

# Traces of Fukushima

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# Traces of Fukushima

Global Events, Networked Media  
and Circulating Emotions

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## PREFACE

The first beginning of this book was the triple disaster: the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant accident that hit Japan on 11 March 2011, causing some 20,000 deaths and transforming the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. We, the authors of this book, were also affected by the events, both personally and professionally, and were keen to study the ways in which Fukushima affected the collective consciousness both in Japan and elsewhere.

The second beginning was a research funding call jointly announced by the Academy of Finland and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) in autumn 2013. We saw a chance to work together in tracing the media attention on the Fukushima disaster some years after it happened. We received funding for two years (2014–2016) and set out on an exciting and complicated research journey of methodological experimentation and intercultural communication between the Research Centre for Journalism, Media and Communication (COMET) at the Tampere University, and the Journalism School, Graduate School of Political Science at Waseda University.

The third beginning was our desire to undertake methodological experimentation with a view to achieving a deeper understanding of disruptive media events and the hybrid media environment. Now that we have the book in hand, we can say that our research was an excellent show of cooperation, but it was not always easy and straightforward. Apart from the constraints of time and geographic distance, we have sought to tackle issues of interdisciplinary research and different methodological premises. Qualitative and interpretative approaches and computational social

sciences working with large datasets have different starting points and research settings. Our desire to figure out the workings of the hybrid media environment helped in driving us forward as we exchanged views and tested different approaches.

Finally, the fourth beginning that pushed us to compile our findings into this book was the scarcity of English-language research on Japanese media. This might seem a curious statement to make given the global boom of Japanese media and popular culture both in the market and in academia. It is true that manga, anime and other elements of Japanese popular culture have gained growing global attention since the early 2000s. However, research on Japanese journalism and public discussions and the Japanese media environment remains scarce outside the country. We also felt that there was room for a study on the Fukushima disaster particularly from a media perspective. What we have tried to do is look at Fukushima and Japan through the media both from the inside and from the outside. The reader, of course, will be the final judge of how well we have done.

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This book is a joint effort of many people. Because of the way the book was put together, the names of our colleagues are not mentioned on the cover, even though they have contributed by collecting data and analysing and reporting it. The book should therefore be added to their respective track records. They have contributed as follows:

Chapter 2: Asuka Goto from Waseda University; Chap. 3: Anu Sirola from Tampere University and Arto Kekkonen from the University of Helsinki; Chap. 4: Associate Professor Ryuma Shineha from Seijo University, Kaori Isomura and Naiwen Hong from Waseda University; Chap. 5: Researcher Daisuke Yoshinaga and Ryota Kurazumi from Waseda University.

We also wish to thank the Fukushima Minpo journalists who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Our thanks also go to Assistant Professor Hiroki Takigawa from Tohoku University.

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Parts of Chap. 3 have previously been published in Rantasila, Anna; Sirola, Anu; Kekkonen, Arto; Valaskivi, Katja; Kunelius, Risto (2018) #fukushima Five Years On: A multi-method analysis of Twitter on the anniversary of the nuclear disaster. *International Journal of Communication* 12: 928–949.

We thank Greenpeace International for allowing us to use some of its anniversary tweets (Fig. 3.3). Thanks also to David Kivinen and Heli Heino for their thorough help with finalizing the manuscript and to our editors Sara Crowley Vigneau and Yue Li at Palgrave Macmillan. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewer for the insightful and helpful feedback.

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction: Tracing the Meanings of Fukushima</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	<i>From an Occurrence to Varieties of Media Events</i>	3
1.2	<i>Post-modern (Hybrid) Media Condition</i>	5
1.3	<i>Human Loss, Shock and Trauma</i>	7
1.4	<i>Nuclear Stakes: Scope, Time and Place</i>	10
1.5	<i>Methodologies for a Hybrid Environment</i>	12
	<i>References</i>	14
<b>Part I</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Dealing with the Disaster: The Live Media Event</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1	<i>Live Press Conferences Resituated</i>	22
2.2	<i>The Temporal Trajectory of #edano_nero</i>	26
2.3	<i>The Development of #edano_nero</i>	27
2.4	<i>Temporal Patterns of Emotion on Twitter</i>	31
2.5	<i>Affect Control in the Aftermath: Mythologization and Remediation</i>	32
	<i>References</i>	35
<b>3</b>	<b>Temporal Affordances in the Networked Remembering of Fukushima</b>	<b>39</b>
3.1	<i>Studying Actors in Network</i>	42
3.2	<i>The Network: Actors and the Structure of Remembering</i>	44
3.3	<i>Advocating and Promoting a Cause</i>	48

3.4	<i>Fukushima Five Years On</i>	52
3.5	<i>Commemorating Fukushima While Advocating a Cause</i>	55
	<i>References</i>	56
 <b>Part II Space</b>		 59
<b>4</b>	<b>Towards a Geography of Mediated Affect: Discursive Spaces and Emotional Dynamics</b>	61
4.1	<i>Newspapers: The Discursive Base of Collective Memory</i>	62
4.2	<i>Anniversary Journalism</i>	64
4.3	<i>Remembering Fukushima in the Domestic Press</i>	66
4.4	<i>The International Press: A Transnational View</i>	71
4.5	<i>Fukushima and Other Nuclear Memories: Global and Local Traumas</i>	72
4.6	<i>In Search of Emotions in News Space</i>	73
4.7	<i>Hierarchies of Publics</i>	75
	<i>References</i>	77
 <b>5</b>	 <b>Social Media and Ambient Social Distance</b>	 81
5.1	<i>'Reading the Air': The Ambience of Social Media</i>	82
5.2	<i>The Emergence of Media Hybridity During the Disaster</i>	84
5.3	<i>Materials and Methods</i>	85
5.4	<i>The 'Disaster Utopia' and Its Rupture</i>	86
5.5	<i>Science as a Tool for Inclusion: And Exclusion</i>	89
5.6	<i>Weakness of Journalism in the Social Media Space?</i>	91
5.7	<i>New Hybrid Roles for Journalism?</i>	94
	<i>References</i>	96
 <b>Part III Emotion</b>		 99
 <b>6</b>	 <b>The Global Circulation of Affect: The Case of Iodide Tablets</b>	 101
6.1	<i>Circulating and Sticky Affect</i>	102
6.2	<i>Iodide Tablet Stockpiling in the Northern Hemisphere</i>	105
6.3	<i>From Grammar to Stories About the Public</i>	111
6.4	<i>Affective Dynamics Beyond Fukushima Daiichi</i>	114
	<i>References</i>	116

<b>7</b>	<b>Affective Entanglements of Expertise: The Finnish Case</b>	119
	7.1 <i>Sociotechnical Imaginaries, Cultural Memory and Trauma</i>	121
	7.2 <i>Experts in YLE's News Coverage Between 2011 and 2016</i>	124
	7.3 <i>Construction of Expertise in YLE's STUK Stories</i>	126
	7.4 <i>A Moment of Affective Dynamics</i>	127
	7.5 <i>Experts as Sticky Figures</i>	130
	7.6 <i>Unwrapping Affective Intensities of Expertise and Technology</i>	131
	<i>References</i>	133
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusion: Time, Space and Emotion in Tracing Fukushima</b>	137
	8.1 <i>Experimenting and Exploring Methods: Key Lessons</i>	140
	8.2 <i>Temporality</i>	142
	8.3 <i>Social Media Geography</i>	145
	8.4 <i>Memory, Trauma and Emotions</i>	146
	8.5 <i>Note to Self: How Exceptional Is Our Moment?</i>	149
	<i>References</i>	151
	<b>Index</b>	153

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	Frequencies and numbers of tweets mentioning <i>tanomoshii</i> , <i>kawaii</i> and #edano_nero. Arrows mark the dates of the hydrogen explosions	31
Fig. 3.1	Visualization of user-user and user-hashtag connections. (Several prolific private users within the #nuclear sub-forum are not shown) (The large concentration of grey nodes at the edges are mostly users who tweeted using only the #fukushima hashtag either directly or by retweeting, and who did not explicitly connect to any of the sub-forums (at least not by using the appropriate hashtags). In some 8230 tweets, the only hashtag used was #fukushima)	45
Fig. 3.2	Lorenz curves. The curves shown only include users with a corresponding value higher than zero (e.g. users who have posted tweets, users who have posted original tweets, etc.)	47
Fig. 3.3	Greenpeace tweets commemorating the Fukushima disaster in March 2016. (Rights by Greenpeace International)	54
Fig. 4.1	Weight of topics covered in Japanese newspapers in 2011–2016	67
Fig. 4.2	Results of co-word network analysis of anniversary articles. Figures based on article data for the anniversary months from 2011 to 2016. Figures show the co-word occurrence network of five years' anniversary articles. (See appendix webpage for details: <a href="http://waseda.steman.jp/lab/fukushima-appendix/">http://waseda.steman.jp/lab/fukushima-appendix/</a> )	69
Fig. 4.3	Co-occurrence of 'Fukushima' and earlier nuclear accidents. (a) Probabilities of co-occurrence of terms with Fukushima in each newspaper. (b) Corresponding analysis plot of Table (a)	72

Fig. 4.4	Frequencies of key emotional words (See appendix webpage for details). (a) Numbers indicate the frequency of the use of each word per article. ‘National’ represents the averages for <i>Yomiuri Shimbun</i> , <i>Asahi Shimbun</i> and <i>Mainichi Shimbun</i> and their standard errors. (b) Corresponding analysis plot of Table (a)	74
Fig. 5.1	Visualizes our analysis of the social relationships between actors during the anniversary months of March in 2011–2013	87
Fig. 6.1	Number of stories published about iodide tablets between 12 March and 1 April 2011	106
Fig. 7.1	Number of mentions compared to number of direct quotations of experts from 2011 to 2016	125

Additional figures and tables can be found on the Appendix website at <http://waseda.steman.jp/lab/fukushima-appendix/>