ISLANDS FOR LIFE
Art Projects and Post-Growth Philosophies in Japan
A virtual u:japan lecture by Adrian Favell

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online

https://japanologie.univie.ac.at/ujapanlectures
Japan offers one of the most dramatic examples of population decline and urban/rural polarization in the world. Although mostly off the radar of contemporary art theory discussions about “socially engaged art”, this context has provided some of the most creative international examples of bi/tri-ennales and art projects working in remote locations with socially isolated, ageing populations.

My presentation will discuss in particular the ideas and practice developed by art producer Fram Kitagawa in Niigata’s Echigo Tsumari (a triennale that has been running since 2000), as well as the Seto island based art projects of the artist Yukinori Yanagi, including one I have participated in, the Momoshima Art Base. While these projects draw on the almost limitless resources offered by the voluntary participation of young “lost generation(s)” artists and creatives as well as abundant empty properties in remote locations, a younger generation have responded in their own way to Japan’s stagnation and dilemmas over housing and art careers, with anarchist-like ideas of autonomous self-sufficiency and collective organisation. Here I consider the examples of Chaos Lounge, Kyohei Sakaguchi, Parplume and Shibu House.

These various projects raise interesting questions about the progressive intention of their ideas about the post-growth condition in Japan, as well as the particular politics of art organisation and participation in these contexts.