

Some thoughts on graphic design and how we ended up in Fukushima anyway

I forget the exact conversation but at one point M said the phrase graphic “manufacturer” (instead of designer) and I realized it was the most accurate description of the activity I had been trying to understand for the last six years.

I also think most graphic designers working today would be offended by the term precisely because it describes what they fear most – that their jobs are insignificant and meaningless. I think a lot of these people (who describe themselves as graphic designers) feel like they are in a somewhat of a creative¹ position. That somehow, their job is better than the normal salary-man because it’s closer to Art (with a capital A). I’d counter that in this era where nearly everything is commodified, privatized, and part of a system that exists by manipulation and exploitation for the benefit of the rich, there’s no real difference.

It’s much easier to to describe them as manufacturers because it’s more truthful and straightforward; on demand, they produce and assemble specific things that serve a simple purpose (more often than not, to sell a product or idea). A designer of graphics on the other hand seems to imply there’s some actual creative visual expression going on, or if not, at the very least, it muddles a lot of what should be a simple explanation. Try it – ask a self proclaimed graphic designer to describe what they do in a simple sentence and you’ll find it’s nearly impossible.

Personally, this kind of manufacturing holds no interest to me whatsoever. If anything, the profession as a whole actually represents a lot of what I feel dedicated to oppose in this world. However, I’m still not able to abandon it completely. It is, after all, the way in which M and I are currently supporting ourselves. Moving to the countryside and continuing to work as graphic designers has been informative, and in some ways enlightening. On a small and local scale, I’ve come to think that working with graphic design (or as one of our former professors used to infamously call “mark making”) can actually have tangible, positive impacts on the community and lives of those within it. It’s within this domain that I feel interested and inspired to continue.

^① The word creative, especially when being used as a noun to describe what one does is also frustratingly difficult to unravel, but let’s save the semantics for another time.

Unfortunately, to more accurately describe what I'm trying to say I'm afraid a bit of background information is needed to contextualize how we got here in the first place.

a brief autobiographical digression

Our story began in that big stinky metropolis of metropolises... New York City. Me and M met as students at a university called the Fashion Institute of Technology.² Whenever explaining this we always have to follow up and clarify that we did not study fashion design or have any connection whatsoever to that side of the school. We were actually relegated to the chronically underfunded art department in the graphic design program.

By the senior year of our program, (when me and M first became really acquainted) the only thing clear to me about graphic design was that I didn't want to do it the way we were being taught. All of our classes and professors operated within the context of "preparing us for the real world", a euphemism that just meant learning how to take orders from a boss and produce pretty, sellable, trendy, consumable, soulless design using the latest Adobe software.

After graduating, M had similar reservations about entering the "profession", i.e. getting a job. By taking a huge leap of faith (mostly on M's part, she had only a year extension on her student visa) we decided to (1) move in together at her basement apartment in Sunset Park Brooklyn and (2) turn our apartment into a studio for our own graphic design company. The idea was to work for ourselves from the start and choose the projects we wanted to work on. The name was chosen over coffee and a half eaten blueberry muffin in chinatown.³

② When people think of art universities in New York City the names are always SVA, Pratt, Parsons, etc... these schools are incredibly expensive. FIT is actually a SUNY (state university school) which means that tuition rates are incomparably lower, and for long time New York state residents like myself, more than affordable. In this era of blatant corporate money machines that like to pass themselves off as higher education, I feel lucky to have been spared the massive debt.

③ As in,
W: "So what should we call ourselves?"
M: "Hmm, I think we're still thinking..."
W: "That's good!"



For one year we tried really hard. We both held on to our part time jobs as we floated by on rent from paycheck to paycheck. Still, we were privileged enough to have the opportunity to even try something so selfish as working for ourselves so we were happy, grateful, and exhausted. Finally with the visa running out we had the long overdue epiphany that nothing/nobody was forcing us to stay in New York. With a limited portfolio of our collaborations and school projects we then applied for residencies all over the world. Somehow we were accepted by two programs (a month in Wassiac New York followed by three months in Kortrijk, Belgium⁴).

While traveling, we had no home. We moved out of the Brooklyn apartment and kept most of our stuff at my mom's place. It was fun to call ourselves nomadic but it's not really something either of us are comfortable with for long periods of time. So after the residencies we regrouped at M's home in Japan. We had a vague idea we would continue to try and work together but we had no idea how.⁵

In the early Spring of 2016 we stumbled on an open call for a place called the NishiAizu International Art Village (here on NIAV) in Nishiaizu, Fukushima. They were looking for a designer to help as a *chiikiokoshikyoryokutai*.⁶ It was the first time we had ever heard the phrase and the concept sounded intriguing to us so despite knowing nothing about Nishiaizu and the open call only looking for one person, something compelled us to apply.

Our application out of the pile⁷ and we were saved. Invited for an in person interview, together with M's parents we drove the eight hours to Fukushima and back.

④ I intend to write more about our residency experience somewhere in the future, but for now, if you ever have the means and the time, apply for and do residencies! Good or bad, (perhaps especially bad) the experience of going somewhere totally new and working out of your usual element is so incredibly humbling and educational.

⑤ At this point I have to mention M's parents, who were so incredibly generous and understanding as we shared their home in Saitama while we desperately looked.

⑥ 地域おこし協力隊 Roughly, "Local revitalization staff". The position exists almost everywhere in Japan, mostly in depopulated areas. Hired for three years at a time, the specifics of the actual job vary a huge amount depending on what the town needs. As it turns out, not getting this position was the absolute best scenario for us as we later learned what it would have entailed. That is, a close relation to the town hall (i.e. bureaucracy) and an ability to take orders from authority which is, for us, problematic to say the least.

⑦ Thank you Kobo-chan!

A few days later in a ramen shop in Ikebukuro I can clearly remember getting the phone call from Yabe-san⁸ telling us we didn't get the job. What would have been woe turned to excitement when he struck a deal with us. Instead of the job we applied for, we'd come to Nishiaizu as artists in residents and help Yabe-san as staff for a non-profits art organization in Fukushima.

So that's the long story of how we first arrived in Aizu. Our year of living as residents was a huge learning experience. The fact we lived for free (no rent) was no small factor either. We had a crash course of what living and working in the countryside of Japan is like; at the same time we had space to work on our own projects and think about what we wanted to concentrate on going forward.

We never had/have a long term plan. But when our year was winding down we didn't need to have a big conversation about what we would do or where we would go next. It felt obvious and right to both of us that we had to stay. We soon found a vacant house in a small village near NIAV and decided this would be our home base. This house would become the Institute of Barbarian Books.

and now, an example

We designed a package for a burger⁹ made by a group of local women. It's one of my favorite projects we've ever worked on.

The women run a small kitchen in a small village called Okugawa in Nishiaizu. Together they make a few food products using local ingredients but they usually don't have time to think about the packaging too carefully. By chance, there happened to be some room in the budget for designing and printing so we were recommended by Yabe-san.

⁸ NIAV director, among many other things. The importance of Yabe-san in our lives here is Nishiaizu can't really be overstated. Suffice to say that if it wasn't for him, Nishiaizu would be a very different town. The way I always like to describe it is that he's a gardener who is planting a lot of seeds. We just happened to be one of them.

⁹ In Japan, a burger (バーグ) is really just a piece of meat. It's not necessarily paired with buns and french fries like Americans tend to picture the word.

What followed was about three months of an extremely collaborative and fair exchange of ideas and skills. We had periodic meetings over this time to talk about the package, find out what they wanted and how we could help them. These meetings were in the same kitchen they cook everything in over hot tea, snacks, and the warmth of a makeshift kotatsu table.

On our end, instead of a simple box or bag, we offered to try and introduce a little more of their story. We were limited by costs but the solution was simple and appropriate. An A3 printed sheet would be printed via risograph in one color. It would be styled like a newspaper telling the story of what the hamburger is and a bit about the kitchen and the women who make it together. Each page would be folded down to wrap the burger as the package that way the newspaper would be a kind of secret surprise when opened.¹⁰

Honestly, I don't really want to support or encourage the consumption of meat. Environmentally and ecologically it doesn't make sense to me. But at the same time, keeping an open mind proved to be incredibly important. As it happened, the hamburgers were already being produced by the time we were involved. We could have declined from the start but there's a significant trade-off; if they aren't able to sell their products they cannot continue to support themselves and therefore another healthy part of the community ends and is lost. In the long term, for our town, I still believe it's better to help them the most useful way we knew how. This time it happened to be with graphic design.

Of course, more than the package, becoming friends was more rewarding. We see them quite regularly; at the store, at festivals, at the restaurant, in a small town we all share a lot. While it's possible to avoid everyone if one wishes, finding ways to work collaboratively is a constant reminder of how little the differences between each other can matter and how great it can be to share a community together.



¹⁰ Everyone, including ourselves is very happy by the way it turned out and I'm even happy to say we've had to order more sheets to be printed already.

in conclusion (kind of)

I'm uncomfortable when people describe what they do with their lives in a single term. For me, calling ourselves graphic designers still sounds lifeless and uninteresting but I'm equally aware that it's a big part of what we do on a daily level to support ourselves. As a compromise, I think I'd rather be a person who uses graphic design (e.g. using tools like general knowledge about typography, composition, and printing) to make something interesting and meaningful as opposed to just being a graphic designer as an end in itself.¹¹



⑪ I realize this is still not such a clear way to put it. Maybe I'm just embarrassed to be called a graphic designer because of all the negative (at least to me) connotations it entails. I want to distance myself from those connotations but still explore the ways in which graphic design can be a serious and useful (and hopefully subversive) instrument in society today. Needless to say, it's an ongoing process. Living in Nishiaizu has given us the time as we continue to figure it out.

KIMI NO INAKA



Did you see that movie called “*Kimi No Na Wa*”? It was a really big deal here in Japan. It was probably the biggest anime hit of 2016. Actually, it definitely was. You couldn’t turn on the television or walk into a store and not hear about the film or the stupid theme song.

I saw it on the airplane which is maybe my least favorite place to watch a movie. Despite this, I still thought it was great and interesting. Right up until the final act when it proved to be just another piece of mass entertainment rubbish.

To get there, I’ll give the synopsis; teenage girl lives in unnamed countryside, teenage boy lives in Tokyo. Due to mysterious circumstances, they switch bodies and experience each others’ lives. But there’s a twist! It turns out the girl’s home village was actually destroyed by an asteroid and she died some years ago. They were switching between time too, apparently. Anyway, because it’s a feel good movie, the boy somehow maneuvers his way into saving the girl, and at the end they meet.

Here’s why I thought it was interesting: I took decimation of the girl’s village as a metaphor for the destruction following 3.11’s earthquake and subsequent nuclear meltdown. In both cases, towns were literally wiped off the surface completely by factors unexplainable. In one instant, memories, histories and families were erased, lost forever – a poignant reminder of how fragile and limited our existence is. As a highly marketed and profitable product, (I would say the equivalent of a summer blockbuster in the U.S.) the film has a large reach – a statement like this has potential, if anything to just serve as a reminder. On multiple viewings however, I’m certain that this was not Makoto Shinkai’s intent.

The previously mentioned final act goes something like this: the boy, acting in the past in the girl's body, is able to warn the residents and evacuate the town. It's suggested everyone survives despite the asteroid destroying the town physically. It's after the boy grows up, as his life in Tokyo is seemingly, utterly "normal", i.e. he's a kaishain/salaryman, that he reunites with the girl after seeing her on his train commute.

If this seems innocent enough allow me to point a few things out. First of all, the focus on over-sentimentality as the lovers reunite completely shifts attention away from what was a legitimate disaster; the destruction and loss of community, history, and environment. Instead of exploring what the consequences of losing an entire town could be, or perhaps what cleanup and rescue efforts could look like, the disaster is brushed aside to make room for the emotional and unsurprising climax. The entire inaka (countryside) segments of the film seem at this point to serve as little more than a pretty and quaint reminder of something that *was*, not something that *is*. What I mean is, just because we're no longer in the countryside does not mean that it no longer exists. As much as politicians and corporate leaders would like to try, just because time has passed since 3.11 does not mean that the situation is under control. It doesn't even necessarily mean that we've made progress or things are respectively better.

Secondly, it's implied that after the girl and her friends survived, they moved to Tokyo since their homes were destroyed. This parallels a lot of what happens on an everyday scale in reality. Young people, with a lack of job options or desire to stay in the countryside move to the cities and start families. Meanwhile their hometowns continue to depopulate and decay as no one is able to take the older generations' place. From a first hand experience, I can say this is a vicious cycle, one that's hard to break.

However to break the cycle, it must start with asking why moving to the city is such an easy solution? With that comes the question of is it necessarily the best solution? By the end of the film both of the characters seem to have matured into young adults. They're taking part in the morning commute, they wear the appropriate work attire – by all visual evidence they're "productive members of society". But why is this presented as normal? Why is this necessary to have a happy ending? In my opinion, having to live such a life is the definition of a living hell; a meaningless, trite existence that has no benefit beyond immediate financial satisfaction.

Furthermore, my qualm is that this is a film that is more or less marketed to young adults and teenagers, in other words, the very people who are at once extremely impressionable and significant in terms of the near future. They're also about to make some very important decisions about what to do with their lives. The "happy" ending here reads to me as little more than propaganda for the Capitalist machine.

Kimi No Na Wa treats inaka as something defiantly in the past. Perhaps it's nostalgic and pleasant, but only for short visits. The people and customs of inaka are fading, and it may be a shame, but in the end, real life and all the important stuff happens in Tokyo anyway.

I live in inaka. I live with people that have spent generations building their lives and communities together. It's true – it's slowly deteriorating and there are less and less young

people every year, but it doesn't change the fact that we exist here, now, together. It doesn't change the fact that we actually like living here too – given the choice I could never choose to live in a city again.

There are endless problems here in Fukushima. Closer to the nuclear plant it becomes much more understandable why families want to live elsewhere. I don't want to put any blame on them. It really belongs to the lawmakers, to Shinzo Abe, to TEPCO executives and the Tokyo Olympic committees; all the people who want to pretend the disaster was a freak accident and is better to leave in the past instead of fixing the problems now. Like Shinkai's *Kimi No Na Wa* they want to pretend the happy endings lie in Tokyo and in selling your life at an hourly rate. Meanwhile, in inaka, life continues.



きみの田舎

あなたは「君の名は。」という映画を観たことがありますか？日本だけでなく世界中で大ヒットしたこの映画は、おそらく2016年のトップを飾るアニメーションだったと言えるでしょう。いえ、間違いなくそうでした。外出するにしても自宅でテレビをつけるにしても、何をするにしてもこの映画の退屈な主題歌から逃れることはできなかったはずです。

私がこの映画を見たのは飛行機の中でした。最悪の鑑賞環境だったにもかかわらず、私は素晴らしく面白い映画だったと感じました。最後の最後に、結局はどこにでもある大衆向けエンターテインメントのごみくずだと判明するまでは。

私の話をする前に、まずは映画の大まかなあらすじを紹介します。無名の田舎(映画の中では糸守町と呼ばれる)に住む十代の少女と、東京に住む十代の少年。出会ったことのない二人がある日、夢の中でお互いの身体が入れ替わっていることに気がつきます。戸惑いながらもお互いの生活を経験しますが、しかしそこには思わぬ展開が。なんと少女の住む町は数年前に彗星の破片が落下したことで町ごと消滅しており、少女もその災害事故で亡くなっていたのです。身体だけでなく時空を超えて入れ替わっていた二人ですが、何とか少年が少女を事故から救い出し、ついに二人は実際に出会いクライマックス…という、それはもう気分が良くなる映画です。

私がこの映画を面白いと思った理由、それは少女の故郷糸守町の消滅が隠喩するのは3.11の東日本大震災と原子量発電所のメルトダウンではないかと捉えたからです。東日本大震災被災地も、映画の中の糸守町も、説明しようのない要因によってそこにあった多くのものを拭い取られてしまいました。ほんの一瞬で思い出も歴史も家族も消え去り、永遠に失われてしまった—私たち人間の存在がどれほどもろく、制限されているのかを改めて思い知らされます。実際に起きた忘れてはいけない出来事のリマインドという点だけでも、多くの観客にリーチできる市場性・収益性の高い映画(米国の大ヒット映画に相当するかもしれません)としては価値があったかもしれませんが、どうやら新海監督のインタビューをいくつか読むところそのような意図はなかったようで、残念でなりません。

はじめの方にも書きましたが、映画の最後の方は次のような展開になります。過去の時間を生きる少女の身体に入っていた少年は、災害事故が起きる前に町全体に警告を出し町民を避難させました。これは隕石落下によって町は物理的に破壊されましたが、町民は生き残ることができたということになります。その後月日は流れ、少年は東京で「普通」の人生、つまり会社員としての人生を送っています。彼は通勤時に偶然並走する別の電車の中に少女の姿を見つけ、ついに二人は再会するのです。

ここでいくつかのことを指摘させてください。まず第一に、想い会う二人が感動の再会を果たすという展開に過度の焦点を当てることは、それまで追ってきた正真正銘の大規模災害から完全に目をそらしている気がしてなりません。感情的なクライマックスに十分な余裕を作るため、災害—コミュニティ、歴史、環境の破壊と喪失は突然脇に寄せられました。この時点で、この映画にとっての田舎という要素は、過去に存在していた古風で美しいものという捉え方でしかなく感じます。私が言いたいのは、田舎は今も確実に存在しているということです。東日本大震災以降時間が経過したからといって、状況が前進しているわけでも、改善しているわけでもないのです。政治家や企業の指導者はそう願うのかもしれませんが。

第二に、故郷の町が失われた少女はその後東京に移住したように見られますが、これは田舎と都市の間で実際に日常的に起こっていることです。仕事の選択肢の欠如などを理由に田舎に残りたいという欲求を持たず都市に移動し家族を築く若者はとても多く、一方彼らの故郷は世代から世代への引き継ぎができずに過疎化と衰退を続けていきます。私自身現在田舎に住んでいますが、これは断ち切るのが大変難しい悪循環なのだと感じました。

なぜ都市への移住が最善の解決策なのか。この悪循環を崩すためにはその問いかげが必要なのではないでしょうか。映画の終盤、成人した若い二人はスーツを着て「生産的で適切な社会の一員」として朝の通勤電車に乗っています。しかしこの状況があなたも普通のこのように提示されるのはなぜでしょうか？この選択肢が必ずしも幸せだと言えるのでしょうか？あくまで私個人の意見ですが、目下の経済的な充足のために無意味でありふれた存在として同じ毎日を送ることは生きた地獄のように思えます。

さらに私が懸念しているのは、この映画は大体10代から若年成人つまり近い将来を形作っていく非常に重要な世代をターゲットにしているということです。自分たちがこれから何をすべきか、人生の方向性を決めていく大切な段階にいる年齢です。この映画が描写する「幸せ」な結末というのは、彼らに対する資本主義社会の宣伝に過ぎないように私は感じました。

「君の名は。」は、田舎を過去のものとして扱っています。おそらく彼らにとってそれはノスタルジックで心地の良いものですが、時間をかけて向き合うものではないでしょう。田舎の人々の暮らしや習慣、文化は確実に失われつつありますが、結局のところ、東京で起きていることが「現実」であり「重要」なのだ。

私は田舎に住んでいます。世代を超えて受け継がれてきた生活とコミュニティの中で、それを築いてきたたくさんの住民と共に暮らしています。確かに町からは毎年たくさんの若者が出ていき、少子高齢化に人口減少によって地域は確実に衰退への道を歩んでいます。ですが、今ここに、私たちが共に存在しているという事実は変わりません。私たちはここでの暮らしに代え難い魅力を感じています。都市に住みたいと思うことは、この先一生ないでしょう。

ここ福島は果てしない問題を抱えています。原子力発電所に近づけば近づくほど、なぜ周辺地域に住む家族が他県へと移り住みたがるのかその理由がはっきりと分かるでしょう。彼らには何の責任もありません。全責任が国会議員、安倍晋三、東京電力の役員、そして東京オリンピック委員会にあることは明白です。目前にある問題を修復することに全力を尽くす代わりに、彼らは全てを予測不能な災害の結果だったとして過去に葬ることに力を注いでいます。新海監督が「君の名は。」で描いたように、東京にはいつでも「ハッピーエンド」があるかのように装いながら。

そうしている間にも、田舎で暮らしは続いています。



ALTERNATIVE ANIMATED FEATURE FILM RELEASED IN 2016 RECOMMENDATION: Kubo and the Two Strings



*get that corporate
shit out of here!*



I wish I could!

Despite studio Laika's questionable corporate ties (the director of Kubo, Travis Knight is the son of Nike founder and billionaire Phil Knight's son plus Nike owns the studio) the animation studio is responsible for some of my favorite animated films in recent years. Kubo is a good film too. Besides the craftsmanship, story, and visuals, it's one of the few films based in Japan that seems to have done a good job translating Japanese culture (to a Western audience) and not just *using* it via stereotypes.

Fukushima Update 2018

Seven years after the triple meltdowns at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, TEPCO, the company who own and run the plant, have finally managed to locate some of the melted fuel inside one of the three wrecked reactors. By sending a camera robot into reactor 3 they have confirmed that most of the 364 tons of melted nuclear fuel has burnt through the bottom of the reactor pressure vessel (RPV) and has slumped to the concrete floor of the primary containment vessel (PCV) underneath. TEPCO said they think that the molten fuel had escaped through the holes in the RPV, through which the control rods are inserted, by melting the graphite gaskets which sealed the holes. The designers used graphite because they assumed the reactor fuel would never melt down.

TEPCO also got robots into reactors 1 and 2, but one was quickly overcome by the high levels of radiation inside the reactor, and the other one became caught on the fuel debris. Now they will have to design metal-cutting machinery which can get inside the PCVs to chip away at the deadly piles of melted fuel, without also being wiped out by the radiation. How to shield the workers operating this machinery? They could fill the PCVs with water - if they could find and patch the many holes in them. "We will have it all done in 40 years," they still claim. But most of them will be retired long before then, leaving the next generation to sort it out.

TEPCO have now surrounded the four reactor buildings with an "ice wall" composed of vertical pipes which freeze

the soil around them to create a barrier. This is to reduce the 400 tons per day of groundwater which has been flowing through the site, entering the basements of the reactor buildings and becoming strongly radioactive through contact with the melted fuel there before flowing on into the ocean. Although the ice wall is now fully frozen, the Japanese NRA (Nuclear Regulation Authority) say that they doubt if it will be "very effective" as many pipes and channels cut through the area, and it is not possible to freeze the ground under them. So this eye-wateringly expensive ice wall, combined with other measures such as wells, has only reduced the water flowing through the site, by two-thirds, to around 120 tons a day.

In fact the ice wall has created another serious problem by causing a huge volume of radioactive water to accumulate in the area inside it. It's as if the four reactor buildings are now sitting in a 'bathtub' of water which, less able to flow out of the site, is becoming increasingly radioactive due to the melted fuel in the basements. Should the ice wall melt due to a failure of its power supply, or should a future earthquake shatter it or the rock underneath it, then this huge volume of deadly water will escape and make its way into the ocean and hence our food chain.

Another problem is that inside this 'bathtub', the ground is becoming increasingly waterlogged and soggy. No one knows what effect this will have on the stability of the four damaged reactor

buildings. Three of the reactor buildings, no's 1, 2 and 3, still have many tons each of highly radioactive used fuel rods cooling down in swimming-pool-sized 'spent fuel pools' up on their fourth floors. Should these buildings collapse during another earthquake or due to subsidence in the soggy ground, the pools will drain, and the rods will be exposed to the air causing them to burn and release clouds of radioactivity which would permanently cut Japan in half and necessitate the evacuation of Tokyo. With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics just around the corner. TEPCO have nearly finished building a new, stronger roof for reactor 3, so that they can lift out the 88 tons of fuel in the spent fuel pool there. Hopefully they will do so before another big earthquake strikes. But that still leaves reactor 2 with 100 tons of spent fuel, and reactor 1 with 50 tons, in the pools on their fourth floors ...

Around 900,000 tons of highly radioactive water are being stored in huge tanks on the site. This water is contaminated with tritium - radioactive hydrogen. Since it's impossible to separate tritium from water, they are now planning to dump it all into the sea. Although it's no doubt cheaper to do this tritium is readily absorbed by anything which contains water so it can contaminate any fish, vegetables or animals which it encounters and hence end up in the food we eat. The local fisher-folk are objecting strenuously, saying that this will destroy the still fragile reputation of Fukushima fish products.

And there are more than 22 million one-tonne bags of radioactive waste from the 'cleanup' to be dealt with. These are currently stacked in farmers' fields, beside

roads and rivers, along beaches and near schools and houses.

The central premise of nuclear energy advocates has always been that the by-products from the splitting of uranium atoms would always be kept out of the environment. Now that this premise has been proved false they've raised the 'permitted' dose of radiation to which citizens of Fukushima can be exposed from the global standard (for non-occupational exposures) of 1 millisievert per year to 20 millisieverts per year (20 mSv/yr).

So if your former village is polluted to a level of 19.9 mSv/yr, the government now wants you to move back. They will have stopped financial support for you to live elsewhere, and your compensation payments. This may cause you such economic hardship that you and your children are forced to return to your ruined village, and accept the increased risk to your health, and the even greater risk to the health of your children, as well as the threat of new calamities posed by the ruined reactors tottering at the edge of your neighbourhood. This new 20 mSv/yr radiation threshold is utterly scandalous; the increased risk of cancers and many other radiogenic illnesses imposed on vulnerable populations in order to protect the economic and military interests of a powerful minority. Hopefully as awareness of this appalling situation spreads it will come to a rapid end.

For the best updates, photos and videos on the situation at Fukushima:
www.fukuleaks.org/web/

Leaflet by Kick Nuclear London:
www.kicknuclear.com



Kick Nuclear

福島 最新情報 2018年

福島第一原子力発電所で原子炉3基が炉心溶融（メルトダウン）を起こしてから7年が過ぎました。東京電力はやっと、溶けた核燃料の一部が原子炉のどの辺りにあるのか突き止めることができました。カメラを搭載したロボットを3号機に送り込んだ結果、溶けた364トンの核燃料の大半が圧力容器の底から流れ出し、その外側にある格納容器のコンクリート床部分にたまっていることが分かりました。圧力容器には制御棒を挿入するための穴が開けられており、黒鉛で封じられていました。東電は、燃料デブリがこの黒鉛部分を溶かして流出したようだとしています。原子炉の設計者が黒鉛を使ったのは、メルトダウンが決して起こらないと想定していたからです。

東電は1号機と2号機にもロボットを送り込みましたが、ひとつは原子炉内の高い放射線量ですぐに壊れ、もうひとつは燃料デブリに絡まってしまいました。人間を死に至らしめるほど放射線量の高い格納容器内部でも金属を切削できる機械をこれから開発し、燃料デブリを切り開いていかなければなりません。この機械を操作する作業員を一体どのように保護できるのでしょうか。格納容器を水で満たす方法がありますが、それには開いてしまった穴を見つけて全て埋めなければなりません。東電は「全て40年以内にはできる」と言い張っています。しかし今いる関係者の多くはそれまでに退職し、問題の解決を次世代に先送りすることになるでしょう。

東電は現在、4つの原子炉建屋を「凍土壁」で困っています。これは垂直なパイプを通して土を凍らせ、地下水の流入を食い止める目的があります。1日当たり400トンもの地下水が、建屋の地下で燃料デブリと接触し、大量の放射能を含んだ汚染水として海へ流れ出てきました。凍土壁は全面凍結されましたが、多くのパイプなどがこの区域に存在することから、原子力規制委員会は完全な効果を得られるか疑わしいと述べています。凍土壁のさらに下にある地盤を凍らせることも不可能です。そのため、巨額の費用をかけた凍土壁も、地下水を汲み上げるといった他の方法と合わせて、建屋区域内を通過する地下水を従来のおよそ3分の1に当たる120トン程度へ減らしたに過ぎません。

実際のところ、凍土壁は建屋区域内に大量の水が溜まってしまうという別の問題を引き起こしています。4つの原子炉が水を張った「お風呂」に浸かっているような状態です。その水は区域内にとどまって燃料デブリと接触し続け、放射能濃度を増していきます。凍土壁に必要な電源が何らかの故障で途絶えたり、また地震が起きて凍土壁そのものや、下の岩盤が破壊されれば、大変危険な高濃度汚染水が海に流れ込み、ひいては人間を含む食物連鎖に取り込まれます。

さらなる問題は、この「お風呂」の中で地盤がますます水を含み、緩くなっていることにあります。これが4つの崩れかけた原子炉建屋の安定性にどのような影響を及ぼすか、誰にも分かっていません。1号機、2号機、3号機の原子炉建屋の上部には「使用済み核燃料貯蔵プール」があり、そこに放射線量の高い使用済み核燃料棒が大量に保管されています。

またの地震で原子炉建屋が倒壊したり、地盤が崩れて傾いたりすれば、プール内に水がなくなり、燃料棒が空気にさらされて再び燃え始め、その煙で雲のような放射性ブルームを発生させるでしょう。そうなれば、日本の半分が住めなくなり、東京からも避難が必要になるでしょう。2020年の東京オリンピックはすぐそこです。東電は3号機に強度を増した新建屋を建て終えようとしており、88トンの使用済み核燃料を移す計画です。次の大地震が来る前に作業が済むことを祈るばかりです。それでも2号機に100トン、1号機に50トンの使用済み核燃料が残りますが・・・

福島第一原発の敷地内には、大きなタンクの数々に収納された高濃度汚染水が約90万トンあります。こうした水は、放射性の水素であるトリチウムに汚染されています。トリチウムを水から取り除くことは不可能なため、そのまま海へ廃棄される計画です。もちろん費用面と言えばより安く済む方法であることは間違いないでしょうが、海水を吸収する魚、海藻、動物の全てにトリチウムが摂取される可能性があり、われわれの口に入ることになるでしょう。地元の漁師の皆さんは、福島の高濃度汚染水の評判が一段と悪くなるとして強く反対しています。

「除染作業」で取り除かれた2200万トン余りの汚染土。これを1トンずつ詰め込んだフレコンバッグの山を結局どう処理するのか、まだ決まっていません。現時点では農地、道路の脇、河岸、海岸、学校や住宅の裏などに置かれています。

原発推進派は常に、核分裂の過程で生まれる副産物は自然環境から恒久的に切り離されるという主張を軸としてきました。今となってはこの主張が正しくないことが証明され、福島の人々に「許容」される追加的な被ばく線量は、世界的な標準（原発作業員除く）の年1ミリシーベルト（mSv）から年20mSvへ引き上げられました。

つまり、もしあなたの故郷の放射線量が年19.9mSvの場合、日本政府から帰還を求められます。別の場所で暮らしていくための金銭的な補助も、補償金も打ち切られるでしょう。経済的な困難に見舞われ、あなたも、あなたのお子さんも、荒廃した故郷へ戻ることを余儀なくされるかもしれません。そして自分の健康に対するリスク、さらにはお子さんの健康に対するより深刻なリスクの増大を受け入れるのです。そう遠くない場所に、壊れた原子炉が危険な状態で建ったまま。年20mSvへの追加被ばく線量引き上げは恥ずべきことです。強大な権力を握る少数の人々の経済的・軍事的利益を守るために、がんや、放射能が原因で起こるさまざまな疾患のリスクの増大が住民に押し付けられているのです。このような酷い状況に関する認識が広がり、一刻も早く解決が導かれてほしいものです。

福島の最新情報や写真、動画は、こちらの閲覧もお勧めします：
www.fukuleaks.org/web/

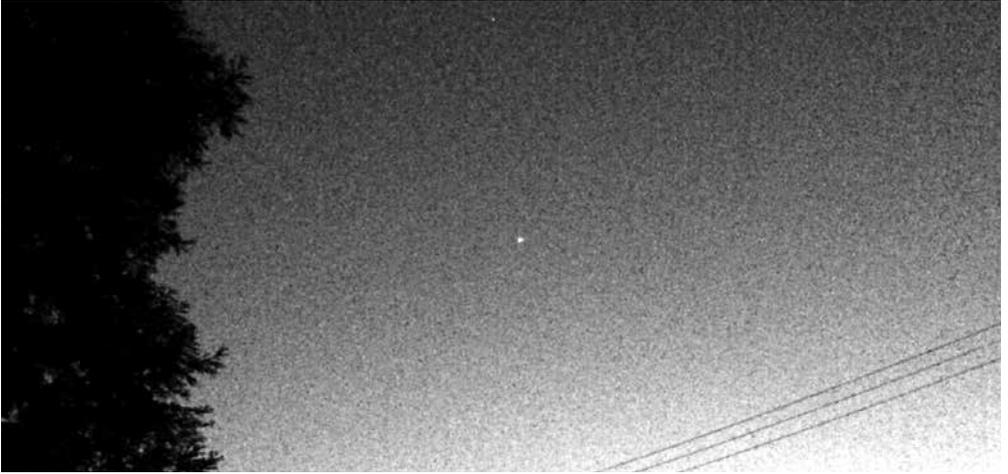
文責／キック・ニュークリアー・ロンドン：www.kicknuclear.com







“That’s not a star,” he continued to protest.



The sun was behind the mountains, the last of its rays outlining the trees in oranges and pinks. In this direction, almost due west, the bright spot did seem a bit out of place.

“There are no other stars in the sky, you see?” he tried to reason.

“Because it’s not dark enough!” K yelled back at him.

We were all laughing. The charcoal crackled at a pleasant rhythm. The first barbecue of the season and it felt nice to be outside without a jacket. He lit another cigarette and continued.

“I’ve been seeing this light everyday for years. It’s part of an antenna or something. But it’s definitely not a star.”

He exhaled as we thought about this.

“And in a few hours, by 10, it will be gone!”

K couldn't keep quiet. “That's because it's a star and it moves behind the mountains!”

His wife rolled her eyes as if to say, not this again. We laughed some more. When asked what the light was for (if it wasn't a star) he had no answer. The important part was that it was artificial. But it looked too high for one, to be an antenna, and by now the other stars came out. In comparison, it looked quite similar.

Still, nothing anyone could say would convince him otherwise. There's a term in Japanese we heard used to describe him a few times; maipesu, as in literally, my pace. It was really quite accurate. When we would join them for dinner he would often butt in mid-conversation about something totally different and off topic, as if he just remembered something incredibly important. It wasn't like he didn't care about us or our conversations, he just lived, quite simply, at his own pace. Marched to his own drums. I always liked him.

It was dark now. We finished cleaning up and started gathering our things. The light was still there, but it seemed to have shifted. He was, of course, adamant that it had not.

“Just wait until 10. It will disappear!”

“Next time!” we promised.

“Well, come again soon,” he said with a smile as he stubbed out another cigarette and went inside.

K and her mom gave us some of the un-grilled freshly cut asparagus from earlier to take home. I promised to make more bread again on our next visit. The summer was just beginning and the air smelled fresh and green. Driving home I tried to find the light but couldn't see it in the sky anymore. Or perhaps it just passed behind the mountains.

That ended up being the last time we saw him before he died.

A few months later, he had a heart attack early one morning while cleaning the roads. He fell into a coma in the hospital and hung on for a few more days but never regained consciousness.

It was a shock to all of us. He had always seemed so healthy and energetic. It was a weird impulse at the time but I immediately thought of all the unfinished farming work he still had to do. I couldn't believe that he wouldn't be around to complete his work and take in the harvest. I also couldn't imagine how K and her mom were feeling.

A few days later we came back to the house to light incense and say goodbye. The house was full of friends and relatives when we arrived and people were smiling and talking. Laying on the tatami, he looked like he had just dozed off for an afternoon nap. If it wasn't for the towel under his neck propping his head up I would have been convinced he was sleeping.

In the next moment he would wake and say, **“Hello! Don't worry about me, I'm fine. It was nothing. By the way, have you looked at the sky recently?”**

Was it the cigarettes? The pachinko? Nothing else seemed to remotely account for how such a healthy man could pass so suddenly. But maybe searching for logic and answers is pointless. Sometimes, these things can and do happen. There doesn't always have to be a reason.

K seemed okay but we knew it was a lot to process. Additionally, there was the funeral ceremonies to organize, the farms to be maintained, and Chibi, the new kitten, to be cared for. We wished we could help more. Before we left she wanted to show us a video she planned to show to relatives during the funeral.

By chance, a few days before his heart attack, K filmed her dad in the new komugi field. The video is simple:

he's walking in the field surrounded by tall, golden stalks and examining a handful of stems. In the background, the mountains cut a deep silhouette in the bright, cloudless, blue sky. He seems to be in his element; a sense of peace and happiness embodies his every movement. Maipesu.

At the time, K never expected to use the video in this way. But everyone was thankful that she happened to capture this beautiful, small, wordless moment.

The moments we all have are like this too, if we are mindful enough. In fact, our entire short lives are just a moment too. One that we often forget is not infinite. I think of the night with the stars often. The smokey grill slowly dying, bits of grilled corn stuck in my teeth, Chibi chasing birds away from the potatoes, smiling, laughing, and feeling grateful to be alive as K's dad looks up and says for the hundredth time,



“that's not a star!”