felt that all they could do was wait for the completion of the reconstruction. Vainio (2020) shows how this temporal state of recovery was characterized by a notion of *gaman* (perseverance, endurance). It refers to bearing the discomfort of reconstruction that stood in the way of commencing actual community recovery (Vainio, 2020b, p. 170). The locals experienced voicelessness when *machizukuri* as the top-down "designated spaces for designated imageries" offered hope of participation but in practice realized mainly the authorities' visions at the expense of the locals' aspirations (Vainio, 2020a).

Instead of focusing only on debating whether the locals have power or not, here the interest is in the importance of *machizukuri* as a process of collective pursuing constituting aspired community. *Machizukuri* can be easily dismissed as powerless pseudo-political participation due to its limited power. However, despite their frustrations, the participants of *machizukuri* did engage in joint activities. The significance of *machizukuri* is, thus, both its planning results and achievements as well as the practice itself: It is about doing things in/for localities with other locals (Watanabe, 2007). Dimmer (2014; 2017) has similarly suggested that it is essential to understand that both the results of citizen participation in reconstruction planning and the planning process itself "can act as venues where new community ties and social capital are created" (Dimmer, 2014, 2017, p. 37). As such, *machizukuri* forms 'spatial practices...that [do] not just presuppose' community, but also 'perform and in some senses create it' (Cornwall, 2002, p. iii). It is argued that the ideas and awareness of place, locality and community networks have become more important when seeking to understand *machizukuri* in the modern Japanese society that is characterized by urbanization and social transformation (Ishii, 2012, p. 111).

Machizukuri offers, thus, a window into exploring how and what kinds of aspired communities are sought to be made a social reality when pursuing their desired futures of both the social and physical environment within the set limits of *machizukuri* practice the participants operated in. The aspirations and collective pursuing were often manifested in practicalities. Furthermore, the practice of *machizukuri* was confined in its material environment, which was also shaping it. It is thus necessary to pay attention not only to the soft side of community but also to the relationship between the soft and the hard sides and see them as an interactive whole (Hiroi, 2008, p. 68). For example, he excitement in Shinyamashita of approaching a general meeting, including organizing snacks and beverages, prompted discussions, for example, about the size of the kitchen facilities in the new

assembly hall. It was hoped that the kitchen would be larger to enable catering for larger groups and lunch meetings and would, hence, facilitate socializing. In turn, the issues discussed in the meetings in Shinsakamoto, where the area was more unfinished than in Shinyamashita, were related to the station square, park layout and planting and managing of the green zones.

Community gardening has been a popular practice in community building in Japan (Watanabe&al.2014; Akazawa & Nakase, 1998), and it was also applied in Yamamoto. The town representatives introduced a plan to involve the residents in park maintenance and plant selection at a Shinsakamoto general assembly in spring 2015. A question was raised from the audience about the extent to which the residents were expected to be responsible for the maintenance. The resident asking the question pointed out that if the terrain of the park was flat, it would be more easily managed because of the residents' older age. The council members expanded on the park discussion later in the council meeting. They inquired of the town representative about the height difference between the road and the park and were also worried that the height of the plantation might affect traffic safety. Later in another general meeting introducing the plans of the Shinsakamoto area, a long discussion was held about the shape of the station square and even the very detailed angle of the pavement relating to the most convenient traffic arrangements. In the same meeting the participants raised another acutely concerning issue, namely the toilets in the Shinsakamoto station: "Is there a toilet in the new station?" "Is it free to use or is it behind ticket gates?" "Is it on the first floor and easily accessible?"

This sort of discussions about the details of shrubbery plantation, the angle of the pavement, the design of the path in the green zone or toilets could seem trivial. However, albeit its limited actual power in overall planning, *machizukuri* practice also gave the participants a sense of doing and collectively envisioning their desired future of and in the area. This collective aspiring reflected how a sense of security was associated with the experienced spatiality (see also chapter 8): the residents were envisioning themselves in the place and projecting that aspired future security to the present day. Sometimes these bits and pieces of security were drawn from their past experiences in their now-lost material environments: The availability of a toilet, suitable pavement for the elderly or the possibility for casual encounters in the park represented both material practicalities and the aspired secure living environment of the envisioned future community. It seemed that the more tangible the future living environment became, the easier it was for the people to participate in the collective envisioning. The aspired community was still very much still a distant, blurry vision on the horizon in the Miyagi hospital area, not anchored to any concrete environment. This, together with constant delays, hampered the sense of trust in the future and was reflected in the low participation rates. This reminds us about the co-constitutive relation of the social and material in collective aspiring.

7.1.2   Territoriality of community

The reconstruction *machizukuri* in Yamamoto was a tool to realize the pre-tsunami, district-based administrative participation model in the form of neighborhood associations. A separate *machizukuri* system was planned to cease after the completion of reconstruction and the establishment of administrative districts in the compact cities. The neighborhood associations, with their long history, for example, as tools of governance during the Meiji-period in pre-war Japan, are still often understood as a dominant, exclusive, and territorially, clearly defined form of community organization (Pekkanen, 2006; Pekkanen *et al.*, 2014). As such, they are argued to function as forums for so-called friendly authoritarianism through which officially sanctioned norms and ideologies are disseminated on the grassroots level (Sugimoto, 2014; Nishimoto, 2018). However, neighborhood associations are increasingly perceived in contemporary Japan as being constituted by active volunteer members engaging in activities that sometimes also resist the authorities (Kikuchi, 2003, p. 41).

This framework shaped the intertwined temporality and spatiality, or timespace experience (Schatzki, 2010, 2020) of the practice and directed collective pursuing of the locals participating in the activities: On one hand, the realization of future communities was perceived as highly dependent on the decisions of the district division. This was because of the widely held idea that administrative districts form the basic geographical area providing a sense of social belonging. The official deadline and aims shaped the future horizons and the spatial scope of the practice. The delays in the reconstruction led to a prolonged term of their activities, setting the officially defined threshold of the reconstruction's completion further in the future. This formally articulated timespace was conjoined with the *machizukuri* participants' intertwined timespaces when they, on the other hand, negotiated the geographical boundaries of the communities and collectively pursued a community whose development they envisioned continuing beyond the official timeline.

If the previous examples of the toilets and the pavement illustrated the envisioning of the living environment, also territoriality as a geographical area was reoccurring as the definer of a community. It appeared in the Yamamoto reconstruction plan, in the locals' narration and also in *machizukuri* practice. The Yamamoto locals seldom used the English loan word *komyuniti*. They preferred terms that had a territorial connotation when discussing their immediate social reality: They used the terms *chiiki* (area, region) and *shūraku* (village community). *Chiku* (district) and *kinjo* (neighborhood) or *tonarikinjo* (neighbors) were other often-used expressions when community recovery and social relations were discussed in daily life. These territorial terms refer not only to the geographical boundaries of community, but they also connect to conceptualizations of community rules, values, social relations and their enactment within this particular area that are

tied to the social community's normative expectations and sense of security (cf. Hein, 2001, p. 225; chapter 8). *Machizukuri* councils remained significant actors in defining these territorial communities as the legitimate citizen participation forum that lends its authority from the especially strong association between the territorial community and the administrative district.

Thus, social relations were strongly associated with the idea of territory and one's place of residence in Yamamoto. Many scholars have argued that these kinds of traditional, locality-based communities in Japanese society are eroding in the tide of modernization and urbanization, although the spatial scope of neighborhood association is still often regarded the unit of so-called local community in Japan. The formation of this kind of "unit" is a series of historical socio-political developments since the Meiji period, such as the establishment of the family register in 1971, the municipal system in 1889 and the formal connection of shrine parishes and particular neighborhood associations. The post-world war municipal mergers, such as The Great Showa-era mergers (1953–1961) and the Great Heisei-era mergers (1999–2006) were particularly influential later in creating both new administrative communities and inner tensions within them (Hiroi, 2008, pp. 62–65). Thus, community should not therefore be considered as either local or network-based but as a multilayered structure in which both sides are present (Komeda, 2001, p. 64).

The administrative districts were important denominators of community for the Yamamoto residents even before the disaster, although the loss of their immediate living environments and situated communities may have accentuated the significance locality, place and neighborhood (McKinzie, 2019). Noguchi-san, a long-term frequent volunteer from Tokyo, told me that he once asked an acquaintance who worked at the town hall if it was really so that Yamamoto consisted of four communities – Yamashita *hama* and *yama*, Sakamoto *hama* and *yama*. Contrary to his expectations, the town official had replied "no" and explained that Yamamoto actually consists of 22 small communities that are the administrative districts of the town. They were often used as synonyms to understand people's everyday community where the pre-disaster social interaction was often described as generally being focused on the closest neighbors, district section (*han*) or the district (*chiku*) (see also chapter 8 for the importance of the district).

The Yamamoto reconstruction plan uses the word *komyuniti* to refer to social recovery in general, although the association of community and district is also present in itemized explanations of reconstruction projects. The administrational districts (*gyōseiku*) are referred as local communities (*chiiki komyuniti*) that function as the unit for the community reconstruction:

> Continuing from the restoration period, we will promote the regeneration of local
> communities (*chiiki komyuniti*) in coastal settlements, and while giving

consideration of maintaining the communities before the earthquake, we plan for the formation of communities in new urban areas and the reconstruction *of the local communities (administrative districts)* (*chiiki komyuniti* (*gyōseiku*)) of the entire town. (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 20, emphasis added)

However, the significance of the district was not based only on the geographical boundaries; it also reflected the perceived importance of district community rules and values that were regarded as essential cornerstones of the community's organization. Nobody knew where they would live during the planning phase, and administrative decisions also took time due to the delays in the massive reconstruction projects. This forced the *machizukuri* councils to delineate the spatial scope of the aspired communities varyingly in this context of the proceeding reconstruction. The Shinyamashita *machizukuri* council drew the lines of its envisioned territorial community and activities exclusively around the new compact city area. The members often pictured together how the long-awaited official declaration of the administrative district would enable the district community's organization. This also included community rules and practicalities, such as the length of future addresses and the garbage collection system. The current or future residents of Shinyamashita were nominated to hold the most significant posts in the council due to the scope of its envisioned situated community. However, Shinyamashita as a larger area with better services had attracted tsunami evacuees from all the tsunami-stricken districts within the town, which was seen to complicate the community building:

[People are moving] from emergency shelters to temporary housing and living in a mass relocation area. From the coastal side, from the mountainside, and also people originally from different districts make community building in one area really difficult (Shinyamashita machizukuri council, 2015, p. 2).

Tamura-san, a community building specialist from Kobe hired by Yamamoto town to facilitate the move from temporary housing to compact cities, also identified the establishment of practical rules as the foundational problem in new communities. People could rely on established systems in the pre-disaster districts that varied slightly between the districts, but people needed to start from zero (*zero kara sutāto*) in the new areas and align the aspirations, practices and habits of people from the various districts. The Shinyamashita *machizukuri* council especially attempted to align these heterogenous backgrounds by tying the aspirations of the new residents to a shared objective of increasing welfare services in the area:

Regarding the town planning for easy living for the elderly [*kōreisha ni kurashiyasui machizukuri*], we react to the current situation that nearly half of the residents living in the new urban area are over the age of 60. Having the sense of crisis that this "must be done now," we would like to propose to the town improvement of the living environment and welfare and medical services (Shinyamashita machizukuri council, 2014, p. 1).

This appeal was directed to the majority of the new residents, but it also reflected the immediate concerns of council members who were mostly older residents themselves. As previously noted, the community pursued by the *machizukuri* council within the boundaries of the Shinyamashita district was dominantly one inhabited by elderly residents who appreciated access to services, easy mobility and relied on a traditionally structured administrative district. This view contrasted with the town's visions of Shinyamashita as open, attractive and welcoming to various generations.

Meanwhile, the Shinsakamoto *machizukuri* council envisioned the future community as inclusive of the areas surrounding the compact city. The first residents were unable to move into their new houses in Shinsakamoto until April 2015 due to delays. The new area was to merge with the existing Machi district due to the aging and sparce population of future Shinsakamoto. This integration was perceived to be facilitated by the evacuees' existing social ties in the area because the majority of the future Shinsakamoto residents originated from coastal Sakamoto: According to *machizukuri* council member Wada-san, there was "a sense of village" prevailing in the greater Sakamoto area. The *machizukuri* council often drew on this perception and defined its scope of action as "eight districts of Sakamoto (*Sakamoto hachiku*) with the new area as its center." The council members nevertheless estimated that the merger could raise criticism among the Machi district's current residents. Thus, the reference to greater Sakamoto as an inclusive community was also utilized as a rhetorical tool to seek support for *machizukuri* practice from a wider area.

These differences in the geographical scope of collective pursuing in *machizukuri* can be understood as originating from and reproducing the notion of a district as a community. This can be observed in the envisioning rhetoric as well as in the enactment of these ideas when events, activities and services were directed to geographically bounded audiences. The composition of the council members was also reflected in this collective pursuing: In principle, the *machizukuri* councils were open to everybody to participate, but as described earlier, the Shinyamashita council consisted mostly of elderly residents already settled in the new area. In contrast, only two council members were tsunami evacuees in Shinsakamoto, and the majority of the participants were residents of the inland districts surrounding the new area. However, despite the different composition of the council members, the common concern in collective pursuing was how to guarantee the physical and social sense of

security. I elaborate this in the chapter 8 and move here to the discussion of agency and rediscovery.

7.2 *Tōdai moto kurashi*: pursuing for rediscovery

A post-disaster Yamamoto town branding project aiming at realizing the reconstruction goals of a revitalized, vibrant town was underway during my fieldwork. The publication of a Yamamoto town promotion leaflet called "*Yamamoto no Iro*" (The color of Yamamoto) was being prepared as part of this project that reflected the reconstruction plan's emphasis on the importance of "Yamamotoness" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 6). The man responsible for collecting the data for the leaflet was Saitō-san, an energetic and positive man from Sendai who interviewed the locals and participated in town events. I had once arranged to meet Saitō-san after a brief visit to Kaneko-san's home in Hanagama. It turned out that the two men, both active in their own fields, knew each other, and we all ended up sipping tea and discussing Saitō-san's project at Kaneko-san's repaired house in Disaster Hazard Zone 3.

I asked Saitō-san why he was involved in the project and what its goal was. He enthusiastically started explaining how the Yamamoto authorities wanted to frame and advertise the town as appealing. However, he felt that the locals often did not understand their hometown's good qualities. He used the proverb "*tōdai moto kurashi*" (it is dark at the base of the lighthouse or old-styled lamp stand) to illustrate this, meaning that it is hard to see things when they are close to you. Thus, for development of Yamamoto's prosperous and viable future, he considered that it was necessary to gain opinions and viewpoints from people coming from the outside. During the data collection for the promotion leaflet, Saitō-san went around the town, interviewed the locals and stressed how he wanted to make a reflection back to them in order for them to "be enlightened," to understand the town's qualities in this process. According to Saitō-san, this realization was about changing perspectives by presenting the town as an attractive place for potential future residents: If the locals depicted the town as a quiet, deserted, old peoples' place, someone needed to convert those demerits into merits by reframing, for example, Yamamoto as a tranquil town where one can sleep.

The two men, Saitō-san and Kaneko-san, seemed to be on friendly terms, but the situation was slightly awkward: Saitō-san's town-sponsored efforts to generate a good image of Yamamoto were generally considered beneficial as they concentrated on highlighting the town's local people, community spirit and good qualities. However, the branding program was directed mainly to outside audiences to advertise and attract visitors to the town, whose potential was presumably undetected by its apparently passive residents. Meanwhile, Kaneko-san who was sitting at the

same table was as an extremely active, local Hanagama resident who had initiated many post-disaster community activities individually and as a member of Doyōbinokai (chapter 6). Kaneko-san's perspective on the locals' role differed: He had stressed in an earlier interview the importance and potential of the locals themselves actively engaging in the realization of their community. Thus, establishing a sense of social agency and collective pursuing was enabled and actively initiated in various activities that challenges the framing of the locals' passiveness. This reflects the development also elsewhere in Tohoku, where local community groups were established in great numbers after the earthquake to contribute to community and resilience building (Imai *et al.*, 2015).

In fact, Saitō-san himself was also engaged in local activities. The meeting at Kaneko-san's home was not the first time that I encountered his energetic striving to boost Yamamoto town towards its bright future. *Yamamoto Shōrai e no Tanemaki Kaigi* (The meeting for planting seeds for the future of Yamamoto, hereinafter Tanemaki Kaigi) was another organized and regularly meeting citizen group besides Doyōbinokai: They comprise a network of volunteer organizations and individuals both from Yamamoto and outside of the town. Tanemaki Kaigi's activities also offer a glimpse of how collective pursuing both embraces ideas of community and constructs social agency in practice. The first Tanemaki Kaigi meeting I participated in was held in the central community center next to the town hall. Approximately fifty people sat in a circle in the main hall of the community center, each wearing a nametag. The atmosphere was cheery, there were balloons and clowns, and I even had a selfie taken with a participant dressed as a Star Wars stormtrooper before the meeting.

The role of this stormtrooper remained a mystery to me, but the enthusiasm to develop ideas and organize events and activities was almost as tangible as the balloons distributed by the clowns. Therefore, although I discuss here mainly practices and pursuing as an activity, it is notable that the affective mood seems to play an important role in facilitating the motivation, excitement and enthusiasm to pursue together. *Machizukuri* council meetings were rather serious and formal. In contrast, in the cheery atmosphere of Tanemaki Kaigi, the funny strawberry hats worn in community events or the snacks, bingo games and magician performances in the *machizukuri* general meetings all contributed to an atmosphere that facilitated a willingness to pursue together (figure 8).

Figure 8   Tanemaki Kaigi meeting activities.

The group's chair, Nomura-san, opened the meeting. He declared with Tahara-san, the future chair of the group, that they wished Tanemaki Kaigi to build a future together and strengthen and expand their network not only in Yamamoto but to extend it beyond the town borders. Nomura-san later explained in an interview that this was to complement the official community building considered as limited. Following these opening words, there was a self-introduction round for all the participants, who ranged from ordinary but active local residents to NPO representatives all the way from Tokyo and Kobe. After those opening words outlining the purpose of Tanemaki Kaigi's mission, the representatives envisioned a community not limited to territory but one that drew from the feeling of being connected to a larger network pursuing together. Nomura-san stressed that communication and interaction were essential to realize this vision.

This envisioning and enactment of community as a network also appealed to younger participants and gave them a sense of agency. For example, Imai-san, a man in his late 20s, became active in town development after the disaster and regularly participated in both Tanemaki Kaigi's and Doyōbinokai's activities. He thinks that the young people are gradually activating to think about the future and achieve a sense that things can be done together in the town where decision making was traditionally dominated by the older generation. Imai-san stressed the importance of

starting to take action and claim agency "by stepping up" ("*jibun no steppu appu*") and connecting to interesting people within and outside the town. Imai-san's motivation was originally very personal, a wish to "make a town that I like" as he modestly formulated it, but he became gradually interested in town affairs. He started to pursue this desired future community by encouraging others to participate in activities and plan for, for example, a gathering place that also serves as an accommodation for outside visitors.

This aspired community envisioned by Tanemaki Kaigi's rhetoric and practices embraced an idea of a translocal, yet locally activating and empowering community. However, it also drew from a similar division of agency as the town branding program: The participants from outside the town were regarded as essential enablers of the desired futures and as the target audience of the initiated activities. As such, they were perceived as both supporting and giving perspective to the locals. The aims of increasing town appeal and mobilizing the local residents to partake in this collective mission by "rediscovering" the good qualities of their hometown in formal and informal activities reflect the trends of rural revitalization in Japan and its "imperative to foster fiscal autonomy by activating local character" or *chiiki-rashisa* [region-ness] (Love, 2007, p. 545). The mindset, methods, rhetoric and realization of Yamamoto's reconstruction plan also continues this tradition when stressing that, "each town resident share this future vision, concentrating the power of participation in *community development with love for one's hometown and with passion*" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 6, emphasis added).

These established practices, such as rural revitalization, form a foundation and shape collective pursuing and its objectives as well as delineate social agency and expected emotions: The rediscovered, nostalgic community that is to be formed by active residents having their hearts filled with attachment to their fellow neighbors and *furusato* in which they live is portrayed as the desired goal of these activities and the expected basis of local identities (c.f. Love, 2013, p. 118). Chapter 5 discussed rural revitalization that simultaneously position the locals to be responsible for the revitalization yet not fully capable social agents who are in need of outside guidance to, so to say, step out from the base of the lighthouse. This is argued to divert attention away from the structural problems (Dilley *et al.*, 2017). As said, the notion of community similarly becomes politically appropriated in post disaster contexts when community reconstruction is advocated by various actors while communities are simultaneously expected to be the main generators of their resilience (Bruun & Olwig, 2015; Barrios, 2016).

The main program of the Tanemaki Kaigi meeting followed the script of rural revitalization practice and the objectives of reconstruction plan when the participants were assigned to envision the good qualities and opportunities provided by their hometown. The participants were split into small groups with the task to develop

ideas for future events and activities in Yamamoto for each month. We brainstormed different ideas and wrote our suggestions on sticky notes. I found myself in the same group with Saitō-san, who was eagerly taking the lead in posting the notes to a large paper with a timeline of a year drawn on it. Saitō-san, a good speaker, took the microphone when it came time for each group to introduce our group's ideas and introduced our visions, such as surfing and cosplay events. Other suggestions included, for example, reopening a flea market for children and sports events.

The meeting selected the best ideas to be realized for each season from the suggested activities. One of the popular activities was strawberry dates for couples. This concept would be developed locally, yet it was also planned to be advertised outside the town to lure in tourists, like many of the other innovated activities. This reminds us what Littlejohn (2020) has called museumification of the post-disaster Tohoku communities: Communities have become exhibitions of themselves, their history and traditions to the outsiders as way to enable the continuity of the local communities after the devastating 3.11 disaster. Funds are directed and locals mobilized in this task of activating the damaged areas through turning "what is there" into resources for recovery (Littlejohn, 2020, pp. 8–9). The brainstorming in the Tanemaki Kaigi meeting did not rely much on local tradition; nevertheless, it "experientalized" the town to outside audiences. This made the local community a provider of experiential services but, nevertheless, simultaneously gave the residents a sense of pursuing together the shared aspirations of the town's bright future that they like. Strawberries, one of Yamamoto's local products, were a frequently appearing item in this process.

7.2.1   "It is Yamamoto strawberry"

The Yamamoto reconstruction plan outlined as one of its main objectives "to create a town that feels attractive (*miryoku*) and comfortable (*kaiteki*) and where everyone wants to live" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 5). An important building block of this future vision is the recovery of local resources, such as strawberries, apple, Sakhalin surf clam. Reflecting the strategies of rural revitalization, regenerating these resources damaged in the disaster is presented as essential task. This is because they will not only bring people back to the town but also because "these resources are presenting "Yamamoto-ness" (*Yamamoto-rashisha*) and the attractiveness of the town itself" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 6). Strawberries were a central emblem of Yamamoto town's attraction (*miryoku*) both for its reconstruction plan and for its resident activities and local businesses.

Strawberries were already produced in Yamamoto before 3.11, but the town's agricultural industry suffered heavily from the devastation when the disaster damaged or destroyed some 80% of the paddy fields and 90% of greenhouses used

for strawberry farming (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 21). Farming was often practiced on a small scale, and the aging farmers were struggling to find successors, yet strawberry farming emerged perhaps even stronger from the crisis. Its recovery was supported by the town, and while some farmers rebuilt their farms as they were, the industry's resurgence was also realized by restructuring the old farms and establishing new, larger farming companies. Strawberry farming also came to have a more pronounced role in the remaking of the town identity and community when the reconstruction plan and policies emphasized the role of strawberries as one of Yamamoto's local specialties (*meibutsu*). Moreover, some of the farming companies expanded their scope of interest in town revitalization in general.

Yamamoto was already a known strawberry producing area before the tsunami, although it was originally a region for wine grape production. The tsunami caused saltation of the arable land and destroyed the greenhouses. This made grape farming difficult, while strawberry production became even more dominant because of the rather easy implementation of the elevated cultivation technique. In addition to these reconstruction possibilities, the strawberry industry is also appealing because it offers various potential income sources and has significant touristic value. It also has advantages compared to Sakhalin clams and apples, the other two of Yamamoto's "*daigurume*" (great gourmet products), often advertised in the town's brochures. Strawberries have a relatively long high season in greenhouse farming conditions (approximately mid-October to mid-June). Organizing *ichigokari* (all-you-can-eat strawberry picking) and using the berries for other products offer a convenient farming opportunity to attract visitors and to construct an industry around it. Strawberries are processed into other products, such as wines, sweets, tea, curry and even pizza and used as a motive in various souvenirs. In contrast, the Sakhalin surf clams should be eaten fresh and are fished by professional fishermen and, to be frank, all-you-can-eat apple picking would not be equally attractive. The physical appearance of strawberries is also appealing: They are fresh, red and have an iconic role in the national culinary culture in traditional Christmas cakes and other confectioneries.

Figure 9   A screenshot of a strawberry advertisement shared in Facebook in 2016. The caption says "It is Yamamoto strawberry. Do not mistake it as Sendai strawberry."

The reconstruction plan itself curiously speaks only about "Sendai strawberries" (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 21), the label under which the Yamamoto strawberries were sold before the disaster. However, the idea of strawberries as products particularly from Yamamoto and Yamamoto as a touristic strawberry destination was strengthened after the disaster. Food in general and specific food products often have embedded symbolic meanings. These meanings contribute to and have also been used as a tool for identity construction in Japan (Cwiertka, 2006; Rausch, 2008). This strawberry promotion for the future of "brand Yamamoto" also constructs a fortified idea of the town-level community that is based not only on the vision of the increased job opportunities, tourists and residents achieved through strawberries but also on the pride in and celebration of Yamamoto town as the *furusato*-like origin of these strawberries. Migaki-Ichigo's edible jewelry carries visions of a future Yamamoto all the way to the urban capital. Meanwhile, various local actors stress the importance of strawberries in constituting a particular town identity, as illustrated by a local resident's Facebook post stating that "It is Yamamoto strawberry. Do not mistake it as Sendai Strawberry" (figure 9). The meaning and materiality of the strawberries cannot be separated (Henare *et al.*, 2007, pp. 2–4; cf. Demelius, 2019), and the strawberries have become the small, sweet, red vehicles of communicating, renegotiating and pursuing the desired futures of envisioned and enacted communities and agency in post-disaster Yamamoto.

7.2.2   The edible future and its margins

I also interviewed strawberry farmers during my fieldwork, among whom was the representative of GRA (General Reconstruction Association) strawberry farm. The farm was better known by the brand name of Migaki-Ichigo, the producer of the edible jewelry sold at 1050 yen (9.20 USD) a piece. When I visited the farm for the appointed interview, I was first taken to an office that was professional looking and at a first glance more resembled an urban, white-collar business environment than an agricultural farm. That impression changed when I was given a tour of the GRA farm premises after the interview. The sterile high-tech facilities and intensive technical surveillance of the strawberries' growth environment became evident as we stood at a viewpoint to one of the company's huge strawberry houses that I was forbidden to go in due to the carefully controlled growth environment. The ripe strawberries were carefully hand-checked. The prime quality pieces are chosen to be sold as the edible jewelry; the lesser quality berries are used for products such as the Migaki-Ichigo sparkling wine, another flagship product of the company. These strawberries were envisioned "to become the famous product of Yamamoto brand, similarly to the Venetian glass," according to the representative of GRA I interviewed.

General Reconstruction Association (GRA) was founded by Asai-san, who was born in Yamamoto and worked in the IT business in Tokyo. He volunteered in Yamamoto after 3.11, while still a student in business school, to clean up the debris and encountered the wishes of the locals to have employment. As a result, Asai-san with his fellow students established NPO GRA in 2011, a non-profit organization for community development. They expanded their activities and established the company GRA Inc. later in 2012 to concentrate on strawberry farming with the help of high-tech solutions. Thus, GRA, although driven by business, does not limit its ambitions strictly to strawberry farming. It also seeks to contribute to the recovery and development of Yamamoto with its community development programs and non-profit organization NPO GRA. For them, the key to Yamamoto's future prosperity lies in promoting the town nationally, creating jobs and in developing translocal collaboration. GRA aimed at producing "in 10 years, 100 jobs for 10 000 people" in Yamamoto, mainly in strawberry farming and through support for young farmers in the town.

GRA's pursuit of revitalizing Yamamoto town resembled the ideals of Tanemaki Kaigi in its delineation of agency when pursuing translocal networks of belonging that were simultaneously seen as a prerequisite for local development. The GRA founders thought that creating job opportunities was not enough, so they sought to establish a more attractive community through their *hitozukuri* (people-making). These programs encouraged the locals, especially young residents and children, to think about their future and take a more active role. These activities aimed to

providing a sense of agency for the locals and generally to encourage envisioning their desired futures and pursuing them. This was to be realized by creating a positive circle of increased job opportunities, activated residents and a strengthened town. These were expected to in turn create more employment and attract new residents.

Essential in this activation process were the opportunities to exchange ideas between residents and actors from outside Yamamoto. Thus, GRA can also be perceived as acting translocally, expanding social agency and community when mediating between localities. They also sought to realize their vision by promoting Yamamoto in their brand by, for example, bringing people on tours in Yamamoto to create new innovative ideas for development. GRA also connects to temporary constructions of *furusato* when advertising tradition, the richness of natural resources and human connections in Yamamoto. GRA, however, drew from both notions, development and preservation, when it combined the long history with the new, future-oriented innovative young by utilizing technology in its advertisements. Similar innovativeness and translocality are also increasingly present in community activities elsewhere in Tohoku after 3.11 (Klien, 2016).

GRA is not alone with their strawberry-driven efforts to realize the prosperous future for Yamamoto. In addition to managing a successful business, other strawberry companies also want to tackle the looming threat of decline, though with slightly different objectives and ideas of collective pursuing. For example, the quick rebuilding of the Yamamoto Strawberry farm and the associated Very Berry Labo coffee house and shop after the disaster was also motivated by the reconstruction and recovery of the Yamamoto town. The farm restarted its strawberry production less than a year after the disaster in the middle of plain coastal fields. The location of Very Berry Labo under the elevated railway tracks of the Jōban line is very much both a concrete and a symbolic intersection of the visions for development and attraction embedded in Yamamoto's reconstruction plan: In the first picture on the company's web page introducing the farm's history, the coffee house is standing alone in the empty landscape. The picture's caption describes strawberries as the symbols of reconstruction:

> Unlike today, the surroundings were still quiet. The product lineup in the Labo was still small, and there was space on the shelves. However, the bright red strawberry fruit that was the first to grow after the earthquake seemed like a light for reconstruction (Yamamoto Strawberry Farm, no date).

The construction of the Jōban line was proceeding during the fieldwork, and the elevated railway line started to rise to its full height on the Hamayoshida side of the building. The railway practically runs directly over the coffee house as a huge arc structure due to the impossibility of building all the necessary supporting pillars on

the ground. Gotō-san, who was also a town council member and critical of the reconstruction priorities, tried to see the benefits of the arch despite its massive presence: he laughed and noted that at least it is a very visible and easily detectable landmark for the visiting tourists, an essential part of his vision. This illustrates how reconstruction projects are not perceived either as negative disruptions or positive advancements but are integrated gradually into the locals' sensemaking of their living environment.

The vision for the prosperous future Yamamoto of Gotō-san's business relies on the idea of attraction: He aims to attract new permanent residents to Yamamoto by providing services and activities for tourists. The farm provides strawberry picking opportunities (*ichigokari*) for visitors and the Very Berry Labo coffee house offers all kinds of strawberry-associated foods and sweets, ranging from strawberry curry and pizza to strawberry pancakes. The farm also has a shop that sells a wide variety of strawberry products, including strawberries themselves, jam, strawberry wine produced at the farm, dried strawberries and different kinds of strawberry handicrafts and other products. Attracting tourists to the town and hoping they would turn into permanent residents may sound like an ambitious goal. Gotō-san nevertheless firmly believes that the town revitalization can be achieved by "making everybody to know that Yamamoto is a good place." Gotō-san himself, of course, benefits financially from tourist flows, yet his pursuing is motivated also by his personal yearning for the pre-disaster community: He stated how he "would like to return to how things were" (*moto no jōtai ni modoshitai*). Even going "back" to how things were or back to normal is not returning as such: It is a desired future and an aspiration that denotes pursuing "how things were" or the sense of normalcy. These aspirations also hint at the wish to step into a different timespace of "normalcy." The future is projected further away to the horizon in times of normalcy, and the transformations in the lived environment become more subtle in contrast to the overwhelming sense of the immanent future, urgency and despair of the post-disaster period (cf. Bryant & Knight, 2019).

Gotō-san's description of his motivation to work for the recovery also highlights the perceived importance of collective aspiring constituted by the will to pursue this desired future:

> Those who are living here are all doing their best (*ganbatte*) and if there would not be a desire to make this town once more reborn, reconstruction could not be done, I think… so this is why I work hard with these things.

Thus, according to Gotō-san's vision, recovery and reconstruction should be motivated and realized by the locals' own aspirations, energy and participation. He argues that in this sense, the *machizukuri* groups in compact cities are inefficient due

to their restricted opportunities for real, town-wide discussion. Gotō-san's Yamamoto Strawberry Farm activities can thus be seen, on the one hand, as joining with the practice of revitalization through relying on the outside consumption of local goods and subjecting the local aspirations and agency to the success of this promotion. On the other hand, Gotō-san's personal motivation springs from his sense of nostalgy, his sense of local agency and his collective striving to realize the reconstruction on locals' terms. The first relies on the temporal notion of development, while the latter draws from the idea of preservation and return as the socially unifying objective (see also chapter 8).

However, this strawberry utopia triggered by the disaster also creates exclusions. Thus, merely envisioning a bright future is not always enough because many actors, factors and policies shape pursuing the desired futures within particular practices (cf. Appadurai, 2004; Gordon, 2012). Shinhama is one of the coastal administrative districts of Sakamoto that the tsunami hit hard: The whole district was literally washed away, and the district is now designated a disaster danger zone 1, making the future of the administrative district uncertain. I cycled on a warm spring day to interview the Shinhama district leader on his strawberry greenhouse farm that stands alone on the desolated Sakamoto coastal plain. Kobayashi-san, a man in his 60s, kindly offered me some strawberries, sat down, and lit a cigarette. He started talking about the disaster in Shinhama and strawberry farming in a heavy Tohoku dialect in a modest setting that was notably different than the office-like high-tech environment of GRA or the Yamamoto Strawberry Farms' touristic atmosphere. Seasoning his skepticism with melancholy, Kobayashi-san expressed his bewilderment about my efforts in the rural and uninteresting Yamamoto, although the other district leaders had informed him of my research interests. Then Kobayashi-san sighed, and his voice trembled with emotion when he said that the decision to declare Shinhama an uninhabited Disaster Hazard Zone 1 was "too quick, way too quick."

Continuing to practicalities helped him to overcome the moment of sadness. Kobayashi-san was an outsider to the outwards-directed, optimistic strawberry branding, and he described that it was hard to re-establish the farm, the groundwater on the coast was unusable and water, oil and electricity are now expensive. He continued with a pessimistic evaluation that it was unreasonable to try to get more residents to the town only with strawberries in the face of accelerating depopulation:

Author: People are needed, money is needed, but apart from that, what do you consider necessary for this area and town?

Kobayashi-san: Here are no places to stay for those who visit, no hot spring.

Author: Are the visitors from outside necessary then?

Kobayashi-san: That is also difficult. Only for strawberries, apples and rice, the visitors will merely pass through [the town], I think, though the town and the people in the same business think about many ways to get people gathering. Gathering maybe yes, but [the town population] continues to decrease by 30 people every month.

Whether the strawberries are key to the desired, prosperous future or not, and whether Kobayashi-san would like to participate in the strawberry tourism or not, being in the margins of future visions may hamper the support of and prospects for the future. Kobayashi-san started the interview by noting how the Tokyo Olympics 2020 were prioritized over Tohoku's recovery politically, financially and in terms of general interest. Thus, although disaster reconstruction was appropriated in the national rhetoric as the opportunity for the prosperous future of Japan (chapter 5), it was nevertheless locally felt they were left in the shadow of other national interests. The Sakamoto area was similarly peripheralized and disconnected from the efforts to pursue a viable Yamamoto in the strawberry-driven envisioning. One indicator of this realignment of future visions is the redesignation of the so-called "Strawberry Line," a road that connects significant strawberry farms for sightseeing along the coast. The reconstruction plan stresses the role of tourist-oriented farms in this land readjustment plan:

> We will aggregate the strawberry fields along the farm road, which will be a new Strawberry Line to replace the prefectural Soma-Watari road, which was heavily damaged by the tsunami, and promote the installation of cultivation facilities including tourist strawberry plantations (Yamamoto, 2011a, p. 11).

The renaming of an inland road as the new Strawberry Line shapes the townscape both concretely and symbolically: It directs tourist flows mainly to the Yamashita area and outlines who belongs to Yamamoto's edible strawberry futures. The Strawberry Line that also used to traverse also through coastal Sakamoto along the so-called *hamadōri* (coastal road, chapter 6) now runs only in Yamashita past the biggest post-disaster strawberry establishments and ends just when it reaches the Shinhama district in Sakamoto (figure 10). Sakamoto was already before the disaster less oriented in strawberry farming, but this further decreases the connection of the area with the aspired post-disaster town community and its prosperous future pursued through strawberry farming. Kobayashi-san remains a skeptic at the outskirts of this Yamamoto's edible future the envisioning which may, however, also affect the concrete business profits when it positions the few remaining Sakamoto farmers as the anonymous producers of the "Sendai strawberries" at the very southern end of the new Strawberry Line.
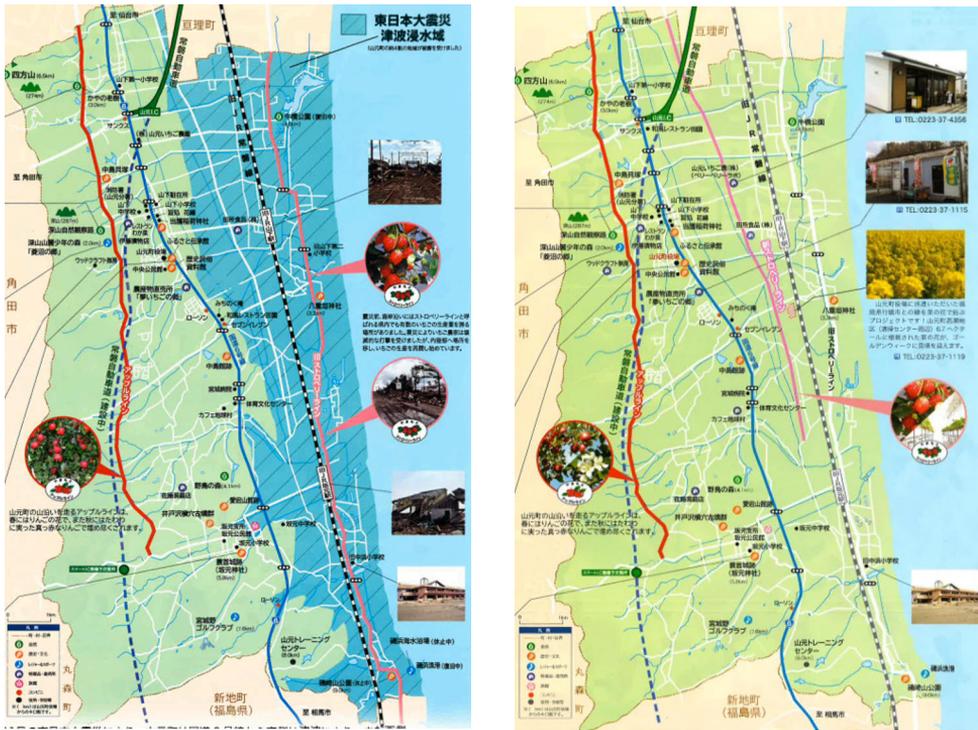
Figure 10   The old (left, 2013) and the new (right, 2014) Strawberry Line (in pink) on the Yamamoto town guide map in the town's tourism promotion leaflet.

The previously presented visions of recovery do not constitute community in the concept's traditional, definitional sense, but these efforts nevertheless also show how pursuing for desired future in strawberry farming serves to orient social relations and agency. This variety of desired futures in strawberry farming practices and related policies in Yamamoto join for their part in the ethos of future-oriented progress, development and attraction and, thus, in the crafting of the aspired communities of and in Yamamoto. However, this pursuing also involves marginalized positions in terms of spatiality, temporality and agency: The locals are positioned either as in need of outside inspiration or as enablers of consumption and Sakamoto is characterized by a state of stagnation and anonymity in this vision of an active, translocal and attractive Yamamoto community and its strawberry utopia. It must be noted, however, that the way this positioning is experienced is also central: It may be felt as exclusion and subordination, empowerment, agreeable role or something in between.

7.3   Pursuing without an objective

Machizukuri, Tanemaki Kaigi and strawberry farming represent collective pursuing that is explicitly directed towards a specific, collectively and constantly re-envisioned future and audiences. *Machizukuri* activities may lack actual political power, Tanemaki Kaigi may perceive outside ideas and connections as important, and the strawberry industry may be catering mostly to tourists or consumers. However, their main significance in ontologizing community lies in practice: in pursuing together by holding meetings, arranging events, promoting visions, selling branded goods or wearing funny strawberry hats at community festivals. A community (town, place, neighborhood or network and so on) to identify with is envisioned and enacted in dialogical relation with the collectively negotiated shared objectives in these practices. However, the importance of aspiring as collective pursuing is not limited to this kind of organized activities and explicit visions of future community: It is also occurring in practices that are in themselves a (re)enactment of social relations and spatiality without a specific objective. This aspect of collective pursuing was emphasized in the experiences of gradual formation of the future and sense of agency when acting together in the locals' narration. This perspective was characterized by the spontaneity or casualty of the encounters (chapter 8).

The town reconstruction policies evoked harsh criticism at the coast, voiced particularly by Doyōbinokai (chapter 6), while the coastal residents, who included Doyōbinokai's members, also initiated and engaged in various community activities. Instead of careful planning and execution, the community came to be perceived not as a result but as naturally forming everyday interactions and social practices themselves. For Kaneko-san, the shared mindset towards the future is born out of this "everydayness" and spontaneity that, in his opinion, separates *chiikizukuri* ("area making") from *machizukuri*:

> *Chiikizukuri* is not achieved by other people. No, it's not like 'let's do *machizukuri*'. Each individual should have the same intention to achieve *chiikizukuri*. So, there is no person in charge, there's no role to play, but people spontaneously help each other, speak with each other and work together and like that *chiikizukuri* is done. So, it's not something by the plan.

Embedded in the everyday activities, the agency in community building in this perception of collective pursuing is posited to the residents themselves. On the one hand, this echoes the heightened emphasis on and the idealization of the community relations in the post-disaster rhetoric of *kizuna* (human bonds). The post-3.11 discourse praising *kizuna* in Tohoku communities was used to portray a utopia of post-disaster social cohesion, yet it was also criticized for "silencing unwanted

voices and hiding social divisions to sustain a positive image of the Tohoku region" (Gerster, 2019, p. 11). Nevertheless, an intensified striving for forming social connections and the desire for maintaining the sense of collective pursuing offered by these post-disaster social connections can also arguably be detected from these utterances.

On the other hand, this view of agency is associated with the role division between the town officials handling the hard side and the residents responsible for the soft side of reconstruction. This shaped the locals' perceptions of the temporality of community recovery: It was perceived to be defined by the completion of the infrastructure and homes, which subordinated social recovery to infrastructural reconstruction. Vainio (2020b) calls this the dual spheres of recovery, a situation in which the official reconstruction policies do not take into consideration the locals' experiences and feelings of recovery. As noted earlier, this leaves the locals to endure until completion of official reconstruction, only after which can they feel they can commence their social recovery. The chief monk of Fumonji Temple at the coast reflected this temporality and social agency in relation to the situation of the compact cities:

> Now people have homes, that is good. It is the start of reconstruction, now that the people are moving. Thus, now the environment is new. And now that the houses are done, the role of the town will end and people living there start [community building]. The neighbors are totally different, only the people themselves can do it [community building].

This temporality of recovery depending on the completion of the hard side was also present in the coastal communities. The residents' return was regarded as important because the community was perceived to gradually be forming both in and as everyday social practices. The chief monk continued in the interview by acknowledging the financial realities of reconstruction, but like Kaneko-san, he stressed the importance of gradually proceeding and sharing a mindset of co-operation and pursuing instead of clearly defined aspirations as objectives:

> Firstly, money is necessary, but the most important thing are the people. With the strength of one-by-one proceeding forward, with cooperation and sharing mutual desires, certainly [the community] will start taking form… Everyday a little, but gradually one can understand the form. Yesterday, it was a seed, but gradually the sprout and then leaves appear. Now when looking closely, one thing at a time the shape [of the community] is changing.

This importance of pursuing and embeddedness of a gradually emergent community in everyday practices highlights the mutually constitutive relation of enacting and envisioning community. As noted, instead of organized, explicit objectives or joint commitments (cf. Gilbert, 1994; Amit, 2010, 2020), collective pursuing in itself can be seen as having the potential to create a shared sense of togetherness. The heightened importance of doing – performing or practicing – in itself became apparent on several occasions in Yamamoto when the sense of social connectedness and the idea of community became gradually associated in activities such as eating, exercising, cooking and doing handicrafts (chapter 8). This reflects Neal and Walters' (2008) argument about the sense of community being generated by everyday community practices that "directly contribute to a more tangible sense of community" *and* "fuel the ongoing desire for 'community'" (Neal & Walters, 2008, p. 290).

7.4   Conclusion

I have explored collective pursuing in this chapter mainly in local activities in Yamamoto, ranging from *machizukuri* councils to strawberry framing. Pursuing in many of these activities crafted territorial notions of exclusions and inclusions in the community. At this point, I want to remind readers that it is not my intention to state that community is defined by territorial boundaries, implying a geographical area. Instead, I want to pay attention to how these boundaries are drawn and by whom, while acknowledging that these boundaries can be created differently in various other practices. For instance, in *machizukuri* practice, the framework set by town and the institutionalized neighborhood association practice delineated in many ways both the spatiality and the experienced temporality. These defined, for instance, the completion of compact cities and the end of the *machizukuri* term as important thresholds in determining the desired future and community. However, as I have shown, a great deal of imaginary efforts and creative future projections of, for example, the temporal duration of the activities occurred simultaneously with the more formal organization of the practice. Thus, aspiring and especially pursuing offers the opportunity for inquiry into these creative, transformative and multilayered processes within social practices.

Agency was another prominent theme discussed in this chapter. The sense of agency and having a future in the first place appeared particularly significant for many research participants. This relates to the question of delineating agency and to questions of by whom, for whom and why collective pursuing is practiced in these visions. The collective activities of Tanemaki Kaigi were undoubtedly empowering for the participants and the strawberry business benefitted from its emphasis on branding and networks, yet these activities also resonated in many ways with the

goals and role division of the rural revitalization practices. Here, my intention is not to understate the sense of agency in these locals' activities but to reflect on how collective pursuing is connected here with established practices, such as urban planning and rural revitalization. These shape the objectives, agency and power divisions and, consequently, the community. For instance, the *machizukuri* practice posits the responsibility for the recovery's soft side to the residents themselves. Revitalization also presents the residents as simultaneously active and passive yet always subordinate to the "outside" agency. In the context of disaster recovery, the criticism of the resilience concept has pointed out that this kind of agency delineation is important to acknowledge, because it easily and subtly (re)produce unequal positions (Barrios, 2016). However, this outside-inside dynamic and positioning is limited not only to collective pursuing but is also very present in the collective yearning for a sense of belonging and security, as I discuss in the following chapter.

8   Go out and (re)connect!

On an afternoon in May 2015, during my last week of fieldwork, I heard it once again! "There are no places to gather. There are no places to chat in Yamamoto." I lifted my eyes from the delicious-looking cakes in a newly opened coffeeshop to Fukuda-san, one of my research participants, as she spoke those words to the salesclerk. I had heard the same notion throughout the town as it continued to recover: On a jog around coastal Yamashita in the dusk of the evening, I had bumped into Matsuo-san, Sensei's neighbor. We exchanged a few words about the community center he and his wife had been running since the disaster. He stressed how that kind of place was really needed, as "there is no place to gather, no place to chat." The members at a Sakamoto *machizukuri* council meeting were discussing the plans to establish a tea salon in the new compact city area and how they could be realized as quickly as possible. The council decided to proceed with the establishment of a temporary tea salon since "we need quickly a place to gather, a place to chat." Suzuki-san, a founding member of a resident group in Hanagama, introduced the activities of the group at the town welfare council's district support network meeting. She described in her speech how, after the disaster, everybody was disconnected from their own district and the community was scattered, which made people feel sad and lonely. She stressed how "there are no places to gather, but it is necessary to have places to chat," and she ended her presentation by stating that "We want a place to gather." During a friends' lunch meeting in a community space, a woman noted that "there are not really many places to meet and chat in Yamamoto." The others nodded and responded in agreement, "Yes, it is indeed so!" [25]

Fukuda-san and I later sipped coffee and enjoyed the cakes we had bought at her family's residence in the tsunami evacuees' barracks-like temporary housing complex. Fukuda-san explained the reasoning behind these wishes and told me that

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[25]   Erikson (1976) also remarked on the phenomena of repetition of certain phrases in his study of post-disaster recovery. He presumed that it was not only a phrase that was regarded as well-fitted to describe the situation but also an indicator of a common phase of trauma (Erikson, 1976, p. 198). I assume that both explanations are valid but also that the repetitiveness here reflects similar, shared pre-disaster conceptualizations of community and its prerequisites.

it would be important to have places such as the new coffee shop where people could meet and communicate with each other. Her sentiment summarized the locals' persistent felt need for places to interact and form trustworthy social connections[26] to reconstruct their community. What kept puzzling me in Yamamoto, however, was that at least five such desired gathering places had already been established within walking distance from my temporary residence at Sensei's house. For example, a few days after the discussion with Fukuda-san, I cycled the three kilometers from the Yamamoto Central Community Center next to the town hall on the mountainside back to Sensei's house at the coast. I first passed Shinyamashita's new community center. I continued to Hanagama, where I cycled past Orange House, Everyone's Library, and at least four similar community spaces. Then, I reached the old Yamashita Station and Nakamura-san's shop that often served as a setting for various events and local gatherings.

Turning at the empty slot reserved for the new district assembly hall, I headed to the road that runs past Koya-kun's Community Center and Sensei's house all the way to Fumonji Temple where weekly Doyōbinokai's meetings and monthly Tera Café events were held. On my way, I met three men clearing bushes from a field to make way for a community park. One of these men was the chief monk of Fumonji Temple. As we sat on a bench to chat about the park project that he had already advertised in Doyōbinokai's meeting, the chief monk emphasized how the park would serve as a place for people to randomly encounter each other. His enthusiasm made me vividly recall the meeting about community building in the compact city, where participants eagerly stressed the importance of public parks and community facilities as places to get to know others' faces.[27]

In this chapter, I explore collective aspiring from the perspective of affectively charged yearning. The yearning that arose in post-disaster Yamamoto, especially from the need post-disaster for social, spatial and temporal reorientation, helps us to also understand this paradox of missing community and gathering places despite their apparent availability. The notion of community, as discussed in chapter 2, is generally depicted as a positive ideal and cherished future goal, whose temptation lies in the affective qualities that evoke warm and cozy feelings of trust, belonging, safety and confidence. In essence, "missing community means missing security" (Bauman, 2001). Thus, affectively charged yearning for community, a sense of

[26] Some scholars have defined such networks and the resources embedded in them as social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). I have discussed the relation of place and social interaction from the perspective of social capital and disaster resilience in a separate article (Posio, 2019a). Parts of this chapter's analysis is based on that article.

[27] This vignette is published as a shorter version in an earlier published article (Posio, 2019a, pp. 433–434).

belonging and of security as well as its translation into activities and power, sheds light on the process in which the affective sense of belonging is constructed and distributed (cf. Amit, 2010).

Collective yearning for a sense of belonging and security was also prominent in post-disaster Yamamoto, and it arose from the locals' feelings of loss, confusion and insecurity caused by the disaster's disruption to their social, spatial and temporal understandings. However, their yearning also encompassed reconfigured and shared feelings of nostalgia, disconnection, togetherness, sense of place and community, all of which colored the ways that they reinterpreted the past and strived towards their desired futures. Nevertheless, the affective side is often neglected in disaster recovery and reconstruction, although emotions are argued to be "all over disasters" (Barrios, 2017a, p. 3) and "inequity, vulnerability, and recovery are conditions that are, first and foremost, *felt*" (ibid., p. 10). I use the terms *disorientation* and *reorientation* to capture the dynamics of the feelings of confusion in the wake of people losing their navigational frameworks of belonging and the following urge to regain them (Cox & Perry, 2011; Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015).

The first half of the chapter focuses especially on discussing the foundational feeling of interconnected social, temporal and spatial disorientation that generates anxieties and insecurities as well as yearning and a need to reorient. What characterized reorientation in Yamamoto was a yearning for a sense of belonging and security that was often expressed through a discourse on mobility envisioned as a way to realize community. Mobility here is not only spatially from the inside to the outside and from home to gathering places: It is also agility in temporal reorientation when people sought to reconcile their disrupted past, present and future, often through particular places. However, the enacting and envisioning of community does not always meet, thus the focus on yearning also highlights how communities are temporally and spatially multilayered. The latter half of this chapter explores how the residents in Yamamoto experience and feel the lived environment particularly in relation to social relations in the new compact cities. This also leads to a discussion about power when the locals construct norms and socially sanctioned expectations of enacting and envisioning communities in relation to their felt insecurities fueling the yearning for a sense of belonging and security.

This chapter highlights the role of the sense of place, partially due to the drastic change in the familiar living environment. I use the concept of sense of place in this chapter to refer to the locals' relationships with a place that is both a product and producer of their collective social realities (Low, 2016). It encompasses place-related meanings, emotions, memories, and experiences (Chamlee-Wright & Storr, 2009; Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015) and is formed through enactment and continuous discursive practices that actively construct meanings of experiences and relationships of the physical environment, the self, and others in a particular place

(Milligan, 1998; Rodman, 2003; di Masso *et al.*, 2013). As such, places organize and symbolize people's social reality (Lalli, 1992; Gieryn, 2000). Post-disaster Japan has witnessed a heightened awareness of the importance of socially driven place-making in form of, for example, community centers (Teuchi, 2014; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Dimmer, 2016), yet remarks on the temporally evolving place meanings after the 3.11 disaster have remained cursory (e.g., Delaney, 2015). Attention is directed mainly to social interaction in place, for instance by arguing for the benefits of community spaces in building social capital in Tōhoku and elsewhere (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). This chapter is partially based on two earlier published articles (Posio, 2019a, 2019b).

8.1 After the disaster: Social, spatial and temporal reorientation

The massive devastation of the known living environment and the dispersion of familiar pre-disaster communities caused by 3.11 created drastic feelings of disruption, loss, confusion and sorrow for many. This caused what is called disorientation in the orienting frameworks of social and physical worlds that generate a sense of belonging. Disorientation is argued to create a need for reorienting. This reorientation is not a one-time act but a continuous, cyclic process in which people seek to regain their sense of self, place and community amid continuous change during reconstruction (Cox & Perry, 2011; Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015). Disorientation-reorientation mostly refers to individual experiences, but in this chapter it is a useful notion to describe the shared need to collectively renegotiate the social, spatial and temporal dimensions of social life. Therefore, in a post-disaster context that is often characterized by massive changes, collective aspiring can be regarded as a future *re*orientation that is constantly readjusted in relation to felt disruptions and insecurities.

This post-disaster reorientation thus also concerns experienced temporality. On the afternoon of March 11 in 2015, I walked pass Shinyamashita's compact city in the freezing wind on my way to the old Yamashita Station, once the heart of the Hanagama District. A dozen coastal returnees had organized an annual disaster memorial event at the old station square that continued to symbolize the coastal community. It started snowing when the district temple's monks commenced the memorial service by facing an altar filled with bamboo lanterns decorated with wishes written by the locals. On one was written, "Yamamoto is the place where my life began, and I will return." The wishes shone brighter at dusk as darkness started falling on the windy, snowy square where the monks' chanting echoed as several dozen locals watched the service. The residents shivering in the cold nodded to each

other and repeatedly noted, "It's snowing. Just like on that day (*ano hi*), isn't it?"[28] (figure 11)

The expression "that day" (*ano hi*) referring to the day of the disaster was often used as a discursive marker to indicate the division between the pre- and post-tsunami realities. The residents often remarked first the passage of time from the disaster when discussing reconstruction, town affairs and their lives, making the disaster a marker on which temporality is constructed and time is measured (Forrest, 1993). The locals' general temporal understandings were characterized by the division of the pre-tsunami past, the post-tsunami past, and perceptions of the future. All these temporal dimensions were opened up, interpreted and felt in various ways in social practices. Temporal reorientation was characterized by the efforts to make sense of the relation of these temporal dimensions and the transition from the pre-disaster *heiwa no jidai* (times of peace), as many locals called the pre-disaster period,

Figure 11 3.11 memorial service at the old Yamashita station in Hanagama.

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[28]   This vignette is also published in (Posio, 2019a, p. 443).

to *saigo* (post-disaster). Furthermore, collective yearning was fueled by the felt insecurities of *saigo* and characterized by the desire to proceed towards the new *heiwa no jidai* of the future that was associated strongly with the sense of security.

This need for temporal reorientation, or re-evaluation of the past and reconfiguring of the desired futures, was connected to spatial disorientation and reorientation. The disruption, felt especially due to the destruction of the physical environment and the place of their residence, was daunting for many. Visiting at the destroyed coast on the day after the disaster was a confusing experience for many coastal residents: The difficulty of recognizing the demolished environment without familiar landmarks caused a surreal feeling of disorientation, described by Ikeda-san from the Hanagama District:

> It was reality but like watching a dream, kind of. The tsunami came, and I couldn't go to see the coast on the same day. On the following day, I went to the coast. The neighborhood, the landscape: nothing from the past was there. I wasn't sure where I was. Was this a place where people used to live? On top of that, the place had changed so much from the past that I didn't know where I was. There used to be roads, trees, and houses, but now there was nothing. Really, just bridges, the railroad. [...] Eventually, I recognized the railroad and understood my whereabouts. Just like that, everything had changed so that the location couldn't be understood.

The fundamental feelings of both temporal and spatial disruption were still palpable in the memoirs of Arai-san, a former resident of the Nakahama District in Sakamoto, when she reminisced about how the evacuees in temporary shelters were worrying about losing their past because of displacement and destruction:

> Everybody from the Sakamoto area took shelter. Of course, things were lost, but compared to things, the history of our lives lived thus far [was more important]. "Is our history gone?" everybody asked. It was truly impressive that everybody was thinking [about that]. "Sakamoto is gone. It can't be rebuilt." I heard that from everybody and can't forget it. Our history is gone.

This Arai-san's recollection indicates people's felt connection to community and place, in addition to the fear of losing their past. Even more importantly, this reconsideration of the past and the feeling of loss of place and community were projected to the future prospects and aspired trajectories: The yearning to rebuild the community and the fear of not being able to do so. I discussed in chapter 3 that community as a process is connected to the experience of spatiality, because the material environment and social interactions are mutually constitutive in social

practices. The lived, material world is not a static background but a multivocally constructed, organic co-constituent of social life (Ingold, 2000; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Rodman, 2003; Low, 2009, 2016; Hastrup, 2010) evolving in time. Community is thus felt and shaped by emplaced social interaction, history and shared experiences in place and of place (Milligan, 1998, 2003; Amit, 2002; Gray, 2002; Kempny, 2002; Neal & Walters, 2008). However, aspiring refers not just to the past and its memories; it also highlights the significance of a collectively envisioned and longed-for shared future in a place (cf. Milligan, 1998). Thus, collective aspiring literally occurs in the material environment, in particular places, as an iterative process in which social interactions in place create a shared future of and in place and further longing to belong to that particular place (cf. Neal & Walters, 2008).

Shibue-san, a staff member of a volunteer community center in the Hanagama District, described how the disaster dispersed the self-evident, pre-disaster communities and how the locals now have a heightened urge to regain their sense of belonging:

> The sense of loss has affected how they feel the need to connect with others. If you were already in the community and you had certain responsibilities as a member of the community [before the disaster]. I don't think we human beings would want more with the community, you know, because you were already doing the trash [recycling], cleaning or sending out letters or, you know, some kind of work for the community. Something that should be there, but is not there, makes us miss it even more. So, community should be there, but because it's not, they search for it and even go out and try to connect with others.

The disaster's aftermath is often characterized by this kind of heightened awareness and yearning for community (Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015) and an intensified longing for lost places (McKinzie, 2019). Community is particularly yearned for as the provider of the sense of belonging and security (cf. Bauman, 2001, p.4) and the felt lack of either a community or a sense of security may in turn create feelings of insecurity, anxiety, fear and a sense of threat. This interplay of the yearned security and the felt post-disaster insecurities in post-disaster Yamamoto fueled the striving to realize aspired communities. Furthermore, Shibue-san's remark especially highlights how these yearnings translate into (inter)actions when people "search for it [community]," "even go out" and "try to connect" motivated by their desire to regain their sense of belonging in the future. These feelings of loss and yearning for community appeared to be widely shared in Yamamoto and directed towards a particular kind of enacting and envisioning of community in particular "places to gather."

8.1.1   Come together: No places to gather

The mantra "there are no places to gather, there are no places to chat" voiced by Fukuda-san and many of her fellow locals at the beginning of this chapter indicates that the sense of community and belonging in Yamamoto was strongly connected to yearning for a secure place and also mobility. The felt insecurity created by the fears of immobility in the lived, everyday environment and voiced by many was connected to the town's demographic structure and material environment. The very concrete, commonly felt threat to everyday life in general and to social relations in particular was the ability to move from home to services and to gathering places. Many town residents were elderly, so their anxieties related to the future included worries about their shopping capability, their driving ability or their health services access. These could be easily dismissed as practical, everyday concerns unconnected to community, yet they nevertheless constituted a significant part of people's yearned-for sense of security in their lived environment. For example, in *machizukuri* activities (chapter 7), the availability of health services, especially for the elderly residents, was one important determinant of their sense of security or of "living with peace of mind (*anshin ni kurashiteru*)."

The first part of the mantra, "there are no places to gather," indicates a yearning not only for a particular location or shared space and of mobility to these places, but also expectations of social encounters in them. Hence, it reflects also the perceived socio-spatial ideas of community. Many locals stressed that it is essential to leave one's house to construct social ties, to "go outside" and "to connect." This emphasis on mobility, both from home to gathering places and from inside to outside, consequently reflects how the residents conceived community as a social phenomenon occurring outside the private sphere of their homes. This makes public places important and also creates expectations for how to participate in envisioning and enacting the yearned-for community. However, these communities were spatially and temporally multidimensional and overlapping, as I will elaborate later.

Going out was considered a prerequisite for the sense of belonging and security, so the perceived lack of gathering places reflects the felt insecurity of being unable to be a part of the community relations. Many locals stressed the need to create opportunities to form "naturally occurring community ties" for casual communication at encounter sites that were felt to be surrounded by a sense of security. Fields and lively streets passing by peoples' gardens were referred to as places for community encounters in pre-tsunami Yamamoto. For example, when I chatted with the chief monk of Fumonji Temple on a bench in the park he was working on as introduced at the beginning of this chapter, he explained that these kinds of opportunities to meet by chance were felt to have been reduced due to the growth in the distance between neighbors on the depopulated coast. This is why he wanted to construct a place for people to meet and to interact in "a safe place to come

across each other with peace of mind" Furthermore, opening "a more home-like community center" was considered to be necessary for developing a sense of community to complement the naturally occurring community ties, according to Taguchi-san, a member of the *machizukuri* council and a community non-profit group founder. He stressed that place is a prerequisite for community and envisioned "locals keeping it and using that kind of place. The most important thing is place. Without that kind of place, the community cannot be born."

However, not just any kind of place was regarded as the yearned-for gathering place. Shibata-san, the founder of a community gathering place that organized events such as regular lunch meetings, computer classes and craft workshops in Hanagama, emphasized the importance of a place with specific attributes that could enable community activities and the formation of social relations. This was contrasted to the official, regulated assembly hall:

> Here is no public assembly hall [yet]. The town has decided on [its building], but there are rules for its usage. Here, usage is possible as one wishes. People can freely develop ideas and because this is a small organization, we can quickly respond if the activity is possible or not. The town is bothersome. One needs to write a written application. Here one can make connection directly.

The public assembly hall was thus regarded as having an important role in providing a feeling of a unified area, but many sought to have other places for various activities. Thus, the availability of public spaces neither guarantees their significance and experienced social value (Francis *et al.*, 2012) nor does physical proximity in the same geographical space automatically generate a sense of togetherness. Thus, it was not just the mobility of the places; it was also the particular activities in those places that were regarded as creating the sense of community and togetherness that was yearned for. These kinds of collective, envisioned conceptualizations of place, belonging and their proper enactment have led the locals to establish these kinds of desired gathering places to ensure enactment of aspired community. These places also illustrate how the collective yearning for a sense of security and community can materialize (Low, 2001, 2016; cf. Glück & Low, 2017).

8.1.2   No places to chat

Hearing Fukuda-san repeating the often-voiced concern in the newly opened café was in itself a social interaction, a communication realized in a shared space that, for its own part, reinforced this collectively narrated feeling of yearning for community. Thus, the latter part of the mantra "no places to chat" highlights this perceived importance of communication that was stressed as another cornerstone of the sense

of belonging and community. For example, Hiroi (2008) argues that, in addition to its internal relationships, an essential feature of community is its openness and connectedness to its outside. He stresses that a community center is a necessary point of contact to the outside actors of the community as "a base place where (unknown) people can easily visit and communicate with each other" (Hiroi, 2008, pp. 57, 60, 70–71). This approach presumes clear, shared inside-outside boundaries of the community in a particular identifiable location, but nevertheless it also illustrates the perceived importance of interaction. However, it is particularly the perceived lack of places for socializing, despite their apparent availability, that reveals how aspired communities are spatially and temporally multidimensional and overlapping. This underlines the significance not only of a sense of place but also the importance of the (inter)action performed in "the places to gather". This aspect is connected here particularly to the gendered practices in relation to both disaster recovery and community in general.

Gender has been a prominent theme in post-3.11 Japan. Women came to symbolize "the very spirit, resiliency, and pride that are being called for in time of crisis" and were, consequently, depicted and mobilized as central actors in building a resilient society (Koikari, 2013, p. 2, 2020, pp. 7–10, 43–44). There has also been an increasing effort to include the gender perspective in disaster management in Japan (Petraroli & Baars, 2022). However, in practice, women have remained underrepresented in the post-3.11 reconstruction planning (Saito, 2012, 2014). It is also argued that the aftermath of 3.11 reproduced a hegemonic masculinity and gendered vision of national security. This was particularly prevalent in post-disaster, national resilience-building policies that focused on risk and material, hard-side solutions and rhetorical chat that called for restoring Japaneseness together with manhood capable of protecting the nation (Koikari, 2017, 2020, pp. 15–39). Thus, women's centrality in the post-3.11 Japan largely reproduced the prevailing gender roles in which women and femininity are associated with domesticity, motherhood and care (Koikari, 2020, pp. 8–9).

The men in Yamamoto appeared to have more opportunities for participation in disaster reconstruction and community building and, consequently, enhancement of their resiliency: Continuing their leading role in household and community, men occupied the vast majority of, for example, *machizukuri* council, town council and district leader posts. However, women seemed more capable of fostering social connections and recovery in the everyday recovery through their gendered practices (Posio, 2021). An in-depth discussion of gender roles in Japan is outside this chapter's scope, but this observation could be said to be in contrast to women's allegedly disadvantaged position in disaster recovery and resilience (Ashraf & Azad, 2015; Smyth & Sweetman, 2015; Moreno-Walton & Koenig, 2016) and in Japanese society in general (Steel, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2021).

I was once interviewing a coastal district leader at the meeting place (*shūkaijo*) of a temporary house. The interviewee was a man in his 60s, like the other district leaders. After the interview that had covered, for instance, the concerns over the future prospects of the administrative district and its community, we encountered four women in their 70s in the meeting place's other room. The women were sitting around a table, sipping tea and enjoying snacks such as the pickled vegetables they had prepared for sharing. They invited us to sit down for a moment, offered the foods and tea and told how they had the habit of meeting regularly for afternoon tea to socialize together. The ladies also talked about their handcraft hobby, and one of them asked us to wait for a moment, rushed away and returned shortly to hand me few brooches she had made. This apparent contrast between the idle and lively chatter of the ladies and the formal role of the worried district leader accentuated the opportunities for socializing offered by activities such as cooking or doing handicrafts.

Many locals perceived community and recovery as something realized "while eating, playing, doing things together" (*tabenagara, asobinagara, shinagara)*. Tamura-sensei, a man teaching a soba noodle workshop in the temporary housing, had noted this and remarked that *"the sorrows go away for a moment when eating together"* and continued that "women tend to think about food." Honda-san, a female workshop participant, said that the majority of the participants in the soba workshop and similar activities were women who often explained the absence of men by saying that they were "sleeping" at home. This was interpreted as signaling the men's seclusion and depressed mood. Thus, in contrast to the men whose role and value in society is largely defined by work (Cook, 2016; Kawano, 2017), women in post-disaster Yamamoto were able to draw on their daily practices such as cooking or handicrafts that were embedded in their gender role that was traditionally associated with household maintenance and motherhood (Imamura, 2010) and transform these into collective activities that enhanced their social connections (Posio, 2021).

These social connections in the gendered practices became experienced if not as a clearly definable community, then at least as a heightened attention to the feelings of togetherness that the connections provided in these social practices. The gendered power divisions in reconstruction politics and community building has been addressed in this research mainly through discussing the demographic features of, for example, the *machizukuri* participants. It is noteworthy, however, that women in Japan are not apolitical as such, but these kinds of gendered practices or intentionally adopted gender roles can also serve as a forum for women's political lives when they navigate in the otherwise strongly male-dominated political structure (LeBlanc, 1999, 2011).

Shibata-san, the founder of a community gathering place in Hanagama, explained the relation of interaction and performing activities. She had remarked,

how for example the handicraft workshops and other activities eased and further created communication that was regarded by many as an essential cornerstone of community:

> Because people here are ordinary farmers, emotional care is done by gathering everyone together in a meeting place. So, communication, right? It is gathering together without using money. Gathering, like this, people who want to communicate gather, they eat, to communicate… Where-ever you go, you can buy things. Regarding mental well-being, nonetheless, if there is not communication between people, no bonds between people, one cannot do emotional care. It is not a thing, right? That is why people chat here while doing various kind of handicrafts. When doing so, the expressions of their faces are gradually turning brighter [...] Around here, the public assembly hall, the town's assembly hall was washed away in the tsunami, so now, around here, there is no [official assembly hall]. So, for a gathering place, we started to use this vacant house for everybody to communicate here in this place.

According to Shibata-san, this facilitation of communication was observed as intensifying socialization in the district, for example, in the form of increased greetings in daily life. The participants in other activities also emphasized communication and creation of social relations while performing physical activities. These activities came to respond to and create opportunities to reinforce collective yearning by giving a sense of collective belonging and togetherness and relieving anxieties: In a Nordic walking group and weekly exercise club for the elderly that was organized regularly before the disaster, the members explained that there was no such sense of collective content before the disaster. The exercise clubs were also described as having turned increasingly into a forum for laugher and chatting after the disaster. For example, the preparations for the Kodanarie illumination event were also felt as important as the actual event itself because they created a sense of doing and participating in joint efforts together. The disaster arguably played a role in this re-signification of social practices, but these examples nevertheless highlight again how community is experienced or emerging "in action." This implies that collective yearning in social practices is an evolving process that anchors the idea of community strongly to face-to-face encounters, to the perceived importance of acting together and sense of togetherness it may offer.

Both community and the particular place thus obtain their form and meaning in social interaction in this process. Albeit the discursive construction of the importance of gathering places, it was the collective activities in those places that gave the locals implicitly or explicitly a sense of trust, safety and purpose to tackle insecurities. In other words, the practices or their perceived potential provided a feeling that they

participate in enacting the envisioned community. These practices were not gender exclusive, but women seemed to be more actively taking part in many of them and, hence, capitalizing on their gendered practices in the recovery. Meanwhile, the male leader of the local volunteer center described how the secluded and depressed men were able to regain their sense of usefulness if they were given small tasks, such as changing light bulbs or helping in small-scale renovation. This, again, reflects the gendered role division in which men's roles were largely defined by their functionality and contributions to the society (Cook, 2016; Kawano, 2017). However, not all men were passive: some men, such as Kaneko-san, had also found a way to contribute to the community by initiating and organizing activities.

Communication and mobility also had an instrumental value in disaster prevention (*bōsai*) practice that sought to respond to the yearning for a sense of security especially at the coast. Japan has a longstanding practice of disaster preparedness and rescue activities organized by neighborhood associations that are also strongly encouraged by the local governments (Bajek *et al.*, 2008). However, in post-disaster Yamamoto, Doyōbinokai, for example, was active in arranging independent *bōsai* activities that arose primarily from the criticism of the official reconstruction and the insecurities felt at the coast. Women have been mobilized in the times of crisis in Japan, and femininity has been associated with prevention activities (Koikari, 2013, 2020, pp. 2–6). This "soft side" of prevention in the form of social relations and communication became increasingly valued as the foundation for *bōsai* in general in post-disaster Yamamoto.

Chapter 6 described how Doyōbinokai was organizing a coastal disaster prevention survey conducted under a slogan of "*machizukuri* for safety and peace of mind" (*anzen, anshinna machizukuri*) for "the reconstruction of the coastal road (*Hamadōri*)" at the time of my fieldwork (Doyōbinokai, 2015, p. 2). The group planned to have questions relating to evacuation for the survey because, according to Kaneko-san, that was one of the pressing concerns of the coastal residents. The proposed survey included questions such as, "Would you run in case of a disaster similar to 3.11," "How would you escape?," "What do you feel about living in a disaster danger zone?" and "Are there people needing help in your neighborhood?" Kaneko-san, who was deeply touched by people's misery and sorrow after the disaster, argued that the foundation for a sense of security in the community was communication that created social ties and increased awareness about vulnerable neighbors unable to escape:

> In my case and also in 3.11, communication is the foundation for disaster prevention awareness, community and the most important thing when thinking about this area and for community building. [...] In this area, a car is indispensable to escape from tsunami. So, walking is not an option here. [...]

Therefore, if people do not communicate, do not understand what is his or her condition, in the case of emergency such as 3.11, I cannot provide help in evacuation.

However, while having initiated and participated in various activities in Hanagama, Kaneko-san had widened his perspective of disaster prevention and the role of communication as the key for sense of security. He perceived communication as a way to realize community in which people know each other and can watch over each other, especially amid the insecurities of elderly people's wellbeing:

Well, creating that sort of communication is to want to do community building around here, because there is not much chatting or that sort of things. So, increasing the sense of community is the goal, within which lies disaster prevention. [...] But what is disaster prevention? It is not only about earthquake or tsunami. It is also about if somebody falls ill, needing an ambulance and cannot do anything. [It is about] if I do not see [the neighbor] in three or four days, I'll see how the neighbor is. That is also disaster prevention.

Communication was accordingly considered the main means of realizing this yearned for community that is characterized by a sense of belonging and security. The gathering places thus functioned as hubs for this communication and collective yearning, but they were also yearned for. Men and women alike expressed a yearning for communication, although its realization varied.

However, the enacting and envisioning of security and the yearned-for community do not always meet. This highlights how community as a social reality is multilayered both temporally and spatially. For example, the yearning for a sense of community based on opportunities for encounters contributed to extending the idea of community beyond the district boundaries to a wider, more public idea of the aspired community. This is the case with the idea of the *hama* community (chapter 6) with its several gathering places, described at the beginning of this chapter. Many such places advertised themselves as being open to everyone, although the mantra "there are no places to gather, there are no places to chat" reflected a strong perceived lack of such places. Matsuo-san, who runs a community center in Hanagama, sought to explain this contradiction by remarking that "many still feel that individuals are doing activities for their own limited neighborhoods. That has created a feeling that the whole area is not unified." However, Matsuo-san also joined the yearning for a coastal solidarity: He was critical of town reconstruction policies and was a frequent participant in community events at Fumonji Temple, a central location for enacting and envisioning the *hama* community as the site for Doyōbinokai's meetings.

Hence, despite the widening of the envisioned, longed-for community, many communities in practice were enacted largely based on pre-tsunami socio-spatial relations. The accessibility from home, preferably by foot, was a characteristic of the discourse about gathering places, although it referred more to a sense of place and perceived socio-spatial conceptualizations of community than to mere geographical proximity. This also reveals how the past, present and envisioned future are constituting multidimensional and overlapping aspired communities in the collective yearning for a sense of belonging and security. Thus, the experienced and felt community at the intersection of yearning and pursuing amid social, spatial and temporal reorientation can be ambiguous (cf. Amit, 2010), varying, conflicting and even contradictory, depending on the timespaces of activities and practices it is interpreted from. This redirects the attention to place as both a material and social site that functions as a hub for channeling, symbolizing and constructing feelings of belonging and security. As such, places are connected to collective yearning based on temporal dimensions of the re-evaluated past and a redefined desired future in place. For many, these pre-tsunami socio-spatial communities were connected to particular locations that now served as symbolical places for enacting a longed-for nostalgic community.

8.1.3   There are places we remember

In the midst of prolonged reconstruction, Yamamoto's locals thus sought ways to reconcile their feeling of temporal and spatial disorientation while yearning to maintain, renew or establish new social relations that would give them a sense of belonging. In that process, many locals still relied on pre-tsunami Yamamoto as a mental map as their socio-spatial navigational framework for understanding social relations: "He's a neighbor of Watanabe-san, who used to live on the mountain-side near the old station." Furthermore, chapter 7 discussed that the administrative district forms an important unit of the community and its expected structure. This social identification was reflected in the locals' self-introductions in which they frequently articulated their district of residence, past and present, even four years after the disaster: "I'm X-san from Y-district/temporary housing, originally from Z-district." These expressions functioned as discursive probes in social situations to inquire if there were anyone relatable present. As such, these introductions in themselves were a re-enactment of the speaker's longed-for district-based communities in practice.

This yearning to reconnect was often characterized by nostalgization of the lost district community. For example, the pre-disaster Kasano District community was described as safe and full of mutual trust by both the district leader and the priestess of the district's Yaegaki Shrine, who had regularly performed Shintō rituals in the

district's households: "Everybody knew each other, and nobody worried about locking their doors." These kinds of nostalgic community recollections and reconnecting with the former neighbors were a collective resource for a sense of security for many people, because it offered a feeling of continuity in the face of the felt social and spatial dispersion. This also shows how the reinterpretation of the past in a lost location may reinforce or even create a new collective identity for those connected to that particular place (Milligan, 2003). However, nostalgization also highlights how reinterpretation of the past directs yearning for a future community.

Therefore, aspiring and, here, yearning especially do not imply newness or transformation, but it can also be directed to longing for a return to the past in the future. The town or the coast evoked the feelings of a nostalgic past and belonging for many and this attachment was reflected in the references to them as the heart's hometown (*kokoro no furusato*). In the interviews, the people from the now uninhabited Disaster Hazard Zone (DHZ) 1 especially recalled the pre-disaster environment, the activities by the sea, the nature of the coast or the feeling of being used to having "mountains on the left and sea on the right." Many people regretted how "the places of their memories are now gone." Their feeling of sadness related not only to the loss of place but also to the impossibility of reliving the social activities in them.

Financial reasons were a motive to stay in Yamamoto for many people, but some research participants used a *furusato* narrative to describe their attachment to place when recalling their reasons for staying in the town: The water in the hometown was better, the town had a lovely natural environment and scenery and, most importantly, they felt they belonged to their place-based communities. These narratives about landscape and the town are not merely verbal descriptions of them but are in themselves the very experience of the locals being in *furusato* based on their practical engagements in and with it (Santos Alexandre, 2019). In contrast, an often-used narrative explaining why some had decided to leave the town relied on similar reasoning: The town's transformation after the disaster and its reconstruction was said to have been too drastic for these residents, and "Yamamoto was not anymore the town they used to know." This sense of loss, accompanied with the frustration caused by reconstruction delays, was interpreted as having caused them to rebuild their lives elsewhere.

The spatial and social aspects of a sense of belonging in a rural community was often contrasted with experiences of living in an urban setting either by the interviewees themselves or through stories about friends who had moved away. For example, Nishioka-san, a young local staff member of the Yamamoto Reconstruction Station, was born in Sakamoto and lived in Sendai at the time of the disaster. He returned to his hometown after the disaster, was surprised by the changes in Sakamoto area and started helping the local administration with *machizukuri*

(community building), which then became his job. He compared his experience of living in Sendai to living in Yamamoto: In an apartment in Sendai, he did not know the neighbors, there were no connections between the people (*hito no tsunagari*), and he felt lonely. At first, he thought that he would not return to Yamamoto, but in the end, the sense of place, the social connectedness and security that he felt there were more important for him than urban services. By participating in *machizukuri*, he wants to restore the original Sakamoto (*moto no Sakamoto o modosu*) and its socio-spatial atmosphere. Affective yearning and action-oriented pursuing consequently go hand in hand. For some, this yearning for the past meant a capability of physically returning to particular places associated with the pre-disaster communities in order to overcome the social disorientation caused by the disaster. Furthermore, seeking to realize yearnings by returning to particular places is in itself an enacting and envisioning of community.

8.1.4   Getting back to where we once belonged

A lonely, simple red *torii* gate surrounded by sparse vegetation stands alone on the desolated coastal side of Hamadōri in Kasano District, 550 meters from the coast. It is the re-erected gate of the Yaegaki Shrine that was fully destroyed in the tsunami (figure 12). I came across several such places that symbolized the scattered communities for the locals especially in heavily damaged districts. Places are argued to create continuity by forming bridges to the past (Manzo, 2005). I suggest, however, that this bridge continues into the future when many of these symbolic places serve not only as a site for re-enactment of the past community but for enacting and envisioning the yearned-for future community (cf. Boret & Shibayama, 2018, p. 61). This collective yearning through and in these places, thus, simultaneously constituted a feeling of community and belonging for many people as it redefined the sense of the particular place. Yaegaki Shrine was one of these places: Many others were Shintō shrines or Buddhist temples and graveyards that are perceived as organizers of social realities in Japan and as socio-spatial centers of community (Nelson, 2000; Hiroi, 2008, p.58; Rots, 2017). Collective yearning thus takes shape here in relation to religious practices, such as ancestor worship and shrine visiting.

Figure 12   Yaegaki Shrine, spring 2015.

The Yaegaki Shrine has a long history of several hundred years; it has faced many tsunamis during this time. Now, once again, the shrine was to be rebuilt to the original site in DHZ 1[29] according to the shrine parishioners' wishes. Having passed the *torii* gate a few times before when cycling in Hamadōri, I once entered it to meet the priestess of the shrine, who welcomed me to a temporary construction site barracks located on the shrine's land. In addition to the *torii* gate, a place to wash one's hands and a small altar stood in the yard, waiting for the rebuilding project to take shape. The physical form of the shrine, however, is only the material manifestation of the site's significance for the Kasano community, which the priestess's narrative painted so vividly. The priestess told how after the tsunami, she was surprised by the former residents' eagerness to initiate the rebuilding of the shrine, to restart the traditional community festivals, and to visit the desolated grounds of the shrine that they now viewed as physical evidence of their connections with and continuity of their scattered pre-disaster communities:

> Everybody had lost their houses but wanted to have a summer festival! Amazing!
> I was surprised. That kind of conviction: I couldn't believe it. [...] I thought that

[29]   The priestess explained that rebuilding the shrine was allowed as long as it did not have any part serving as a residential building.

they would want the [fully destroyed] shrine to be rebuilt on higher ground. But, personally, I didn't want to depart from here [the shrine's current location]. Many visitors to the shrine have asked what will happen to it, but my thoughts on the matter weren't clear yet. "What would be good?" I asked. "The shrine should be left here," they answered. "Why?" I asked. "This is an area where new houses can't be built, so nobody can return here," they replied. "But our ancestors lived here. We ourselves lived here. We can't come back, and we're living in other places, but this place creates nostalgia. This is a place to visit. It would be as if one's roots disappeared. It's really sad." So, as proof of the life that was here, there's a wish to have the shrine and the temple here, too.

Takizawa (2019), who has included Yaegaki in his analysis of resilience and local festivals, argues that the swift reconstruction indicated that residents of the scattered Kasano community had a strong sense of connection to the past community (Takizawa, 2019, p.49). However, as I have argued here, the past should not be taken as given, but emphasis should be put on how this "past" is understood and re-evaluated in the post-disaster period and how it unfolds in different practices directed towards desired futures. In this light, the rebuilt shrine is an embodiment not of the past, but of the yearned-for future community: It is based on a reinterpretation of the past's nostalgic social relations that motivated the shrine reconstruction, which in turn further reinforced a sense of continuity and belonging. Many interviewees drew from a generational thread of social connections formed by their ancestors in their narrations of their community ties and sense of belonging. Kubo-san, vice-leader of the now uninhabited Iso District, summarizes this intensified significance of the graveyards that are a symbol in Japan of the intergenerational continuity of place and community (Reader, 1991; Tanaka, 2007):

In the disaster, everything was washed away. What remained was the graveyard. If the graveyard had been washed away, then our true village elders would have been as well. [...] Travelers are different because they have a place to go. They can build or rent a place anywhere, and they have another place to return to. The village elders don't have a place to return to. [...] The graveyard is the place where everyone ultimately goes, meaning that, generally speaking, it's gathering the soul of Iso's community and is the community's center.

Thus, post-disaster places continue to exist with redefined future potential (Milligan, 1998): For example, the people of Iso still gather in the graveyard for tomb sweeping and other occasions. Shrines that organize community festivals, *matsuri,* which have had a significant role in the recovery of Tohoku communities, have also come to serve as touristic attractions (Sakata, 2014; Lahournat, 2016;

Toshiaki, 2016; Kaneko, 2020; Littlejohn, 2020; Adachi, 2021). Takizawa (2019) discusses the transformed significance of festivals: The festivals were part of the peoples' everyday lives in the pre-disaster period. Now these events have become symbols of this pre-disaster daily life (Takizawa, 2019, p. 52) and, as such, create a sense of security, continuity and belonging against the clearly felt "…sense of danger that no remnant of the old villages will remain if the festivals are not revived" (Takizawa, 2019, p. 49).

Figure 13   Dontosai festival at rebuilt Aosu Inari Shrine in Hanagama.

In that sense, the mutually constitutive relationship of enacted and envisioned place and social interaction has fostered a nostalgic community geared toward establishing future community ties. This shows how the experienced intertwined temporality and spatiality, or timespace (Schatzki, 2009, 2010), of the practices of shrine visiting and matsuri as well as the shrine as place came to be refined for striving towards the yearned-for community. As the priestess of Yaegaki shrine puts it, the shrine offers a place for chatting, meeting and laughter, and during "the summer festival everyone gathered and for those three hours it really felt like having a district again." Another rebuilt shrine, Aosu Inari Shrine in Hanagama, held the first *dontosai* festival[30] since the disaster in January 2015 (figure 13). The handful of

[30]   A yearly festival in Miyagi Prefecture Shrines on January 14 for burning the New Year's decorations in a bonfire as a prayer for health and good fortune for the coming year.

participants, including one leader and some residents of neighboring coastal districts, of this small scale *dontosai* also expressed the delight at having the habitual festival restarted to gather people from the coast to communicate and bond. The festival was connected to the enactment of the shared notion of coastal *hama* community (chapter 6) also because of the shrine's central location at the Hanagama coast and its close connections with active coastal residents.

The festival examples highlight how community was experienced by the locals not only as an abstract idea or a memory but also as an enactment based essentially on face-to-face interactions in the material environment. According to the chief monk of the Fumonji Temple that also held a monthly community café, these places and events create a sense of belonging and socio-spatial continuity. They do this by providing an opportunity and a reason for current and displaced residents to reconnect with the places and each other because the pre-disaster material environment for social encounters was destroyed:

> People who lived here before are not coming back, because they don't have a reason to. There's no place [to come back to]. People live alone in the temporary housing, and stress and sadness accumulate. To avoid that, a reason to come out and a place are important. The first summer after the disaster, there was a memorial service. Locals gathered here and chatted. Everyone has been scattered. They had memories from here, but there hadn't been opportunities to meet.

However, this is not to say that establishing temporal continuity by reinterpreting the pre-disaster past is automatically a source of a sense of security and belonging. In the course of reorientation, discontinuity may also be emphasized: Some locals contrasted the perceived lack of pre-disaster social connectedness with the experienced post-disaster social cohesion. Taguchi-san, a member of the *machizukuri* council and a community non-profit group founder, perceived the disruption by disaster as an opportunity to break free of and renew the rigid and narrow place-based, pre-disaster structures of social relations:

> There are also people who do not want to return to pre-disaster community. Why is that? Until today, too much of the strengthening of the community relations has based on where one lives. Relations have of course been formed, but they have been confined. So, that is why this community should be renewed. *Furusato*, *furusato*, it is good, but it is also good that human relations change.

The socially active Fujita couple who had moved to the Shinyamashita compact city after the tsunami destroyed their house in Hanagama District where they had

resided for 14 years also remarked on the discontinuity. They compared the pre-disaster community relations to their post-disaster counterpart and evaluated the first as limited and weak:

> Mrs. Fujita: Now community is better than before, isn't it?

> Mr. Fujita: Yes. Before it was like a small fraction [of the present community in which people interacted]. About one's designated section of the district, occasionally there were some gatherings just to chat. But, generally, there weren't such kinds of activities.

Abe-san, a founder of yet another community center in Hanagama, also compared the past and the present:

> In fact, before the disaster there were not so intimate and close friends. The level of greetings, good morning, goodbye and so on has grown, now I could also talk to Iwasa-san after the disaster.

This remark connects to the experienced and redefined *hama* community that is based on shared experiences of the tsunami and an intensified social connectedness (chapter 6). However, any of these past experiences and their interpretations alone were insufficient for providing a sense of community in the long term: The idealized post-disaster social cohesion, the nostalgic pre-disaster community and the gradually built, totally new social relations needed to be maintained through a continuous process of enacting and envisioning in relation to the lived environment. This task was particularly acute in the new compact city areas.

8.2   Compact insecurities

The dynamics of the spatial experience and the collective yearning for a sense of belonging and security were particularly strongly present in the new compact city areas. In addition to highlighting the connection between community and spatiality, yearning brought forward the dimensions of power in collective aspiring when it created normative expectations of the proper enactment of community in the new areas that needed to "start from zero" (*zero kara sutāto*). Chapter 6 discussed that security was realized in practice in the reconstruction process primarily based on the logic of anticipating risks in the uncertain future in the form of tsunami probability calculations or inundation zone predictions. This is legitimized by the term *anzen*, understood as objective and scientific security or safety (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015; Walravens, 2017). However, Taguchi-san, a member of the *machizukuri* council and

a community non-profit group founder, stressed that "the most important thing is to be able to live with peace of mind *(anshin ni kurashiteiru)*." The term *anshin*, peace of mind, in Japanese means the felt, subjective side of security (Sternsdorff-Cisterna, 2015; Walravens, 2017), which I refer to here as the sense of security. Thus, the term *anshin* illustrates the kaleidoscope of the experienced, felt and embodied side of security embedded in the subjective, affective and bodily states produced by, and productive of, security in the micro level social life and in everyday practice (Glück & Low, 2017).

The compact city policies caused criticism over the security they represented (chapter 6). Meanwhile, in these seemingly safe and materially satisfying areas, the current and future residents processed security concerns over the mixing of residents from different districts (chapter 7) and over the drastic transformation of the physical environment from a rural to an urban-style living environment. These further accentuated the need for a reorientation of socio-spatial relations. The relocating locals' primary priority was to have a permanent home that gave them a sense of security and stability after a liminal period spent in temporary housing. Previous chapters discussed that the compact cities were designed to offer housing in areas depicted as safe, especially in terms of disaster risks. However, the sense of security is provided not just by a promise or a hope of a safe home; it is also constructed in a constant temporal orientation in relation to the desired future and the present moment. For example, preliminary knowledge about one's future residence served as a reference point for the future that facilitated overcoming the uncertainties over one's future trajectories. However, it was also a start for further anxieties and aspirations in the new communities.

Concerning the compact city areas, reorienting to the future was done not only individually and in informal settings but also formally and collectively in the context of *machizukuri* practice. The *machizukuri* council activities and the *machizukuri* general assemblies were the most significant channels for the town to communicate the areas' advancement to the residents. Many future residents participating in the general assemblies were eager to know the schedule for the compact city projects. The participants raised their hands and bombarded the town officials with questions: When can people start to move into public housing? When will the plots and their prices be confirmed? When can the construction of the privately built houses start? Especially for those whose place of residence was not decided yet, the sense of security was sought from temporal reorientation regarding when and how their tangible, material future in the new areas would start.

Thus, the evacuees were yearning for a sense of security provided by the knowledge of their future trajectories, and the decision on where they would settle was relieving. This had also motivated Yokota-san and his wife when they had decided to relocate independently to the mountainside because they did not want to

wait for the town's decisions on compact cities: "When the plot was decided, I had a peace of mind (*Tochi ga kimatte, anshin shimashita*)." Furthermore, the concrete house construction plans gave many people a sense of regaining their future after a prolonged liminal period that had created anxieties, uncertainties and frustration (Gagné, 2020a). Nakajima-san, whose family was about to commence building in Shinyamashita, told how she felt "relieved when it was possible to plan the positioning of the windows and materials of the new home." Therefore, after people knew where to place themselves and approximately when, a more tangible and clearer yearning for place, community and belonging could start.

However, yearnings for a sense of security arose not only from the anxieties about *where* and *when* to settle but also of *how* to settle in the new social and material environments. In Yamamoto, this material environment was largely pre-determined in the planning process (chapter 7), and the residents sought to come in terms with its spatiality. Thus, relocation can be more than a change of address for many people: It may be a more profound experience of disruption to their sense of self and space as well as the rearrangement of affects and social relationships connected to that place (Barrios, 2017a, p. 207). And for some, even the new address itself can prove to be a source of insecurity: Chapter 7 described that the district's organization was regarded as the one crucial task for the *machizukuri* councils. The *machizukuri* council frequently discussed the problems and anxieties relating to the temporary address while waiting for official decisions on establishing the districts in the Shinyamashita area: The address was considered too long, too bothersome to write, and it did not give a clear idea about the location of someone's home in relation to others'. This confusion reflected the yearning to be clearly located somewhere and to find a place to identify oneself with that is essentially connected to establishing one's place within the others' socio-spatial understanding.

The most immediate transformation for the new residents was their material environment, which was also reflected in their yearning for community. The *Machizukuri* councils illustrated both the material and social insecurities relating to the transformation of the material environment in their newsletter:

In addition to the main house, there were a barn and a garage and a spacious garden and fields in the pre-disaster residences. Having a good relationship with one's neighbors, it was possible to live both mentally and physically at ease, because there was a distance to the neighboring houses. In contrast, when you move to the new urban area, the way you live changes significantly. What is

one's lifestyle in premises with an average of 100 *tsubo*[31]? What makes you feel uneasy about relocating?" (Shinsakamoto machizukuri council, 2014, p. 2)

The compact cities thus differed dramatically from the rural residences that typically consist of large houses with gardens, often with fields of vegetables, too (figure 14). Gardening and work in the fields were regarded as sites for everyday interaction and naturally occurring community ties in pre-disaster Yamamoto. In contrast, farming is impossible in the compact cities, and gardening opportunities are limited in the gravel-coated yards of the prefabricated houses lined side by side. Many residents there felt socially distant from their still-unknown neighbors despite the apparent closeness to neighbors in the densely populated, urban-styled areas. In response, for example trash collection points and parks became regarded and

Figure 14   "An image of the change in the living style" in Shinsakamoto newsletter no 4, 2014.

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[31]   Approximately 331m^2.

promoted as potential sites for encounters that they hoped would gradually fortify community ties. Thus, as already discussed in relation to symbolic locations and gathering places in coastal areas, sense of place, mobility and security in place are both shaped by and producing the material environment (Low, 2001, 2016; Glück & Low, 2017).

8.2.1 "When I see a map with names, I will have *anshin*"

One type of *machizukuri* event I participated in a few times in Shinyamashita and Shinsakamoto and once in the Miyagi hospital area was a social gathering (*kondankai*) for the current and future residents in each compact city organized as a part of a formal reconstruction *machizukuri* practice. When the participants entered the venue, they were asked to write their name on a nametag, which they wore during the meeting, and to mark, if willing, their names on a spot on a large map indicating their future residence (figure 15).

Figure 15   Residents looking at the map of the Shinsakamoto compact city at a *machizukuri kondankai* meeting.

The program had first a formal part with the town and the *machizukuri* representatives introducing the stages of the construction process by giving a speech decorated with uplifting encouragements of "*let's make a new community*!" This building of community spirit was indeed regarded as necessary: People had no possibility to choose their neighbors because the relocation was based on individual, not collective, applications. The final allotment of both the public housing rentals and the slots for privately built houses was made by lottery in the name of fairness,

although the socially fracturing effects of this method were already observed in Kobe after the 1995 earthquake (Maly & Shiozaki, 2012). Thus, the objective of the meetings was not only to share updates on the reconstruction but also to make people socialize with their future neighbors. People were assigned to sit in groups for this purpose. In one meeting, a group quiz about knowledge of Yamamoto served as an ice breaker; a bingo game was organized in another for that purpose. Of course, there were always tea and snacks that were hoped to ease interaction.

Relocation involves a redefinition of trust and privacy that greatly affect the yearning for a sense of security and how people strive together to achieve it. The earlier quote from the Shinsakamoto *machizukuri* council's newsletter indicates that the insecurities about the transformation of people's living environment is not only about the change in their style of living or the ways they are able to practice social interactions; it is also about the anxieties of maintaining privacy and appropriate social and physical distances. It was the tension between these two that needed to be negotiated in the course of collective aspiring.

The concern about losing privacy when living in houses located close to each other was raised both in the *machizukuri* meetings and also in newsletters that sought to communicate to the readers how privacy was to be guaranteed in the new environment (figure 16). Finding a balance between maintaining privacy and knowing their neighbors seems also to reflect the lessons learned from the reconstruction of Kobe after the 1995 earthquake: The threats of social seclusion and *kodokushi* (solitary deaths)[32] created by fragmentation of communities and the lack of social contacts. According to Nozawa (2015), "management of solitude and indifference is at stake in everyday Japanese life" (Nozawa, 2015, p. 377). Some attempts to respond to the social problems have been, for example, implementation of Safe Community (*Sēfukomyuniti*) Campaigns promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO) that have also sought to engage residents in building safety in their neighborhoods beyond the disaster context in Japan. The advanced issues in these initiatives originally aimed to reduce injuries ranging from crime, suicide and disaster prevention and to increase the safety of children and the disabled (Shiraishi, 2014; Yamazaki & Mizumura, 2019).

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[32] A popular term that refers to old people, typically men, who die alone with nobody noticing their death. The term has been used in the media since the 70s, but it became more widely used after the solitary deaths that happened due to unsuccessful community reconstruction policies that increased loneliness and fractured social connections after the 1995 Kobe earthquake (Nozawa, 2015; Tiefenbach & Kohlbacher, 2017).
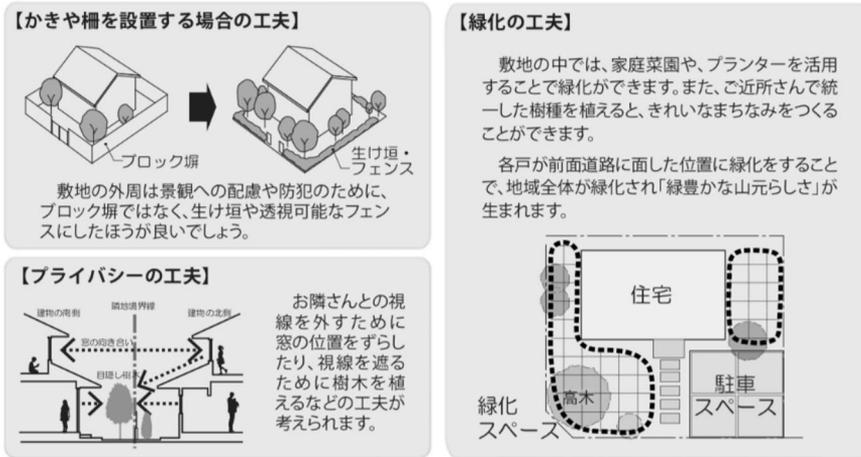
Figure 16　"3. Proposing a 'Townscape planning scheme' that makes everybody's desires to take shape." Lower left corner, "privacy scheme." (Shinsakamoto machizukuri council, 2014, p. 2)

Insecurities, such as the fear of *kodokushi,* have contributed to a reimagination and idealization of sociality based on phatic interaction. This refers to communication in the form of greetings without any particular substance that aim, above all, to establish and maintain the connections between people. These idealized connections are expressed through terms such as *fureai* (connectedness, mutual exchange), *kizuna* (human bonds) and *tsunagari* (connections). Nozawa (2015) argues that sociality based on this phatic connectedness has become at once a deep desire yet a source of anxiety in Japanese society when insecurities arise from not having or from having too much of the maintained connectedness. Furthermore, its allure has been used as a semiotic-political intervention in various efforts to prevent loneliness and *kodokushi* (Nozawa, 2015).

A similar trend of an idealized sociality of phatic connectedness was also observable in Yamamoto when the responsibility of the community to provide a social support network was stressed by many. The perceived importance of gathering places to realize this was also prominent in the compact cities. The Shinsakamoto *machizukuri* council was preoccupied with planning and establishing a tea salon for the residents of the Sakamoto area at the time of the fieldwork to facilitate community building in general and to avoid social seclusion in particular. Aoki-san, the council chair, explained the function of this gathering place:

There is the risk of solitary death and social withdrawal. If people withdraw, we don't know how that person is doing. In gathering places, we'll know that, ah, this person hasn't come for a few days. We get the information. This is why

these kinds of places are important. There are no places to go out for these people moving here [to the new areas] and neighbors are people they don't know. [The tea salon] is for preventing people shutting themselves into their houses.

However, the insecurities created by the felt threat of social seclusion functioned in two ways that illustrate the relational and multilayered character of community as social reality. Chapter 6 discussed that security is perceived here as a relational, contextual and value-laden social construction that relates to defining what is felt valuable to be secured from what. This process involves always situational and relational social constructions of exclusion and inclusion (Stern, 2006; Boholm & Corvellec, 2011) that build on collective ideas of how to envision and enact the yearned community. These constructs can be multilayered, situational or even conflicting: On the one hand, those who were potentially withdrawing from the community needed to be protected *from* the dangers of social seclusion and solidary death. On the other hand, insecurities arose from positioning those secluding *as* a threat that hampered the sense of security in the community, thus creating a problem that required a response.

Bauman (2001) contends that "gaining community, if it happens, would soon mean missing freedom" (Bauman, 2001, p. 4). This signals that aspired communities can be perceived as also being constructed through social norms and expectations of behavior that limit individual freedom. Thus, despite the mutually constitutive relation of a sense of community and security, they both have an aspect of power embedded in them. This is featured not only in reconstruction policies and spatial planning, which in Japan's case have often been developed in a top–down fashion (Evans, 2002), but also in the inter-community dynamics of constructing norms and trust that were the essential building blocks of the sense of security and community for the Yamamoto locals.

Therefore, the feeling of insecurity and yearning for a sense of security does not produce exclusion only in a physical sense (Low, 2001, 2011); it can position people in the same space in a relative, socially excluded sphere of risk or threat. This creates normative expectations for these withdrawing residents to participate in the socially sanctioned ways to be included in the community and to contribute to the generation of a sense of security. As noted by Gordon (2012), especially in this kind of situations of entering or exiting community these expectations and norms become visible and tangible (Gordon, 2012). Furthermore, these normative expectations of how to enact community shaped the material reality: the yearning for both privacy and social connectedness motivated the establishment of gathering places and vice-versa. Furthermore, the participants in the *machizukuri* meetings often insisted that particularly the social conduct related to the gathering place was essential: The new residents in the area, regardless of their individual interests, were expected to "show

their face" or face their neighbors (*kao awaseru*) in the gathering places. This would guarantee "peace of mind by knowing neighbors' face (*kao o wakaru*)" for others and, thus, contribute to the collective sense of security.

The members in a Yamashita *machizukuri* council meeting once discussed a resident survey the town was about to conduct. They had already stressed the importance of, and their anxiety about, the establishment of the new administrational areas. The participants at this particular meeting pondered if it was possible to include a question about personal information and the future place of residence within the compact city area in the survey and then gather the information for all the residents. This would, of course, be voluntary yet highly encouraged. Community map making has been a strategy for advancing the safety of the living environment in Japan, but it has mainly focused on identifying concrete hazardous places in the area (Fukushima, 2006; Hira, 2007; Muranaka et al., 2013). However, in this case, a map containing the residents' information to be distributed to the incomers was suggested as one possible solution for the felt social insecurities.

Inoue-san, the leader of the provisional Shinyamashita area neighborhood association at the time, expressed his frustration over the town not agreeing to disclose any information about the residents of the area and complained how "one does not even know the faces of the people" (*kao o wakaranai*). He justified this complaint by referring to the uneasiness arising from not knowing one's neighbor and the inconvenient social concerns this might cause: "Seeing a neighbor's window open for many days and not knowing who was living in the house would make others worry if the neighbor was dead." Kinoshita-san, a fellow council member, agreed and articulated expectations of a proper time for self-introduction: "If there is no mutual interaction, it can take *even a week* to get to know who the neighbor is." Murata-san, sitting next to Kinoshita-san, concluded the map discussion by stating that "when I see a map with names, I will have a peace of mind (*anshin*)."

Therefore, as I have concluded elsewhere, disclosing their personal information in the survey or attaching their names to a big map of the compact city area available at the *machizukuri* meetings would signal the participants' willingness to identify themselves as a part of the socio-spatial network under construction. Those who refused to do this were not explicitly excluded from the community, but insecurities arose from the resulting blank spaces as "the islands of the unknown" (Posio, 2019b, p. 11) within the dominant version of the aspired community in the *machizukuri* practice and in the new compact cities. This raises the question of who are those privileged to define the normative and socially sanctioned expectations of the embodied, affective security and enactment of community.

This aspect of power also highlights the compelling nature of community. The active members of the *machizukuri* councils had a specific status to speak for the current and future residents of the area and to define these situational boundaries and

normative expectations. Without understating the actual problem of solitary deaths also happening in public housing in Tohoku (The Mainichi, 2019), passivity and seclusion were condemned as risky behavior creating insecurity and trouble for the surrounding community despite the personal preferences and motivations of the individual residents. Thus, expectations for a sense of belonging and security through participation in public spaces, combined with the legacy of the Kobe earthquake and its lonely deaths, resulted in double coding the insecurity related to social seclusion: The community integrity and trust is threatened because of such behavior, but the secluded person is also at risk of a lonely death and (presumed) loneliness.

8.3　Conclusion

I have explored community as a process in this chapter from the viewpoint of an affectively charged collective yearning. This yearning was connected to a longing for a sense of belonging and security in their future communities among the Yamamoto locals, especially at the coast and in the new compact cities. This yearning was fueled particularly by their present feelings of insecurity and anxiety about their drastically altered living environment. Places, both as envisioned ideals of gathering places and of particular locations, were in a central role in the collective yearning that was characterized by the discourse on mobility: In and out, to and from, return to and towards in time and place. On the one hand, people felt connected to the sense of community that these symbolic locations represent, such as rebuilt shrines and the graveyards spared in the tsunami. Such feelings accumulated and became enacted when the locals participated in community events and visited those places in their search for a sense of security in the form of continuity vis-à-vis the fear of losing their history.

On the other hand, the perceived importance of new gathering places for enhancing communication illustrated the mutually constitutive relation of interactions or joint bodily activities in shared spaces that further heightened yearning for a sense of belonging and togetherness (cf. Neal & Walters, 2008). These redefined existential temporal dimensions of the past, present and the future consequently come to be in social practices (Schatzki, 2009, 2010b) ranging from shrine visiting to neighborhood trash collection and disaster prevention. Therefore, even "returning to things as they were" (*moto ni modosu*) is not expressing a wish to go back but instead striving towards a future based on how the past was felt to be. This shows how, for example, the symbolic rebuilt locations, the community festivals or the washed-away objects returned to their owners ought not to be interpreted only from the perspective of the past and of memories (Nakamura, 2012; Mizoguchi, 2014; Toshiaki, 2016; Takizawa, 2019). Moreover, heightened attention

should also be paid to the role of these memorial objects and re-enactments of the past in the process of striving towards the desired futures.

However, ambiguities, contradictions or even conflicts prevailed in yearning: For example, the perceived lack of gathering places persisted despite the existence of several of them. Unknown neighbors were also simultaneously felt as both secured members of the community and as sources of insecurity. The discussion in this chapter supports the notion that community is a situational, dynamic process in which the affect of belonging is not individually nor automatically felt: Instead, it often comes in various forms, intensities and durations through actualized interactions (cf. Amit, 2010, 2015, 2020) and in relation to the material environment. Furthermore, the examples of ambiguity here showcase how several collective yearnings can co-exist and their contradictions can be materialized and enacted, for instance, as the establishment of the gathering places. I have sought to show throughout this thesis that collective aspiring can be used as a conceptual lens to understand the various efforts to intertwine these dynamic, versatile and multilayered ideas and feelings into community as a meaningful enacted and envisioned social reality. However, this social reality always contains an aspect of power. Thus, this chapter has underlined the necessity of paying attention to whose terms the yearned-for security, belonging and future is defined by, not only politically, but also through the normative expectations of the proper enacting and envisioning of the community.

The individual and collective recovery process of intertwining the disaster and the everyday (Hastrup, 2011) continues for an extensive, undefined period. Communication in shared spaces does not automatically produce community or collective recovery, let alone guarantee the individual emotional recovery whose surface this thesis only barely scratches. Matsuo-san's wife, who ran the community center next to Sensei's house with her husband, confided to me that "although there is laughter and chatting, the sadness accumulates inside, and the tears just do not come." This reminds us how the emotional experience of disaster, reconstruction and community in recovery is extremely multifaceted, personal and long durational. This encourages further exploration of the individually and collectively experienced, interpreted and felt community recovery as well as of the communities of recovery.

9   Conclusions

Kono Machi De

kirakira hikaru tanbo midori no jūtan
Shihōzan kara no kaze wa yasashii
natsukashii fūkei

hirogaru umi ni yume o kasaneta koro
omoi wa haruka tōku
katariatta tomotachi

Yamamotochō (koko) ni iruyo
Yamamotochō (konomachi) de aeruyo
donnani hanareteitemo kaeritai basho

konomachi de ikiteiru
konomachi de ikiteyuku
konomachi de mōichido arukihajimeyō

mimi o sumaseba nami no oto ga kikoeru
yūyake ga machi o someru
kawaranai fūkei

3 gatsu 11 nichi (anohi) taisetsuna mono o
nakusitakedo
wasurenai anatanokoto
wasurenai subete o

todokanu omoi
tsutaetai omoi
donnnatokimo kono machi wa atatakai basho

chikara o awase mirai e
Yamamoto de tomoni ikiyō

konomachi de ikiteiru
konomachi de ikiteyuku
konomachi de mōichido arukihajimeyō

konomachi de ikiteiru
konomachi de ikiteyuku
konomachi ga konomachi ga daisukidakara

In This Town

Rice paddy like a sparkling green carpet.
Gentle wind from Shihōzan.
The landscape that brings back memories.

I used to have dreams like an endless sea.
My thoughts take me very far away.
Friends with whom I enjoyed chatting.

I am at Yamamotochō (here).
We can meet at Yamamotochō (in this town).
A place to which I wish to return no matter how far it is.

I live in this town.
I will keep on living in this town.
Let's walk towards the future once again from this town.

I can hear the sound of waves if I listen carefully.
The town is taking on the glow of the sunset.
The landscape that has remained unchanged.

Although I lost my precious things on March 11th (that day),
I will not forget you.
I will remember everything.

My thoughts cannot reach you.
I want to tell you how I feel.
This town is a place that always feels warm.

Let's work together for the future.
Let's live together in Yamamotochō.

I live in this town.
I will keep on living in this town.
Let's walk towards the future once again in this town.

I live in this town.
I will keep on living in this town.
Because I love this town, this town.

I set out in this thesis to explore how can we understand how people come to experience, interpret and feel their particular social relations as communities in the constantly emerging world of numerous forms of sociality (Hastrup, 2004b; Amit, 2010, 2020) - communities that can be very real, tangible and compelling as an experienced social reality despite constant elusiveness of community in its idealized form as a safe haven of a sense of belonging, togetherness and security (Bauman, 2001; Brent, 2004; Blackshaw, 2010). The preceding lyrics are from a song *In This Town* (*Kono Machi De*) [33] by the song-making Team of Yamamoto Town (*Yamamotochō no uta o tsukuri tai*). It was composed after the Great East Japan Earthquake and the ensuing tsunami on March 11 in 2011 had hit Yamamoto, a small rural town in southern Miyagi Prefecture. The lyrics paint a picture of the Yamamoto community, one of the most prevalent of the multiple notions of community that I encountered during my ethnographic fieldwork in the town. The lyrics also reflect many central themes that appeared in this thesis: Feelings of loss and nostalgic past memories, the landscape and its change, social relations and sentiments associated with *furusato*, attachments to place and the devastating experience of the 3.11 disaster.

What is more, the song paints a picture of a shared journey towards the future when the lyrics voice wishes to continue living together in Yamamoto. They also encourage walking together to, and working together for, the future. These presented feelings of belonging and togetherness are not, however, merely memories of the past or utopian dreams of the future. The visions are based on a lived place and the spatial experience of a material environment as well as actual social encounters in the town. In short, the lyrics describe a reinterpretation of both the past and the desired future towards which the song calls people to strive together. More importantly, the song in itself is simultaneously an actualization of this aspiration and an act of aspiring together: These ideas, memories, hopes, wishes and desires come to be enacted in practice in the efforts of composing these temporal dimensions and feelings into words and tunes together with the band or when people gather to listen to the song or sing it together. The composing, playing, listening to and singing of this song, thus, open up and practice a particular kind of temporality and spatiality of the community of "this town" when conveying and reinforcing aspirations of a shared future.

This discussion of the song "In This Town" illustrates the perspective I have taken to community in this dissertation after I became bewildered by the numerous notions of community I encountered during my ethnographic fieldwork in Yamamoto for eight months in 2014–2015. I have not approached community as a

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[33] The song can be found on Youtube with a video portraying the nostalgic and the destroyed landscape: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12K6i7_12Mc

definition of a particular grouping; instead, I have treated community as an analytical working model to inquire into a process of interlinked forms of sociality in their various qualities, contexts, scales, duration, comprehensiveness, degree of formalization, mediation and, especially, their ambiguities and disjunctures (Amit, 2010, 2015, 2020). I referred to this usage of community with the phrase "community as a process." This approach is argued to be essential for reintegrating actualized social interactions into the community concept that is considered to have been turned into abstracted ideas or categorial identities (Amit & Rapport, 2002; Neal & Walters, 2008; Amit, 2010, 2020; Gordon, 2012). It also reflects the increased general interest in finding ways to combine the spheres of discursive/narrative and practice/experience (Hastrup, 2005b).

I drew from practice theory (Ortner, 2006; Moore & Sanders, 2014; Schatzki, 2016b; Reckwitz, 2017) and described community as a process of intertwined and mutually constitutive aspects of enacting and envisioning to analyze community simultaneously as an abstract, actualized, individual, structural, social and materially grounded process. Enacting refers here to actualized interaction in social practice defined as the organized, manifold array of human activities embedded in their material environments (Schatzki, 2002, pp. 70–87). Envisioning denotes the reflexive and discursive imagination essential for experiencing community as a social whole. This experience is confined within the performed practice and its materiality, making the parts and the whole mutually constitutive (Hastrup, 2004a). However, these descriptive concepts do not alone address the dynamic and evolving yet simultaneously static and enduring nature of community as a social reality.

I remember sitting in one of the first Doyōbinokai meetings that I participated in and scribbling this question in my notebook: "What keeps these people coming together every Saturday evening?" This group is an example of organized collective activity in a particular post-disaster context, yet their social relations and efforts to strive towards the community of their shared visions were reflected in their everyday life beyond these meetings. This fieldnote was a spark to pay heightened attention to the manifold relation of the future and the social life that had struck me in Yamamoto. Temporality was present not only when the locals' reminisced about their past community but also in their utterances and collective activities that sought to reorient to the future.

This process occurred in the face of the devastation, sorrow and insecurities caused by the disaster, its massive material and social rearrangements due to reconstruction and the looming threats of depopulation and aging. These efforts were most often directed towards the desired future and included ideas of collectivity, as in the song "In This Town": "Let's work together for the future - Let's walk towards the future once again in this town." This was accompanied by the locals' expressed need for their wants, fears and hopes to be heard, a desire that was also voiced

elsewhere in Tohoku (Littlejohn, 2017; Vainio, 2020b). These observations directed me to explore desired futures and collective aspiring and how these can contribute to social relations, imageries and actions and how shared desired futures come to be negotiated in social life.

Thus, what I have sought to contribute in this thesis to the debate on the community concept is to particularly emphasize the relevance of temporality and the future has remained an understudied dimension of social life Munn, 1992; Collins, 2008; Appadurai, 2013; Bryant & Knight, 2019. I have suggested that it is worthwhile to consider community as a process in terms of the experienced temporal dimensions and teleological character of social life that is embedded in its lived material environment. The core argument of this dissertation is that the future orientation of aspiring as a conceptual tool can enhance our understanding of how various emerging forms of sociality come to be interpreted, experienced and felt as a community. I have especially called in this thesis for a readjustment of the focus on the collective aspiring of desired futures to complement the notions of anticipated uncertain futures and imagined possible futures. Collective aspiring is considered here active in striving towards desired futures, rather than proactive like anticipation. This admittedly might sound like very common-sense reasoning – who would not be motivated by future objectives? However, this approach balances the approach perceive extensively avoidance, risks, insecurities, threats and dangers as constituents of social structures and identities (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983; Douglas, 1966, 1992; Weldes *et al.*, 1999b). To put it simply, through exploring the ways people want to seek together to realize their desired futures, we can study the various ways community is constructed, interpreted, experienced, felt, propagated, contested and imposed as affective, tangible and compelling lived social realities.

Thus, the temporal dimensions animate the notion of community, because the temporality of human activities is characterized by its inherent teleology: the striving *towards* the ends *from* the states of affairs that motivates, while the present is the acting itself (Schatzki, 2009, p.38). Here, temporality refers to existential temporality as dimensions of past-present-future that transpire in the activity itself. Temporality is inherently connected with spatiality as the lived, experienced material environment, and together they form an activity timespace that is regarded as a foundation for all social phenomena (Schatzki, 2009, 2010b).

I have drawn from the concept of future orientations suggested by Bryant and Knight (2019) to gain an ethnographic hold on the experience of temporality and the modes of relating to the future. Future orientations refer to the ways in which we people "continuously … orient ourselves to the indefinite teleologies of everyday life" (Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 16–19). This includes both the relationship between the future and actions and the act of feeling and imagining the future itself. Therefore, the ethnographic analysis in this thesis contributes to the less-studied

aspects of practice theory, namely, agency and subjective experience (Schatzki, 2017a). The analysis showed that a sense of agency and subjectivity were (re)gained in the course of, for example, participation in *machizukuri* or other resident activities as well as bodily activities, such as exercising. The analysis signals also the significance of sense of agency in facilitating future-oriented collective aspiring.

The ethnographic analysis in this thesis showed how collective aspiring took various forms in Yamamoto and contributed to the formation of a plethora of so-called aspired communities. It not only bound people together to envision and enact community, but it also led to temporally and spatially multilayered, even paradoxical, experiences of communities that were felt simultaneously lost and strengthened, unified and dispersed or secure and insecure. These ambiguities are argued to be central when analyzing community as a process (Amit, 2010, 2015, 2020; Amit *et al.*, 2015). This also underlines how there is no singular, unified and clearly bounded "local community" that is recovering or can be reconstructed (cf. Barrios, 2014). Instead, the communities of recovery are constructed in the constant reinterpretation of social, temporal and spatial experience when striving towards desired futures that the various actors seek to define.

Based on these multiple conceptualizations, experiences and feelings of the aspired communities brought forward in this thesis, I have discussed collective aspiring from the perspectives of action-oriented pursuing, affectively charged yearning and aspirations as objectives. The analysis showed how communities of recovery in Yamamoto were intertwined with the desired futures of the Japanese national community when reconstruction in peripheralized rural Tohoku region was shaped by the tension between the aspirations of development and preservation. Similar dynamics were present in Yamamoto, where the local government's development aspirations and visions for a secure future and town community conflicted with the residents' immediate recovery experiences, desired futures and aspirations for security. Thus, the envisioned prosperous future of Japan and the Yamamoto town community did not generate unity. It had also a divisive effect when this offered future felt unfamiliar to the locals, undeveloped and declining rurality was peripheralized, or when the coast of Yamamoto was felt to be ignored in the reconstruction.

The analysis also highlighted how aspired communities emerged from collective aspiring in relation to social practices, the lived environment and continuous social, temporal, spatial reorientation. Contesting the desired future offered by the town and reinterpreting their shared disaster experience shaped the enacting and envisioning of the newly defined *hama* community demarked by the tsunami inundation zone for the returned coastal residents. For many displaced residents, symbolic locations, such as rebuilt shrines and temples, in the uninhabitable parts of *hama* became sites to ensure the continuity of their pre-tsunami district communities to respond to their

yearning for a sense of belonging. Gathering places were regarded in many ways as essential for enabling collective aspiring. However, despite the existence these symbolic places and the establishment of various gathering places, many residents nevertheless expressed a yearning for places to meet and communicate. Thus, enacting based on pre-disaster, socio-spatial networks differed from envisioning a wider, aspired post-disaster community. This indicated how temporally and spatially multilayered the experiences of an enacted and envisioned community are.

The boundaries for territorially inclusive and exclusive aspired communities were drawn in the process of pursuing by the compact city *machizukuri* councils, other resident-initiated community activities and strawberry farming: some were limited to district areas, some were expanded to wider areas or translocal networks. Action-oriented pursuing was thus providing a sense of agency to act together for the desired futures. This highlighted also how the significance of *machizukuri* for community building it is not necessarily only about the actual planning power but also the process of enacting and envisioning in itself. However, the analysis also showed how the local residents were simultaneously positioned as both active and responsible for their social recovery yet subordinate to either officials directing the reconstruction or to outsiders as enablers of town revitalization.

Spatiality was not limited to notions of territoriality, but the dynamics of experience of the lived environment, aspiring and community became especially evident in the new compact cities. The tension between the physical proximity in the urban style area and the social insecurities positioned the unknown neighbors simultaneously both as a threat and as members of the community. People were expected to go out to the gathering places and identify themselves to contribute to the collective sense of security. Thus, power-relations were immanent in both reconstruction policies, and in inter-community dynamics when the normative expectations of proper enacting and envisioning of community were crafted to be applied to everyone in the area.

As I write this, we have been living through a pandemic for two years. I drafted the first version of the theoretical framework for this thesis in late 2019 just before the global outbreak of Covid-19. The experience of pandemic is not comparable to the comprehensive destruction, loss and suffering of the disaster-stricken localities, yet the uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity brought by the spread of Covid-19 has nevertheless underlined the affective temporality and especially the feel of the future in the present. The nations' health officials and leaders have to make decisions based on anticipation and risk calculations. Meanwhile, the unpredictability of the virus and consequently the future has in many ways created a sense of futurelessness in everyday life for many of us, especially during the lockdown times. After the global spread of the virus, all future plans shrank to the most immediate future, often in spatially confined spaces at home with no guarantee about how the future will turn

out. This exemplifies the overwhelming presentness of the uncanny present when temporal dimensions cease to exist (cf. Farnetti & Stewart, 2012; Bryant & Knight, 2019, pp. 40–47). At the time of writing this conclusion in 2021, the future has once again begun to be envisioned: plans are being made for next month or the forthcoming summer holiday to mark points of reference in the future. Life is no longer put on hold and people gradually adapt to living with the changing new Covid normal. A shared future trajectory is reconstructed when these plans or aspirations are envisioned and enacted together. This process of making a future together offers social connectedness that risk and uncertainty alone do not necessarily offer.

This is a very anecdotal and partly personal reference to the experience of temporality at the time of the ongoing pandemic, but I dare to remark that this points towards the potential of aspiring to serve as a conceptual lens to understand social relations and, consequently, community. Collective aspiring is not, thus, a definition of what communities are or an exhaustive explanation of why they emerge; instead, it offers a tool to explore community as a social process. Aspiring also helps to understand how desired futures can manifest in action and how this process is characterized not only by unity and coordination but also by negotiation, contestation and conflict. Thus, the future orientation of aspiring enables vertical generalization of the processes constituting the meanings of community (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 146) while it maintains the focus on the particular subjective experience of the future and social reality.

9.1 Recovery and community as future

The song "In This Town" that became widely popular in post-disaster Yamamoto serves as a window also for discussing the significance of future in disaster recovery process. Disaster and community are mutually emergent in the recovery process as the intertwining of the disaster experience with everyday life and vice-versa (Hastrup, 2011; Samuels, 2019). Interpreting the disaster experience and commemorating the past are undoubtedly essential parts of recovery, as indicated by many projects in Tohoku that aim to restore lost belongings (Nakamura, 2012), such as photographs (Mizoguchi, 2014), and the establishment of disaster memorials (Boret & Shibayama, 2018; Littlejohn, 2020, 2021). The social and material pasts are also accentuated in projects that engage the residents in building miniature models of the destroyed local areas and neighborhoods. The Lost Homes project organized such a workshop also in Yamamoto to rebuild models of the Nakahama and Iso Districts in 2019 (Lost Homes, 2019). These projects and efforts undoubtedly help to create sense of continuity and security when recollecting lost physical and social environment. As such, they relieve people's anxiety over worries of losing

their past because of destruction and dislocation, as expressed by a former Sakamoto resident in chapter 8.

However, this thesis has shown that recovery is not just about making sense and coming into terms with the past. It is also, essentially, about regaining temporality in everyday social life and intertwining the disaster with it when navigating *towards* the future. This research thus signals the need to reconsider the idea of disaster and community recovery. I argue that a future orientation is an essential component of the recovery process: Therefore, recovery should be seen more from the perspective of the process of restoring the capability to envision and enact the future in and of place, both individually and collectively. In other words, recovery denotes re-establishment of the temporal dimensions of human life embedded in the lived social and material environment. Furthermore, attention should be paid to how the futurity of recovery is practiced: From this angle, for example, the Lost Homes project or the song *In This Town* are not merely about preserving memories but are about drawing from them to orient to the future for regaining a sense of being in place and community. Memories may accentuate the feeling of loss, yet here again, the very activity of building models like singing together can serve as community recovery in themselves by facilitating sociality and collective aspiring.

Regaining temporal dimensions in a post-disaster context is quite understandably connected to a sense of security. This thesis underlines the necessity to explore not only how the community and its future but also how security is interpreted, experienced and felt as a social and temporal process in the context of post-disaster recovery and beyond. The dramatic disruption to the everyday life in Yamamoto caused feelings of anxiety and insecurities that accentuated the yearning for a sense of belonging and security. The national and local Yamamoto reconstruction plans and practice focused extensively on anticipating risks and disaster risk reduction through protective infrastructure or technological solutions, despite their rhetoric emphasizing security and resident participation.

In contrast, the residents relied on aspiring security. The security yearned and pursued, for example, in the *hama* community was sought to be achieved particularly through an increase of social connectedness in the community. Thus, as the Japanese terms *anzen* ("objective," measurable security) and *anshin* (peace of mind, sense of security) illustrate, security is a social relation and not merely technical solutions, military armament or the national interest or material security in general (James, 2014). The analysis highlights also that security is very much present in everyday life as both social and political power as well as affective embodied experience (cf. Glück & Low, 2017).

Conflicts arising from divergent temporalities and spatialities, or timespaces (Schatzki, 2010, p.93), become very acute in the post-disaster situation in which various actors seek to legitimize political solutions based on the desired futures

(Gotham & Greenberg, 2014), and plans and decisions for the future are made in an extreme situation in a limited timeframe (Olshansky *et al.*, 2012). A disaster can be a very material experience, and a post-disaster situation accentuates the power of public planners, who are in a central position to shape the material worlds of local communities. Thus, citizen participation in disaster risk management and community building is important to enable bringing forth the various conceptualizations of community and security and creating a sense of agency in crafting the desired future. However, it is also notable that "the local" perceptions of security, risk, future and community are neither unified nor stable, and they keep evolving as parts of the continuous orientation towards the future.

9.2   Limitations and future research opportunities

I have already remarked on some directions for future research, namely, readjustment of the focus on desired futures when studying social life and the need for further development of the notions of community and security in the context of disaster recovery in particular. Here, I reflect on aspects of this research that could benefit from elaboration. I also contemplate some other future research opportunities. The conceptual discussion in this thesis is developed from the ethnographic analysis of the post-disaster. The particular features of the disaster's aftermath, such as a heightened awareness of their sense of community (Silver & Grek-Martin, 2015; Hoffman, 2020) and place (McKinzie, 2019), a strong sense of solidarity (Solnit, 2009; Hoffman, 2020; Oliver-Smith, 2020) and a clearer polarization, which are often seen in extreme situations (Amit, 2010), are strongly present in the analysis because they were central to the locals' experience and sense of community. Furthermore, the intensive feel of the future in the crisis (Knight & Stewart, 2016; Bryant & Knight, 2019) was most likely still accentuated in this study of a long-term recovery.

Disasters are argued to "provide an extraordinary window into social desire and possibility" (Solnit, 2009, p. 6). Furthermore, disasters can be perceived as an extreme example of "unique events from which emerge complex social forms that are perceived as objective realities" (Hastrup, 2005b, p. 146). This approach facilitated a more general conceptual discussion while still focusing on this particular post-disaster setting. However, the temporary nature of fieldwork (Dalsgaard & Nielsen, 2016; Kumar, 2016), as well as the extreme detemporalization (Crapanzano, 2010) and temporary objectification of relational knowledge (Hastrup, 2004b) inherent in any analytical narrative, made it difficult to describe communities as a continuously evolving, situational and emergent process without falling into a trap of presenting them as products or objectives of linearly proceeding aspiring. Furthermore, both community and aspiring have positive connotations;

consequently, it was not easy to avoid romanticizing either aspiring or community while simultaneously taking seriously the research participants' social realties that also featured their idealized sense of togetherness. I consider thus that more developed expressions to describe the process-nature of community could be in order.

The majority of research participants were elderly adults who also had an active role in their communities. This composition of the research participants' socio-demographic positions is certainly reflected in the desired futures and ways of aspiring discussed in this research. It, however, also vividly illustrated the efforts and challenges of seeking to aspire together. I do not perceive an intergenerational comparison or a representational analysis of desired futures as aims of the conceptual framework presented in this research. However, a study including, for example, young newcomers in the countryside (e.g., Klien, 2016, 2020b) through the lens of aspiration would most likely offer a window into alternative ways of constituting aspired communities. This might be due not only to the young age of these age cohorts underrepresented in this research but also to the webs of social practices from which their immediate interpretations and sense of community would draw. Furthermore, the narrative of the experiences of the locals living through the recovery appeared quite critical of the authorities and of the reconstruction policies. This trend also arose from the particular research participants' immediate recovery experiences and interpretations, but it naturally could have been different if more authorities had been interviewed.

However, this is an endless task of speculating about the innumerous parallel narratives of community and recovery. Thus, I am not suggesting that the particular aspirations voiced by the residents in Yamamoto are generalizable in any way. Instead, they describe situational interpretations and experiences of communities as the immediate lived social reality of the locals in the present. I nevertheless acknowledge that my fieldwork concentrated heavily on organized collective activities that had rather explicitly articulated objectives of community building and on other rather clearly delineated collectivities that were more or less established in the minds of the residents recovering from a disaster. Therefore, I consider that the future orientation of aspiring requires further applications in quotidian life to fully test and benefit from its potential to understand and analyze social life.

Additionally, the notion of pace (Amit & Salazaar, 2020) could potentially offer new perspectives on temporality. I have focused in this thesis mainly on the desired futures and the relation of collective aspiring and community. The felt pace of the striving towards the future or the feel of how fast we are actually "moving" towards the desired future would enhance the analysis of collective aspiring (cf. Adam, 2005, p. 51). Gender is another line of future inquiry to follow. Women's apparent capability to draw from their gendered practices to enhance their social connections

and, thus, their recovery, draws attention to gender in collective aspiring. This includes the gendered practices in which aspiring occurs, potentially differing desired futures, and the gendered power division in collective aspiring. Furthermore, as I have remarked elsewhere (Posio, 2021), it is necessary to comprehend the practices through which the gender roles are constructed in the first place when seeking to support recovery and community building in general.

9.3   In the end – or at the beginning?

As I write this over a decade after the 3.11 disaster, things have both changed and remained the same in Yamamoto. My personal aspirational efforts to graduate are coming to an end when writing these final words in this thesis, but life goes on, and time also passes in Yamamoto. The locals' interpretations, experiences, feelings, activities and desired futures evolve in relation to social and material states of affairs. This reminds me of Kaneko-san's hair color; he was a man in his late 60s who was touched and motivated by his disaster experiences. He appeared frequently in the analysis of this thesis as an active member of Doyōbinokai and as an initiator of various coastal activities in the Hanagama District. During my fieldwork, he joked about his habit of keeping his young looks by dying his hair black. He seemed to maintain this habit nearly as persistently as he sought to preserve the feeling of social cohesion that he had felt in the neighborhood in the immediate post-disaster period. This kind of phase of social cohesion and of a utopian sense of communality is often featured in the disaster studies (Solnit, 2009; Morris-Suzuki, 2017a; Hoffman, 2020; Oliver-Smith, 2020) and is presented as exceptional or a deviation from "ordinary" social, everyday life (cf. Amit, 2010).

However, this the exceptionality of the disaster experience does not undermine the fact that interpretations of these past experiences are essential in the trinity of temporal dimensions of past-present-future in ordinary everyday life. As such, they are intrinsic parts of future orientations that also occur in long-term disaster recovery as the intertwining of disaster experience and everyday life (Hastrup, 2011) when navigating towards the desired futures. I have been following the Yamamoto town's Internet pages, local newspapers and residents' posts on Facebook after my fieldwork. In the posted pictures, I saw how Kaneko-san had eventually let his hair go gray, but he nevertheless continues grinning widely in pictures taken in various community activities many of which he had initiated. This made me think how time inevitably passes, but the significance of these activities is not dependent on stubbornly trying to maintain the things as they were neither in terms of the hair color nor the immediate post-disaster social cohesion. Instead, these activities are emergent forms of sociality: They are not merely replicating Kaneko-san's personal past experiences of the sense of post-disaster togetherness and belonging but are

based on constant and developing aspiring of having similar a community also in the future.

Sensei and his fellow Doyōbinokai's members continue their coastal activities and, after few silent years, were on the frontline to oppose the eventually cancelled plans to build a wind farm on the coastal waters of Yamamoto. However, despite the persistent criticism over the relocation of the railway, old symbols were replaced with new ones: The last remnants of the old Yamashita station, the epicenter of the reconstruction controversies, were cleared away and a brand new disaster memorial statue was erected at the old station square. Nakamura-san's shop by the old Yamashita station was also closed in November 2021, and its demolition commenced because of the widening of the road running past the shop. The monthly Tera Café at Fumonji Temple is no longer held, but the chief priest remains active in other community activities at the coast.

The expressed grievances of the locals did not remain only as complaints; they manifested as political activity. Three community activists who I interviewed ran for and were elected to the town council after my fieldwork. Two of these were women who changed the gender balance of the town council that was previously fully dominated by elderly men. In the mayoral elections in 2022, an active coastal resident critical of the controversial development ambitions and prioritization of the compact city areas was elected to replace the mayor that had been in power since 2010 and criticized at worst as dictatorial by Doyōbinokai.

Meanwhile, the compact city building projects were gradually completed. The Jōban Railway Line was reopened in 2016. At the same time, the Shinyamashita residents finally received their decision on an administrative district. The area was renamed Tsubame no Mori (Swallow forest) and divided into eastern and western administrative districts. The Yamamoto Reconstruction Station also continued its activities with the compact city residents even after their initially planned term, while the *machizukuri* councils were gradually transformed into neighborhood associations. Tanemagi Kaigi still seems to hold meetings, though often with fewer participants and without clowns and Star Wars stormtroopers. The Kodanarie illumination event to express gratitude was organized more grandiosely year after year. The announcement that its 10th anniversary event in 2021 was the last one signaled a sense of completion. Additionally, numerous other activities that this dissertation did not touch continue, such as the yellow handkerchief project organized by the Yamamoto Story Telling Group (*Yamamoto Kataribe no Kai*). In this project, support messages written in yellow handkerchiefs are sent to Yamamoto from all around Japan. These handkerchiefs are hung in the Nakahama Elementary School, the only standing building at the Sakamoto coast that was turned into a disaster memorial and education site, often visited during the disaster tours organized by the Yamamoto Story Telling Group (*Yamamoto Kataribe no Kai*, 2021).

Social media only reveal a fracture of the research participants' everyday lives. It nevertheless shows that some activities seem to be scaled down, but many still continue. One regular and important event is "that day" (*ano hi*), the anniversary of the disaster that continues to be commemorated around the town on March 11 every year. This temporal marker is perhaps one of the most evident examples of how the disaster continues its presence in the locals' life trajectories. Gathering to memorialize the disaster also enables re-evaluation of the past before and after the disaster in order to envision a future together. Population decline is another persistent phenomenon in Yamamoto: The monthly updated statistics on the Yamamoto web pages show that the overall population of the town steadily decreases, despite a few occasional new residents. This makes the continuous reorientation to the prospects of the future acute in the depopulating and aging town long after the reconstruction. And what happened in the end to the lady with a letter who I met only briefly during my first day in Yamamoto? That I do not know. Her objective of opening a beauty shop was not necessarily joined or realized. Nevertheless, she was able to share her sentiments about the tsunami experience, her re-evaluation of life and most importantly, her future desires. Thus, what I know is that at least at that moment of our encounter, she had a sense of the future and aspirations on which it is possible to build both the experience of recovery and of community "in this town" from "that day" onwards.

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