Toward a Theory of Islandness:
A Case Study of Art Tourism in the Naoshima Island, Japan

STEPHANIE ÉVORA[*]

Abstract: This study presents a new interpretation of islandness by examining the Benesse Art Site Naoshima, which consists of projects in the Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima Islands. Past studies on islandness overlooked connections between islands and the process of cultivating a sense of collectivity among islands. As an African islander, it is the researcher's view that inter-island connectivity rehabilitated by art tourism contributes to the socio-economic development of the islands. Narrative data is analysed (collected through semi-structured interviews with islanders, visitors, and stakeholders) and is supplemented by figures (statistics on population, visitors, cost, and frequency of transportation between islands). The research revealed that art tourism had a large and significant socioeconomic impact on the islands with improved infrastructure, renewed inter-island connection, and a wave of incoming migration. But Benesse Art Site Naoshima is only seasonal, requiring residents to pursue multiple livelihoods strategies. There are five defining elements of islandness, of which boundness, smallness, amplification by compression, and connectivity are deep-rooted in the development of the islands. Yet collectivity is still in its initial stages and needs more progress.

Keywords: Nissology; art tourism; islandness; connectivity; collectivity

Introduction

This study aims to position itself within and contribute to the emerging research field called nissology[1] by using an interdisciplinary approach to understand 'islandness' and advance the theorization. It aims to review its defining elements while introducing two new elements: connectivity and collectivity. *Islandness* does not necessarily mean isolation. Notably, this study's intuition is that bringing the

---

[*] PhD Student, Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan. E-mail: phanieevora@gmail.com

[1] Nissology is the study of islands on their own terms, i.e., the inquiry into islandness. The spread and experience of the island condition, the islander's reality, and the relations within/between the network of islands has been studied, extolled, and discussed by several scholars, such as McCall (1994), Depraetere（2008a; 2008b), Baldacchino (2006); Hay (2006).

islands together as a family will unleash the power of a group of islands. This article expects to offer a new interpretation of islandness by examining the inter-island connectivity rehabilitated by art tourism. This study firmly believes that it can add value to island studies and Afro-Asian area studies by learning from the experiences in Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima, a group of islands in the Seto Inland Sea (hereafter the *Setonaikai*[2]). The examination of experiences in these islands will enable us to understand the relationships between inter-island connectivity and the development of islands in the Pacific and potentially in the Atlantic.

The study also aims to determine the conceptual reliability of connectivity and collectivity identified in art tourism in the islands and examine to what extent art tourism is a viable, sustainable practice to enhance connectivity and collectivity. Lastly, it examines the potential impact of art tourism on the development of the Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima Islands. The article tries to do so by using interview narratives collected in the three islands, which have served as the primary data for analysis.

The islands belong to a collective of art-related activities called Benesse Art Site Naoshima. The activities started in Naoshima in 1987 and consequently spread to Inujima in 2008 and Teshima in 2010. In the past couple of years, Naoshima has been amply advertised in magazines and art-related circles as a mecca for art lovers and connoisseurs. It has been the target of art-related studies (see Kondo 2012). It has also been acknowledged by the Okayama Prefecture Remote Plan Strategies for the islands' future development to increase the number of visitors as well as in other reports (直島町 Naoshima Town 2010; Okayama Prefecture 2013; Ministry of Land Infrastructure Transport and Tourism 2010).

A group of islands is a miniature universe that entangles countless dualities within the same space and time. Islanders make their living with a local knowledge that simultaneously pays homage to their ancestry and reflects their daily reality. At the same time, they are also exposed to non-locals while adapting to a globalizing world. This applies to both the author's country of origin—Cabo Verde—and current country—Japan. They are both island nations, though Japan is larger in size. While coming of age in Cabo Verde, an archipelago located off the shore of West Africa and surrounded by land areas that were physically separated by the sea, there was a sense of being connected to the islands by identity. This has allowed the researcher to dive into the study of islands and islanders away from home and set a path for further exploration of the '*what, who, how, why, and when*' for research on the subject. Some may think that because the author is an islander, she has a pre-configured bias toward the subject. In contrast, others may identify it as a specificity that would enrich the analysis and simultaneously guide the author to scrutinize the islands' relations, dichotomies, and experiences. The author believes that being an islander provides the research with a crucial insider view and understanding of an islands' value, characteristics, and potential.

---

[2] The region is Japan's largest inland sea and a vital transportation route in ancient times.

1. About the Data

In collecting narratives, the study used semi-structured interviews. The islanders who were interviewed were randomly chosen using the snowballing sample technique. Naoshima Local #1, the first interviewee, introduced the researcher to Naoshima Local #2, who agreed to participate in the interview and then introduced others. In this process, the sample interviewees swelled in size. This methodology acquired the necessary information and appropriately analyzed the lived experiences of the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews were prepared by combining questions informed by theory with information transmitted to the researcher by the interviewees, using personal narratives of lived experiences (Fontana and Frey 2003; Galleta 2013).

The primary data consists of interviews conducted on the islands of Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima in Setonaikai, Japan. Interviewees were residents, visitors, and stakeholders; the data gleaned from these exchanges were supplemented with the researcher's observations while on the islands. A total of 25 interviews were conducted: 8 with Naoshima residents, 7 with Teshima residents, 4 with Inujima residents, 5 with visitors, and 1 with a stakeholder. The Naoshima Island interviews were conducted from November 13 to 19, 2019, followed by Teshima and Inujima from December 6 to 9, 2019. The visits to the islands were just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The secondary data sources include official island documentation, censuses, books, academic journals, papers, brochures, reports, and statistics.

The islanders interviewed were residents born in the islands, left for some years, and then returned[3] or had relocated to the islands. Still, they had lived in the locale for some decades. Two interviewees moved back to Naoshima at the beginning of the art tourism projects, and one from Inujima relocated to the island six years before opening his establishment.

Interview questions varied in length and scope depending on the group (islanders, visitors, or stakeholders). Some interviews were conducted in Japanese with help from a Japanese friend to interpret and translate. As the list of basic questions had been translated into Japanese in advance, it is presumed that there is no misunderstanding about the intention of the research on the part of the interviewees.

2. Toward a New Interpretation of Islandness

Islands have long been considered exotic, mysterious, or dreadful in Western imagination. At times, their representation in culture, arts, and literature[4] gives them

---

[3] Those who left the islands typically moved to Osaka, Takamatsu, Tokyo, Okayama, or abroad. Locals from Naoshima moved more often compared to locals from Inujima and Teshima.

[4] Some examples of literature that describes islands include *The Odyssey,* written by Homer in the eighth century BC, which tells the perilous adventures Odysseus faced while passing

an almost surreal existence that has been described since the beginning of time and defined depending on the relation between the island and the person defining it.

Some say that we live in a world of islands (Baldacchino 2007) or a sea of islands (Hau'ofa 1994). This article defines the island as a small piece of land surrounded by water, where the sea is regarded not as a barrier but rather as an extension of its islandness. Furthermore, this study concurs that an island's mainland or surrounding waters may have limited resources, and inhabitants may partake in multitasking economic activities that amplify their impact due to geographical factors. This definition is adapted from several preceding works (Baldacchino 2018; 2008; 2005; Hall 2012; Hay 2006; Sharpley 2012; Péron 2004; UNCLOS 1982).

The concept of islandness has been contested by many scholars who present different definitions and understandings. One such definition describes islandness as "the essence of island living, the attributes that make an island what it fundamentally is, and which it has by necessity, without which it loses its identity" (Royle and Brinklow 2018, 11). In an influential definition, Baldacchino (2018, xxv–xxx) described islandness as the distinctive essence of being an island and is divided into five elements: *boundedness, smallness, amplification by compression, isolation, and fragmentation*. However, we will not focus on isolation and fragmentation for this study, as these two elements do not seem typical in many islands. Instead, many islands are networked, and connected islanders may nurture collective identity beyond fragmentation. The experiences in Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima Islands illustrate these points. The excluded elements of isolation and fragmentation are now replaced with *connectivity* and *collectivity*.

The differences in island size affect how islanders relate to each other and the outside world. Smallness enhances an island's practice of openness by welcoming newcomers or enhancing its relationship with neighboring islands. The smaller the island, the greater its openness, which is manifested by welcoming newcomers and extending relations to neighboring islands. Indeed, this sentiment is evident in Hay (2006), who agrees that island life is not characterized by isolation. Instead, it could be claimed that islanders are more connected and aware of human interactions than non-islanders. Differences in size also affect how islands are affected by developmental changes. Larger ones may not feel changed realities as acutely as smaller ones, even if the nature of the change is the same. This attests to the influence of smallness and amplification as characteristics of islandness. A rapid increase in the number of visitors to Naoshima (3,000) must be experienced differently than in Inujima Island, whose population is less than 50.

The relationship within an archipelago is characterized by mutual connections and a sense of shared destiny. It is not a disconnection but a continuation. The enhancement of an inter-island identity, inhabitants' openness to non-islanders

---

by different islands on his way home from the Trojan War; *Robinson Crusoe,* written by Daniel Defoe in 1719, depicts the life of a man who spent years on an island following a shipwreck; *Treasure Island,* written in 1883 by R. L. Stevenson, tells a story of pirates on a hunt for the treasure of an evil pirate buried on an island; and the Japanese tale of *Momo taro and Onigashima,* in which Momotaro sets off for an island to subjugate the *Oni*, or devils, who lived there.

and islanders alike, and the connection between islands in the same archipelago are the key route to their full development. Boundedness enhances feelings of identity and belonging, allowing islanders to enjoy greater attachment with the islands encircled by water. Here, the *collectivity* of islanders emerges because inhabitants are bound to their islands and neighboring ones as well. This collectivity is accomplished through shared history, community relations, culture, disasters (natural or artificial), geography, and other complex variables that give meaning to their islandness. The collectivity element experienced by the islands is still in its initial form, with the activities connected to art tourism serving as a stimulating mechanism for its development.

Islands are connected and bound to each other even when scholars and islanders themselves do not realize their *connectivity*. This connectivity may not be recognizable to some scholars. Nevertheless, this research argues that island societies may be momentarily disconnected through time but reconnect once again when the cycle is completed: "most island societies are, or once were, connected to other island societies—as colonists, trade partners, tributaries, allies, wife-givers, and in other ways" (Hage and Harary 2006, 1). Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima are islands previously connected by an extensive network linked to different economic activities. Over time, the industrialization of Japan—and, specifically, the Setonaikai—after World War II brought this historical connection ironically to a standstill. The linkages between the islands fluctuated from proximity and shared prosperity to a post-industrial decline accompanied by depopulation, and finally to a sort of revived connectivity. This network is now being restored through art tourism, which may eventually connect the entire archipelago within the inland sea.

Thus, this study does not define the examined islands as isolated places but rather as networks that were once connected within the region by the history and legacy of Setonaikai and their geographic closeness. We hypothesize that this inter-island connectivity was revived with recent art tourism capitalizing on their proximity. Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima Islands belong to a web of human interaction formed between the islanders of each island and visitors passing by its ports. Art tourism is defined as: "any activity that involves travel to see art and would include those people who travel very specifically to see art somewhere else as well as those who often or occasionally include visits to see art among other activities during tours, holidays or other trips away from home" (Franklin 2018, 399–400). This study discusses art tourism because it has become an overwhelming feature of Naoshima and its neighboring islands. Art tourism garners global enthusiasm. Although art-related activities have been in Naoshima since 1992, the art tourism in the islands gained momentum only recently, with scholars focused on the relation between art tourism and communities in Setonaikai[5]. The islands are connected through circuit tourism involving unique art sites, projects, exhibitions, and museums in various islands in the region[6].

---

[5] For more information see Miyamoto (2018); Qu (2019; 2020); Funck and Chang (2018).

[6] Naoshima's art tourism resonates with the UNESCO initiative of Creative Cities Network (https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home), although in the case of the former, the emphasis is on the fusion between art and rural landscapes of small islands rather than on

This article primarily examines the internal connectivity of the Naoshima Islands. It is necessary, however, to first consider the nature of contacts between the islanders and non-islanders. These encounters are appreciated and needed by some islanders, as stated by an interviewee: "Meeting people with a different background you get to grow as a person, so I think positively about it" (Teshima Local #1).

Prashad (2012) stated that the "fate of the small islands is to disappear" due to rising sea levels. Islanders from Inujima would say that an island can disappear not only by being submerged into the sea but also by simply losing its livelihood, inhabitants, and connections. Locals from the three islands agreed that tourists brought more energy and life. As an interviewee from Inujima commented: "Everyone became energetic. I was thinking that the islands were finished. [But] the art festival and art things [have] created job opportunities" (Inujima Local #4).

The following sections will consider how art tourism has created and rehabilitated relations and connections between the three islands, bearing this time perspective in mind. This will help the study explain how these relations are connected to islands' socio-economic development.

3. The Historical Settings of the Naoshima Islands

Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima are found in the Setonaikai, Japan's largest inland sea. In ancient times, the Setonaikai was a vital transportation route for the circulation of goods and the spread of culture from the old capitals of Nara and Kyoto to Kyushu. It also served as a major transportation route for trade with China and Korea; its waters were filled with merchant ships and pirates (Sansom 1990; Shively and McCullough 1999). Encounters with pirates along the Setonaikai were common and feared by many. More often than not, these pirates were fishermen who could venture into raiding ships or establish commercial relations with distant dynasties and kingdoms (Shapinsky 2014). The region's islands also developed with the expansion of farmland and fishing ports.

Following the Industrial Revolution after the Meiji Restoration, the Setonaikai region became home to many factories that served various functions and industries[7]—from navy shipyards to copper mining and chemical industries (Kohno 1977). In the earlier period, islanders looked inward and focused on their livelihoods in their locales, trying to enhance their economic stability. Naoshima flourished with its fishery and salt industries, which thrived due to its climate and location. Teshima enjoyed prosperous agriculture and dairy industries and fishery and stone ones. After the island adventured into industrial waste disposal in the 1970s and failed, its public image deteriorated significantly. Indeed, it became known for having some of the worst industrial pollution in Japan. Notably, efforts to clean the island were headed by islanders, who united and presented a complaint against the company responsible

---

urban regeneration.

[7] The history of industrial development and the entry of the art industry in Naoshima is summarized in Miyamoto (2018). Korean forced labour in Naoshima during the Second World War is documented in Jodo (1992).

for the waste plant and Kagawa Prefecture. Naoshima's economy has also been heavily dependent on the Mitsubishi copper refinery (Shibata 2012; Fukushima 2012; Shiwaku 2010). As for Inujima, the islanders also faced pollution problems that stemmed from its refinery industry.
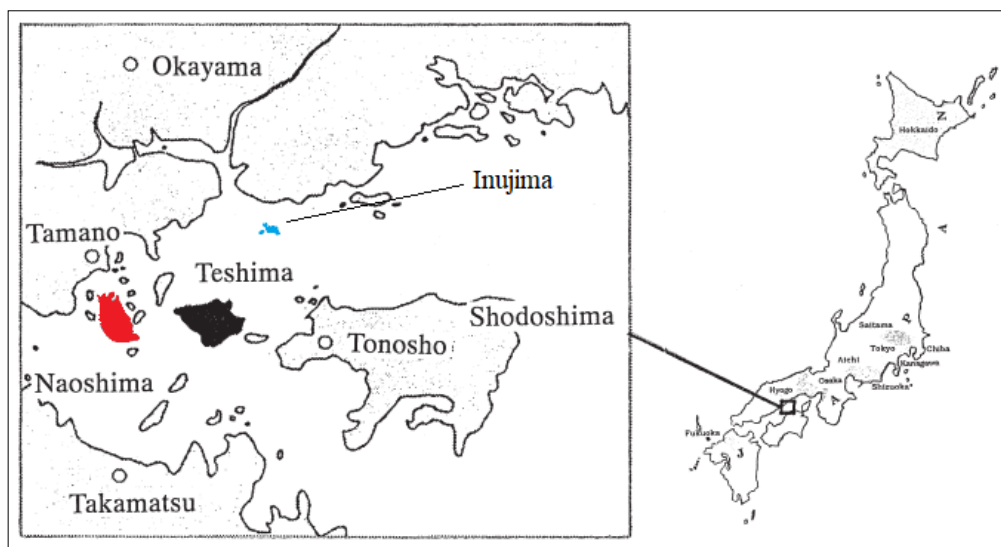

Figure 1: The islands of Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima in the Setonaikai
Source: Adapted from Takatsuki (2003, 27)

4. Art Tourism and the Islands or the Islands and Art Tourism?

Naoshima belongs to Kagawa Prefecture and consists of the Miyanoura District, the Honmura District, and the Tsumu'ura District. The island has an area of 8.13 km^2; as of 2015, it had 3,105 people, according to Benesse Art Site Naoshima (2019a) and (SanukiSetoShimaNet 2016). As in many areas of Japan, the island has seen a major change in its population, which dropped from 7,501 people in 1955 to 4,671 in 1990, eventually reaching today's total. Teshima is the largest island in terms of land size, with an area of 14.5 km^2, and belongs to Kagawa Prefecture; as of 2015, its population was 867. The island has a favorable climate for agriculture and is known for several local products. Bottom-up entrepreneurship countering "elite arts" in Teshima (Qu 2020) may have something to do with this strong basis of livelihoods. Agriculture was much of the local economy of Teshima until the industrial waste disposal sector replaced it. Inujima is the smallest island, with a total land area of 0.54 km^2, belonging to Okayama Prefecture. In the past, the island had a well-established copper refinery that allowed its population to reach between 3,000 and 4,000 people. As of the latest census, however, the population of Inujima stands at only 47 people.

The islands of Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima belong to a collective of art-related activities called Benesse Art Site Naoshima. These activities are conducted

by Benesse Holdings and the Fukutake Foundation[8]. The project started in 1987 with the opening of an elementary school children's camp used as a trial for the project. The camp, the Naoshima International Camping Ground, was built in 1989 under the supervision of the famous architect Tadao Ando. The project originated with a conversation between Tetsuhiko Fukutake, the founding president of Fukutake Publishing, and Chikatsugu Miyake, the mayor of Naoshima at the time (Benesse Art Site Naoshima 2019b). However, Tetsuhiko Fukutake passed away six months after this exchange with Miyake, and it was his son, Soichiro Fukutake, who took up the project (Benesse Art Site Naoshima 2013, 12).

Following the campground activities, they launched the project in 1992 to complete the first art-related infrastructure built on the island, the Benesse House Museum. Then, Benesse Art Site Naoshima began operating in Inujima in 2008 with the opening of the Inujima Seirensho Art Museum. Later, it expanded to Teshima in 2010 with the opening of the Teshima Art Museum. Notably, both museums are the main attractions of the respective islands. (ibid.)

Artworks are located on museums, private or public properties, and scattered around the islands. The artworks not being confined to one specific space encourages visitors to walk or cycle along the streets and into hidden corners, exploring each district and beach shore to discover all the art-related infrastructures. This allows for a unique glimpse into the islanders' lives and identities and participation in the fusion of traditional and contemporary human cultures with the surrounding nature. Soichiro Fukutake once noted, "I am not in this business because I love art. It is to bring smiles and energy to the elderly in underpopulated areas. In that sense, I am only interested in underpopulated areas. My dream is to show the world the sea, the islands, life and folklore of the Setouchi region." (Nagahata and Edahiro 2010, 139).

The overall assessment from the reports and literature purports that the community positively accepted Benesse's activities. However, they generally did not understand the appeal of their island or contemporary art before that time. The islanders participated in the projects either through interactions with the artists on the island or by participating in the activities and becoming advocates for them. One of the interviewees, however, pointed out that the islanders from Naoshima had disagreements with Benesse. This person's observations were as follows:

> There was a fight between the Benesse and the local people. This is because it was a new kind of things[9]: Benesse just came to the island and started to build the museum, the hotel, and other things. For the house project area, they renovated the old houses that had been my friends' or grandparents', or

---

[8] Benesse Holdings Inc. is a Japanese company with headquarters in Okayama City. It focuses on education and the publication of educational materials, and also specializes in various services such as nursing care, childcare, and the Global Kodomo Challenge (Benesse Art Site Naoshima 2019b; Benesse Holgings Inc. 2019). The Fukutake Foundation and the Naoshima Fukutake Art Museum Foundation were established in 2004 (Benesse Art Site Naoshima 2013).

[9] Qu (2019) argues that there remain "cultural conflicts" between the industry and the local, claiming that the artworks do not necessarily represent the world view of the latter.

something like that. They just renovated them for the sake of art, and then they said okay, now local people cannot enter here — you cannot enter here, so you have to pay to see the things, the Benesse area. They said, from here to here is Benesse's area, we bought this area, so you cannot enter it—for, like, swimming, for the beach. So, we had a fight, and now the local people can go to the museums for free—we have had meetings sometimes, and yeah—we felt like—Benesse was intruding upon our history, our island, we felt invaded… (Naoshima Local #1)

It was interesting to discover that at the beginning, the islanders seemed to have united against what they considered to be an invasion of an outside force. Islands may suffer when tourism infrastructure is expanded, as what locals once considered public property is transformed into private property. The public or private sector disregards the islanders' opinions or contributions about disrupting their daily lives.

The art tourism of the islands is significantly boosted by the Setouchi Triennale art festival (*Setouchi* is an alternative name for the Setonaikai region). The festival, initiated in 2010, revived the traditions of each island that participated in its first season of the festival. They were: Naoshima, Teshima, Inujima, Megijima, Ogijima, Shodoshima, and Oshima, as stated by Stakeholder #1. After the first edition in 2010, the sessions were divided according to the seasons (autumn, spring, and summer) in 2016 and 2019. This division was made to alleviate the burden caused by the rush of tourists. The number of art exhibitions and art-related activities varies from one island to another. According to one tourist, "the level of the art is different on these islands. The Teshima Museum and Naoshima Museum are different. Visitors are also different, so this kind of art can be good for some people or better for other people. It is according to each person" (Visitor #5). But for others, the difference between one island and the others is significant: "For me who is in Teshima, I was a bit jealous of the art project in Naoshima" (Teshima Local #4).

Many islanders are aware of such differences: "Number-wise, the number of tourists here is less when compared to Naoshima" (Teshima Local #7). Teshima seems to have experienced a decline in visitors from 154,713 in 2016 to 143,373 in 2019 (Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee 2020, 3). Nonetheless, their huge presence was noted by the locals: "The streets were flooded with people. When it comes to tourists, there are way more foreigners than Japanese, especially during the art festival" (Teshima Local #3). The number of visitors to Inujima has been decreasing at each festival, from 61,809 in 2013 to 60,212 in 2016, and then to 58,707 in 2019 (Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee 2017, 16; 2020, 3).

In the following sections, the case study is presented according to two themes that correspond to the two revisited elements of islandness: connectivity and collectivity. Additionally, the implications of art tourism for the everyday life of the islanders are discussed.

(1) Inter-Island Connectivity

Transportation connections between the islands and the ports in the two main areas, Honshu and Shikoku, are in operation and run throughout the year, with extra trips made during times of particularly heavy tourism. For Naoshima, approaches from both Kagawa Prefecture and Okayama Prefecture are possible.
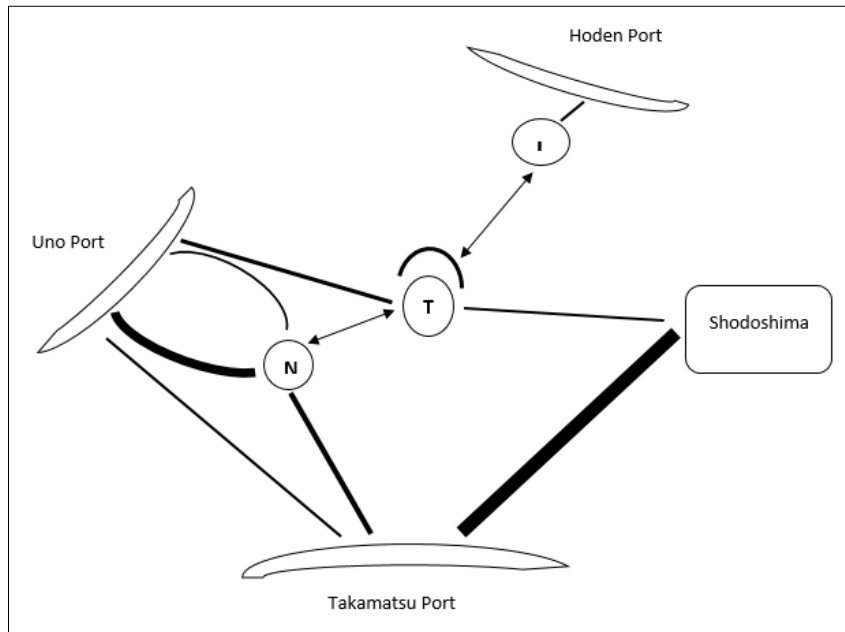

Figure 2: Connection between Islands and Surrounding Ports
N: Naoshima, **T**: Teshima, **I**: Inujima
Source: Created by the author

In Figure 2, the thickness of the lines connecting the areas shows the frequency of the connecting ferry/high-speed passenger boat services available between Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima Islands and surrounding ports. The thicker the line, the more frequent the connection. Connections between the islands and the nearest mainland ports appear to be more significant, with the connections between Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima being the fewest in the region. Moreover, the boat services between islands are also used by visitors as part of the art tourism circuit.

The connections between Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima drew attention during this research since inter-island transport did not exist before art tourism was launched in the islands. This attests to the importance of the third element of islandness, *connectivity*, which became real with the network of art tourism activities between the islands. In response to the question of how locals see people from other islands, one interviewee in Naoshima answered, "…We do not have any common information between the islands. …I think it started some years ago for the art, just for the art—so we did not have ferries or boats running between. That is why it is hard to visit each other." (Naoshima Local #1)

Connections between the islands are made three times a day by a high-speed boat departing from the port of Miyanoura in Naoshima. The boat trips between the islands are based on the opening hours of the Teshima Art Museum and Inujima Seirensho Art Museum. Islanders and visitors equally enjoy the route connecting the islands. The travel time between Naoshima and Teshima does not suggest a significant time constraint while living on the islands or managing one's stay on the destination island. On the other hand, traveling from Naoshima to Inujima takes about an hour, thus making the journey troublesome. The limitations over the costs of travel between the islands were discussed by one of the visitors, who stated that the journey was "very expensive" and that it was easier to "go around the other islands" (Visitor #5). They also discussed the need for some infrastructural improvements in the islands with the ideas centered mainly around transportation with Visitor (#1) suggesting a ferry ticket system like the one present in Okinawa that allows more purchase options other than the round-trip ticket. Another tourist shared this sentiment: "More frequent transport would help, with more buses and boats" (Visitor #3). The geographically compact Naoshima Islands transportation network will be like Tokyo's if the industry thoughtfully responds to these demands. That would be an amplification effect brought by the outsiders, but it is hard to say whether the islanders would be happy about it.

Of the five visitors interviewed for this study, none had visited the island of Inujima, despite the charm of this small island described by Favell (2016). The price of a high-speed boat ticket from Naoshima to Inujima complicates the connection between the islands for visitors and the islanders. Visitors might be able to adapt their trip to accommodate changes in itineraries. But islanders have less chance of doing so since the time constraint of traveling from Naoshima or Teshima to Okayama and then connecting to Hoden Port may not accommodate their routine.

(2) Community Involvement and the Island Life

The art tourism industry brought several changes to the archipelago of Naoshima, not just to the economic situation of the islanders but to the community itself. According to one Naoshima local, the industry brought changes to the elderly population with their broad demographics, giving them more opportunities to socialize and experience new things: "Especially for the old people, I think they are having a good time because their chance to speak has increased. The visitors are young, and the older people like talking to young tourists and visitors" (Naoshima Local #1). The Naoshima Bath facility was constructed by the Benesse Group but is operated by the Naoshima Tourism Association and the Residents Association. The bath is free for the locals and hires local people to tend to the building. This facility is an example of a space where islanders can meet and interact with visitors while interacting with other islanders.

There are several cafés and restaurants on the islands, most of which were opened by people from outside the islands. This aligns with local narratives, such as "The people who are engaged in tourism are mostly people who moved in the islands and a small number of locals. I did not think tourism would flourish" (Naoshima Local #4). However, the art tourism industry on the island is prized as a source of

economic income, even though it is uncertain if the industry is sustainable. Around Naoshima Island, there are 74 accommodation facilities and 54 restaurants and cafés; Teshima Island has 24 restaurants and cafés along with 12 accommodations, and Inujima has seven restaurants and cafés. A Naoshima local shared that:

> As the number of tourists increases, the number of restaurants and hotels has been increasing significantly. You cannot deny that the locals and people who moved into the islands have gotten some business chances. However, the businesses target the visitors, and the owners are getting old. The small shops on the islands go out of business because they do not have successors. I do not think it is doing any good to the locals. (Naoshima Local #5)

The tourism industry has also contributed to making locals' lives more manageable with the addition of a convenience store and ATM that Naoshima Island did not have beforehand and longer working hours for supermarkets. (Naoshima Local #1)

In Inujima and Teshima, the islanders identified the social changes that tourism brought to the mood and environment on the islands, with Inujima becoming "a lot cleaner and … more energetic than it was in the past" (Inujima Local #3) and more young people roaming around the islands (Teshima Local #6). A notable transformation is slowly unfolding on Inujima Island: "A lot of tourists started coming to the islands, and at the same time, many people are moving here, which is very significant. If not for the art project, those people would not have moved to Inujima" (Inujima Local #1). The interviewee is also part of those who have relocated to Inujima Island and opened his own small business. Inujima Local (#1) relocated to the island coming from Setouchi City, lured by "the smallness of the community" and the possibility of running a café where he could exhibit his work.

This appeal of island life to outsiders is not restricted to Inujima: "In Teshima, the number of people who want to settle is increasing, but I am not sure if there are enough vacant houses for them" (Stakeholder #1). As a matter of brand image, Naoshima seems to have already become a modest 'winner' in attracting new residents, as well as "volunteer tourists," countering the natural decrease of the original population (Funck and Chang 2018; Funck 2020, 188–91). Another local made the following observation: "There are some cases in which some visitors moved to one of the islands and married a local. It is good that these cases occur because it prevents the decrease in the island's population. That is something important in this era of an aging and shrinking population." (Naoshima Local #5)

Local people from the three islands all agreed that the tourists brought more energy and life. That said, some locals think tourists can be "troublesome" (Naoshima Local #6), or they can lack manners such as "throwing garbage away in public" and "breaking traffic rules" (Naoshima Local #8). Locals also cited the language barrier as a hindrance in dealing with visitors. According to a local on Teshima, it is necessary to focus on matters that have not been addressed yet, such as sanitation: "We have problems with garbage and bathrooms …Some people throw garbage into our garbage cans, and that is troublesome" (Teshima Local #3). The shortage of bathrooms is even mentioned in the Teshima Guide Map and Timetable

brochure distributed by the nonprofit organization (NPO) Teshima Tourism Association and Tonosho Town Office Commerce and Tourism Department (2019, 1). Both publications are available in English and Japanese and state: "When you come across a restroom, use it because restroom facilities are scarce on some islands."

These changes to the communities and the island life are given higher importance when we consider the different sizes of the islands and how amplified the effects of new features are on the ground. The smaller the islands' size, the more significant is the impact of pollution and improved infrastructures.

Teshima has benefited from a bridge organization that helps maintain the islanders' relationships with other islands participating in the Setouchi Triennale and visitors from outside. This connection is established through the *Koebitai* (a volunteer group that provides support to Setouchi Triennale), as stated by its representative:

> Koebitai has to connect these people. That is a mission for Koebitai. Koebitai then organized Shima Kitchen. It is a restaurant and a platform to connect islanders and visitors and offers meals using locally produced ingredients. The place is located in Karato Oka near the Teshima Art Museum. Koebitai helped with the organization of Shima Kitchen. In 2014, Koebitai decided to hold a birthday event every month, Otanjoukai, to invite islanders as well as visitors to celebrate together. The event brings a wide range of people, from children to the elderly, to celebrate. …Otanjoukai provides them with an opportunity to go out and socialize with others. Some older people only leave their homes for this event due to their age. (Stakeholder #1).

The islanders benefit from more frequent connections between themselves and people from other islands and between people residing on the same island, increasing their sense of collectivity. Older people who participate in these activities enjoy socializing with others, thereby curbing their loneliness. Another aspect of the advantage of these events is that some allow for islanders to visit different islands and "…In some cases, women from Ogijima go to Teshima to get married and women from Teshima go to Naoshima to get married" (Stakeholder #1). Collectivity is stimulated by the activities connected to art tourism, either by direct interaction with the artworks or by participation in the activities organized by volunteer groups like Koebitai. The exposure to islanders from different islands and non-islanders that take part in activities like Otanjoukai or Shima Kitchen stimulates the exchange of experiences and voices between the participants.

Notably, however, a strict focus on tourism for island revenue may not be the most sustainable path since the inhabitants have voiced reservations over the future of the activity on the island. This sentiment was expressed as follows: "tourism is, of course, important for the future, but it is also important to raise the islands' values and make the islands more attractive" (Naoshima Local #2). Furthermore, some explicitly questioned the sustainability in Naoshima. While outsiders tend to see the short-term effects of art tourism, islanders anticipate what the locale will look like in the decades to come:

Naoshima's development is kind of hitting the head now … if they build another art or another thing which is very interesting [and] — which is very attractive to make the tourists come more, it is okay but— …If they do not do that, the number of tourists will reduce in 30 years—I mean in five years, I think. (Naoshima Local #1)

Conclusion

The islands of Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima in the Setonaikai have become a mecca for art tourism. While it attracts tourists worldwide, there is a relative paucity of academic research on this phenomenon[10]. This is especially the case for studies grounded in the voices and perspectives of the islanders themselves. Examining the voice of the islanders affected by the art tourism in their resident islands and observing the relationships between islanders and visitors while collecting narratives from each of these groups allowed the study to be *about*, *from*, and with results *for* islands.

In the islands' context, the definition of islandness requires serious revision. Thus, two new defining elements were introduced: connectivity and collectivity. Conventional nissology has divided islandness – the distinctive essence of being an island – into five elements: boundedness, smallness, amplification by compression, connectivity, and collectivity. Boundedness is the main feature of islandness since it partakes in the encirclement of the islands by water. The smallness of the islands enhances openness to those who arrive at their shores. The size of the islands coupled with amplification by compression forces islanders and visitors to experience all the changes and pressures at a higher level. Connectivity is presented by the new network of transportation that did not exist prior to the art tourism industry. Finally, the islanders are bound not only to their neighboring islands but also the visitors participating in the art project in collective ways.

The activities in the communities offer valuable opportunities for stronger connectivity that are accomplished easier due to the smallness and boundedness of the islands. Although collectivity among the islanders was enhanced by Otanjoukai and other activities organized by Koebitai, ventures to cultivate collective feelings among people residing in different islands still seem to be in their initial phase. Before the Benesse Art Site Naoshima project, visits between the islands were scarce due to a lack of transportation options. At the inception of the venture, interactions between islanders and non-islanders began. Nurturing collectivity through activities and encounters occasioned by art tourism could further contribute to the islands' development.

Art tourism brought a series of significant changes to the islanders' livelihoods, such as gains in infrastructure, shops, and restaurants, and new

---

[10] There is a dozen of Japanese articles on art industry and festivals in the Naoshima Islands. Many are informative, but short, introductory pieces. Miyamoto (2018), a substantial monograph, discusses several art-related community regeneration projects including the one in Naoshima.

transportation routes establishing connectivity between Naoshima, Teshima, and Inujima. The activities also brought new waves of migration to the islands, with new residents exploring the services industry that benefits from the influx of visitors. The industry has provided other ways to support the local community and economy. It intensified interactions between islanders and non-islanders, thus changing their perceptions of each other and bringing real change to the islanders' lives. The effects of people's activities tend to be amplified on smaller islands. As a result, the impact of recent art tourism on the Naoshima Islands has been enormous. The islanders appreciate the energy it has brought and have enjoyed enhanced convenience in their everyday lives while at the same time facing the adverse effects of excessive tourism. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic restored tranquility to the islands, but it seems that the islands have been very quick to return to their previous state.

People from the three islands concurred that art tourism should not be the only economic activity for the development of the islands, as they need something else that would attract young people. As stated by some locals, "I want more young people to live on the island" (Inujima Local #2); "It would be best to tie the islands' economy to an industry that could be profitable through all seasons" (Naoshima Local #8). One local even suggested that "It would be nice if they connected agriculture and tourism. It is a problem that there are not many young people on the island and there is no one to inherit jobs" (Teshima Local #1). The islanders see each aspect of their development subordinated to one another and connected to the improvement of transportation between the islands. Islanders from the different islands seem to want the same thing—diversify the economy and attract future residents—even though there is no collective awareness of the fact. Teshima Local #1 argues that the future would be better for locals since they are now looking beyond the borders of their island. But there is still something to be done: "we have to do something from inside the island because the art festival is the power that comes from outside of the island." The dependency on an exterior force for development must be overcome with innovation and diversification of the economy, with islanders taking part in a collective decision process as key stakeholders for the islands' future.

References

Baldacchino, Godfrey. 2005. "Editorial: Islands: Objects of Representation." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 87 (4): 247–51.

———. 2006. "Islands, Island Studies, Island Studies Journal." *Island Studies Journal* 1 (May 2006): 3–18.

———. 2007. "Editorial: Introducing a World of Islands." In *A World of Islands: An Island Studies Reader*, edited by Godfrey Baldacchino, 1–29. Charlottetown, Canada: Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island and Agenda Academic.

———. 2008. "Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some Epistemological and Methodological Challenges to the Pursuit of Island Studies." *Island Studies Journal* 3 (1): 37–59.

———. ed. 2018. *The Routledge International Handbook of Island Studies: A World of Islands*. First Edit. London: Routledge.

Benesse Art Site Naoshima. 2013. *Becoming: Benesse Art Site Naoshima*. Edited by Kenjiro Kaneshiro, Kiyomi Waki, and Yoko Hemmi. Naoshima, Kagawa: Benesse Art Site Naoshima, Fukutake Foundation.

———. 2019a. "About the Islands." 2019. http://benesse-artsite.jp/en/about/island.html.

———. 2019b. "History of Benesse Art Site Naoshima." 2019. https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/about/history.html.

Benesse Holgings Inc. 2019. "Our Business." 2019. https://www.benesse-hd.co.jp/en/about/management/business.html.

Depraetere, Christian. 2008a. "The Challenge of Nissology: A Global Outlook on the World Archipelago Part I: Scene Setting the World Archipelago." *Island Studies Journal* 3 (1): 3–16. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26569058_The_Challenge_of_Nissology_A_Global_Outlook_on_the_World_Archipelago_-_Part_I_Scene_Setting_the_World_Archipelago.

———. 2008b. "The Challenge of Nissology: A Global Outlook on the World Archipelago Part II: The Global and Scientific Vocation of Nissology." *Island Studies Journal* 3 (1): 17–36. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26569059_The_Challenge_of_Nissology_A_Global_Outlook_on_the_World_Archipelago_-_Part_II_The_Global_and_Scientific_Vocation_of_Nissology.

Favell, Adrian. 2016. "Islands for Life: Artistic Responses to Remote Social Polarization and Population Decline in Japan." In *Sustainability in Contemporary Rural Japan: Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by Stephanie Assman, First Edit, 109–24. London and New York: Routledge.

Fontana, Andrea, and James H. Frey. 2003. "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text." In *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, edited by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Second Edi, 61–106. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.

Franklin, Adrian. 2018. "Art Tourism: A New Field for Tourist Studies." *Tourist Studies* 18 (4): 399–416. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797618815025.

Fukushima, Toshio (福島利夫). 2012. " 「直島と豊島をつなぐ産業廃棄物処理問題のこれまでとこれから」『専修大学社会科学研究所月報』587-588号、55-62頁."

Funck, Carolin. 2020. "Has the Island Lure Reached Japan? Remote Islands between Tourism Boom, New Residents and Fatal Depopulation." In *Japan's New Ruralities: Coping with Decline in the Periphery*, edited by Wolfram Manzenreiter, Ralph Lutzeler, and Sebastian Polak-Rottmann, First Edit, 177–95. London: Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies.

Funck, Carolin, and Nan Chang. 2018. "Island in Transition: Tourists, Volunteers and Migrants Attracted by an Art-Based Revitalization Project in the Seto Inland Sea." In *Tourism in Transitions: Recovering Decline, Managing Change*, edited by Dieter K. Müller and Marek Więckowski, 81–96. Springer.

Galleta, Anne. 2013. *Mastering Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*. New York: New York University Press.

Hage, Per, and Frank Harary. 2006. *Island Networks Communication, Kinship, and Classification Structures in Oceania*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hall, C. Michael. 2012. "Island, Islandness, Vulnerability and Resilience." *Tourism Recreation Research* 37 (2): 177–81.

https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2012.11081703.

Hau'ofa, Epeli. 1994. "Our Sea of Islands." *The Contemporary Pacific* 6 (1): 148–61. http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10125/12960/1/v6n1-148-161-dialogue.pdf.

Hay, Pete. 2006. "A Phenomenology of Islands." *Island Studies Journal* 1 (1): 19–42.

Jodo, Takuya (浄土卓也). 1992. 『朝鮮人の強制連行と徴用―香川県・三菱直島精錬所と軍事施設』. 社会評論社.

Kohno, Michihiro. 1977. "The Problems of Industrial Development in Coastal Areas around the Japanese Inland Sea (Setonaikai)." In *International Congress on the Human Environment (HESC), Kyoto, 1975. Science For Better Environment*, edited by Secretariat HESC Organizing Committee and Science Council of Japan, 447–54. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Kondo, Junko. 2012. "Revitalization of a Community: Site-Specific Art and Art Festivals A Case of Art Site Naoshima." Master's Thesis. University of Jyväskylä. https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/37928/1/URN%3ANBN%3Afi%3Ajyu-201205301764.pdf.

McCall, Grant. 1994. "Nissology: A Proposal for Consideration." *Journal of The Pacific Society* 17, 2–3 (63–64): 93–106.

Ministry of Land Infrastructure Transport and Tourism. 2010. "Naoshima, an Island of Contemporary Art." https://www.mlit.go.jp/common/000138918.pdf.

Miyamoto, Yuka (宮本結佳). 2018. 『アートと地域づくりの社会学―直島・大島・越後妻有にみる記憶と創造』. 昭和堂.

Nagahata, Minoru, and Kanako Edahiro. 2010. "現代アートを活用した地域の再生・創造に関する研究―直島アートプロジェクトを事例として」."『大学教育 』（山口大学大学教育機構） 第7号: 131-143頁.

NPO Teshima Tourism Association, and Tonosho Town Office Commerce and Tourism Department. 2019. "Teshima Guide Map & Timetable 2019.11.5-." NPO Teshima Tourism Association.

Okayama Prefecture. 2013. "岡 山 県 離 島 振 興 計 画 Okayama Prefecture Remote Island Promotion Plan From FY2013 to FY2014." http://www.city.okayama.jp/contents/000173016.pdf.

Péron, Françoise. 2004. "The Contemporary Lure of the Island." *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 95 (3): 326–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2004.00311.x.

Prashad, Vijay. 2012. "Vanished." *IJOS: International Journal of Okinawan Studies* 3 (1): 43–44.

Qu, Meng. 2019. "Social, Political, and Community Agendas in the Arts." *The International Journal of Social, Political and Community Agendas in the Arts* 14 (3): 19–38.

———. 2020. "Teshima - from Island Art to the Art Island." *Shima* 14 (2): 250–65. https://doi.org/10.21463/SHIMA.14.2.16.

Royle, Stephen A., and Laurie Brinklow. 2018. "Definitions and Typologies." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Island Studies: A World of Islands*, edited by Godfrey Baldacchino, First Edit, 3–20. London: Routledge.

Sansom, George. 1990. *A History of Japan 1334-1615*. 2nd ed. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc.

SanukiSetoShimaNet. 2016. " 離 島 統 計 情 報 (Remote Island Statistics)."

https://www.pref.kagawa.lg.jp/chiiki/seto-island/statistics/.

Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee. 2017. "Setouchi Triennale 2016 General Report."
https://setouchi-
artfest.jp/seto_system/fileclass/img.php?fid=press_release_mst.20170217195218
ace09533ffebc6fe19970cb32faed335.

———. 2020. "Setouchi Triennale 2019: General Report."
https://doi.org/10.3917/ridp.741.0017.

Shapinsky, Peter D. 2014. *Lords of the Sea Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in the Late Medieval Japan*. First. Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan.

Sharpley, Richard. 2012. "Island Tourism or Tourism on Islands?" *Tourism Recreation Research* 37 (2): 167–72. https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2012.11081701.

Shibata, Hirotoshi (柴田 弘捷). 2012. "「銅製錬・アート・産廃処理の町・直島の現在─人口構成・産業構造・雇用環境」『専修大学社会科学研究所月報』587-588号、23-54頁."

Shively, Donald H., and William H. McCullough, eds. 1999. *The Cambridge History of Japan Volume 2 Heian Japan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shiwaku, Naoki (塩飽直紀). 2010. "「倉敷周辺での鉱業と公害事例」『倉敷芸術科学大学紀要』 第15号、129-141頁."

Takatsuki, H. 2003. "The Teshima Island Industrial Waste Case and Its Process towards Resolution." *Journal of Material Cycles and Waste Management* 5 (1): 26–30. https://doi.org/10.1007/s101630300005.

UNCLOS. 1982. *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The Law of the Sea: Progress and Prospects*.
https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf.

直島町 Naoshima Town. 2010. "直島町の人口ビジョン."
http://www.town.naoshima.lg.jp/government/cl1000036/cl1000061/i458.files/jink
oubijyon.pdf.

Interviews

Inujima Local #1 (2019) Interviewed by author, Inujima Island, December 8
Inujima Local #2 (2019) Interviewed by author, Inujima Island, December 8
Inujima Local #3 (2019) Interviewed by author, Inujima Island, December 8
Inujima Local #4 (2019) Interviewed by author, Inujima Island, December 8
Naoshima Local #1 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 17
Naoshima Local #2 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 18
Naoshima Local #4 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 18
Naoshima Local #5 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 18
Naoshima Local #6 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 18
Naoshima Local #8 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 18
Stakeholder #1 (2019) Interviewed by author, Takamatsu City, November 14
Teshima Local #1 (2019) Interviewed by author, Teshima Island, December 7
Teshima Local #3 (2019) Interviewed by author, Teshima Island, December 7
Teshima Local #4 (2019) Interviewed by author, Teshima Island, December 7

Teshima Local #6 (2019) Interviewed by author, Teshima Island, December 7
Teshima Local #7 (2019) Interviewed by author, Teshima Island, December 7
Visitor #3 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 14
Visitor #5 (2019) Interviewed by author, Naoshima Island, November 14