

Institution: University of Sheffield
Unit of Assessment: 27 - Area Studies
Title of case study: Repositioning Public Understanding of East Asian Development: Employment and Regional Depopulation in Japan
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Dr. Matanle's analysis of the social and cultural geography of Japan is repositioning public understanding of Japan's development dynamics among the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japanese and UK central government (eg. FCO, MIC, CLAIR). • Japanese and UK local authorities (eg. JLGC and Derbyshire CC). • International media and corporate representatives (eg. Economist Corporate Network). • UK school and citizen groups (eg. JSUK, Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle, Lincolnshire). <p>By exploring regional and sectoral contradictions in Japan's 20th century expansion and drawing out implications for Europe, East Asia, and post-tsunami reconstruction, Dr. Matanle's research is being used in policy formulation, public discourse and communication, and education to develop a deeper and more comprehensive approach to anticipating development trends in the 21st century.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Dr. Peter Matanle researches the dynamic roles of employment and demography as key explanatory variables in Japan's post-war development, and draws implications in the 21st century for a rapidly globalising, de-industrialising, ageing, and depopulating East Asia.</p> <p>Starting in the late-1990s, Matanle's research examines 'lifetime employment' in large organisations and its relationship with organisational and employee needs (R1). Combining perspectives from economic sociology and cultural geography, he demonstrates the stability and resilience of the Japanese employment system as a distinct mode of economic organisation, despite pressure for reform amid rising affluence, a bifurcating labour force and ageing society, slower growth, and Japan's ongoing globalisation (R1, R2, R3). The research stands out by consistently advocating that the system's durability lies in its capacity to satisfy employers' and employees' long-term needs, and its deep roots within the socio-cultural imagination of Japanese people. In pushing forward the literature he builds an empirically grounded and theoretically robust challenge to assertions that lifetime employment is under transformation, that socio-cultural explanations for economic phenomena in Japan remain valid, and lifetime employment remains a defining characteristic of Japan's distinctive mode of capitalist organisation.</p> <p>From the mid-2000s, Matanle extended this research into exploring the regional dimensions of employment systems in Japan by focusing attention on the change in the dynamic of development brought about by shrinkage of the national population in a highly centralised state focussed on Tokyo (R4, R5). Via an ongoing process of spontaneous research co-production with end users, his work tracks regional development processes and events as they happen, exhibiting rich empirical detail, both through aggregate statistical analysis as well as never-before understood micro-trends illuminated through painstaking case studies. Crucially, the research has important implications for reconstruction and revival in post-tsunami Tohoku (R5, R6), as it reveals the importance of employment as a stabilising factor in a region where a severe existential shock has taken place on top of experiencing the long term 'disaster' of ageing, depopulation, and community collapse. His work has brought greater attention in the UK and internationally to Japan's rural-urban bifurcation, as well as local and national responses to extreme environmental disturbances,</p>

at a time when both the concept of a nation of 'gaps' has entered the public discourse and the disasters of 11 March 2011 have exposed a severe national and regional socio-economic crisis. On the one hand, a pro-growth strategy has been pursued by subnational actors seeking to reverse processes of community collapse through government revitalisation interventions; on the other, however, national depopulation makes such strategies impossible to achieve for nearly all areas, especially Tohoku, as Tokyo continues to draw in people and resources and pull away from the rest of the country. Hence, a deepening fissure is emerging within the Japanese political economy between metropolitan and provincial regions, posing difficult challenges for the Japanese government and people, and demonstrating the potential for Japan's inter-regional dynamics to be understood as being indicative of post-developmental trends for the rest of East and Southeast Asia deep into the 21st century.

3. References to the research

- R1. Peter Matanle (2003) *Japanese Capitalism and Modernity in a Global Era: Refabricating Lifetime Employment Relations*, London and New York: Routledge. (48 citations on Google Scholar).
- R2. Peter Matanle, Leo McCann, and Darren Ashmore (2008) Men Under Pressure: Representations of the 'Salaryman' and his Organisation in Japanese Manga, *Organisation*, 15 (5): 639-64. doi: [10.1177/1350508408093646](https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508408093646) (5 citations. 2012 2 yr. Impact Factor: 1.6.)
- R3. Peter Matanle and Kenji Matsui (2011) Lifetime Employment in 21st Century Japan: Stability and Resilience Under Pressure in the Japanese Management System, in S. Horn (ed.) *Emerging Perspectives in Japanese Human Resource Management*, Berlin: Peter Lang: 15-44. (2 citations since 2011.)
- R4. Peter Matanle and Yasuyuki Sato (2010) Coming Soon to a City Near You! Learning to Live 'Beyond Growth' in Japan's Shrinking Regions, *Social Science Japan Journal*, 13 (2): 187-210. (5 citations, including one from OECD. 2012 2 yr. doi: [10.1093/ssj/jyq013](https://doi.org/10.1093/ssj/jyq013) Impact Factor: 0.458. Ranked 'A' by ARC 2010 rankings.)
- R5. Peter Matanle, Anthony S. Rausch, with the Shrinking Regions Research Group (2011) *Japan's Shrinking Regions in the 21st Century: Contemporary Responses to Depopulation and Socioeconomic Decline*, Amherst, NY: Cambria Press. 12 citations since 2011.
- R6. Peter Matanle (2011) The Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Meltdown: Towards the (Re)Construction of a Safe, Sustainable and Compassionate Society in Japan's Shrinking Regions, *Local Environment: the International Journal of Justice and Sustainability*, 16 (9): 823-847. doi: [10.1080/13549839.2011.607160](https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2011.607160) (8 citations since 2011. Ranked 'A' by ARC 2010 rankings. Chosen as a Case Study text by the International Conference on Sustainability Science, Tempe, Arizona, 20-23 Feb. 2012).

4. Details of the impact

Matanle's research achieved local, national, and global impact through actively repositioning the discourse of 21st century East Asian development by focusing on Japan as a low-growth economy and ageing and shrinking society. Nurturing robust collaborations at differing levels of engagement – with policy practitioners, media and corporate representatives, third sector organisations, and school and citizen groups – the principal impacts of his external activities are summarised here.

1. Media

Matanle's contribution to repositioning the public discourse on Japan's development began with him helping journalists to revise assumptions about the stability and resilience of Japan's

distinctive socio-economic institutions, and the importance of their socio-cultural underpinnings. This included commenting on work and suicide for niche online publications such as *The Fresh Outlook* (2010), on education and employment in the *Financial Times* (2011), and features on lifetime employment for the *New York Times* (2011), achieving global syndication through the USA (*International Herald Tribune*, *Gainesville Sun*, etc.), Japan (*IHT Asahi*), Brazil (*Terra*), and India (*Indian Express*). Matanle is also engaging international broadcasters in shaping documentary production (BBC, 2013) and influencing media discourse in live television debates (NHK, 2010). Recently, Matanle developed this impact by speaking to the Economist Group's Tokyo Bureau (2013), using advanced knowledge to strengthen corporate executives' knowledge of Japan's regions and the recovery underway in Tohoku since the 3.11 disaster. The Director of the Economist Corporate Network, said that '*Dr. Matanle drew on his research ... and in doing so communicated his deep knowledge and appreciation of the reality of regional and rural economies in Japan. ... attending members ... appreciated the opportunity to hear from an expert about the reality of socio-economic conditions [and] left with a much clearer and balanced understanding of the issues at hand.*' (S1).

2. Government

Matanle collaborated with UK and Japanese government institutions at regional and national levels in developing analyses and responses to emerging 21st century phenomena. For example, he deepened UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for Work and Pensions officials' understanding of the dynamics of Japan's regional development by framing this within a more robust empirical context, helping to revise expectations of the dynamics of East Asian development in the 21st century. Matanle's talk on Japan and China to this high-level government group was '*informative, thought provoking, and enjoyable. ... [I]t brought together colleagues from the FCO and other parts of government to discuss issues of common interest. ... [S]uch cross-government working will become even more important for the UK, partly as our economic interests look set to become increasingly interconnected.*' (S2)

Matanle has also been instrumental in developing the activities and agendas of Japan's Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR), both directly and through its London office (Japan Local Government Centre – JLGC), nurturing mutually beneficial engagements through co-production of research and policy implementation. These include being invited to speak at the joint JLGC/Derbyshire County Council Japan Day in 2008 and staging a joint symposium in Sheffield with the JLGC on 'Shrinking Regions' (2008) which the former Director of JLGC said helped '*in developing the JLGC's research and training activities in an area of policy that is of vital importance to Japan's future*' (S3), and participating with the JLGC on a co-produced research project on 'Intersecting Disasters in 21st Century East Asia (2013-)', which resulted in Matanle being invited to write for *Prospect* magazine and which is feeding its results through to national and regional level policy-makers and other practitioners in Japan via the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) and CLAIR/JLGC. Matanle was also invited to present his research to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications on the Minister's visit to London in 2012. The Director of International Affairs of the Local Administration Bureau wrote to thank Matanle for his '*valuable comments and ... kind cooperation [in a] very important exchange between the Japanese and UK sides*'. In addition to the MIC and JLGC, other research participant-informants are the British Chamber of Commerce and Industry Japan, the Tokyo Planning Forum, the UK advocacy group Population Matters (S4), and Japanese prefectural and municipal authorities.

3. School and Citizen Groups

After the tsunami on 11 March 2011, Matanle's research took on extra significance – Tohoku being a 'Shrinking Region' – with his article for *Local Environment* (R6) leading to his participation at a series of public events and him feeding into UK concerns about extreme environmental disturbances – such as flooding – in vulnerable communities. Beginning with an invitation to

present the Japan Society of the UK's Special Lecture to the Geographical Association, Matanle has spoken to audiences of up to 1,000 delegates in London, Manchester, Harrogate, Lincoln, Wimbledon, York, and Sheffield on post-disaster recovery in ageing and depopulating communities. Collaborating with the JSUK has also led to planning joint delivery of a Continuing Professional Development event in Sheffield (2014), for the first time outside of London. Matanle's research has helped attendees to connect with the experiences of people in Tohoku and enhanced teachers' and pupils' explanations of disaster hazards (S5). The Head of Humanities/Geography at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle, Lincolnshire: *"The talk you gave ... will form the basis of my teaching for the Japanese tsunami impacts this year. Thank you once again ... the students who were not present were told by those that were that they had missed out on the 'best talk yet at the GA', to quote a student."*

In sum, Matanle delivers significant impact at varying levels of engagement across differing user groups. Indeed, his external engagement is developing and expanding into the future as research is completed and its outcomes feed into policy implementation and practitioner engagement.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1. The Director, Economist Corporate Network, Tokyo corroborates the claim that the research has given their members a much clearer and balanced understanding of the issues at hand.
- S2. An Analyst at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office corroborates the importance of receiving such briefings to the FCO
- S3. The Director of the JLGC London (2012-Present), and Career Official for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Government of Japan confirms impact on policy
- S4. The Chairman of Population Matters confirms impact on work of their group
- S5. The Head of Geography at Stamford School, Lincolnshire, corroborates how Matanle's research forms the basis of teaching.