

After Nuclear Disaster: The decision-making of Fukushima University authorities, the threat to democratic governance and countermovement actions 原発災害後、福島大学における大学当局の動き 民主的ガバナンスの危機と対抗運動

Nakasatomi Hiroshi

Translation by Caroline Norma



Fukushima University: 'Discover your future'

This journal article was written by Nakasatomi Hiroshi in 2011 after the Great Tohoku Earthquake and nuclear disaster. Nakasatomi

currently lectures in constitutional law at Tokushima University, but at the time of the disaster he was working at Fukushima University, and living in Fukushima City with his family. The article describes the response of Fukushima University to the nuclear disaster, and efforts by students and staff within the University to build more critical awareness of the situation and foster more activist approaches. Following the article, there is a 'sequel' piece written by Nakasatomi in 2014 describing criticism he attracted from Fukushima City residents during and after his one-year campaign at the University on nuclear safety after the disaster. In this sequel, he seeks to clarify a misunderstanding about his political stance on the issue of voluntary evacuation, which has circulated on internet forums and damaged his public reputation for the past year. Today, Nakasatomi and his family live in Kyoto, and have become leading figures in the Kansai anti-nuclear power movement, including in a class action civil case against TEPCO. In addition to this, Nakasatomi speaks to civic groups nationally on the issues of constitutional revision that have arisen in Japan over the last 12 months. He is also an active member of the People Against Pornography and Sexual Violence group, which is also the affiliation of the translator. Nakasatomi continues to be highly engaged with a range of social justice initiatives in Japan, and is widely known among progressive groups in both Kanto and Kansai as an expert in an increasing number of areas, including, most recently, human rights jurisprudential

*approaches to issues of disaster evacuation and nuclear radiation.*CN

Japan is widely known as the only country in the world to have sustained nuclear bombing. The country developed in the postwar period with an awareness of this fact. But I think this awareness should be tempered by the understanding that Japan is also the world's only country in which the government has caused citizens to suffer both nuclear attack through reckless warring, as well nuclear contamination again in peacetime through reckless nuclear power policymaking. These two nuclear events do not exist in conflict or counterpoint. On the contrary, I believe they sit in historical parallel.

Japan was the reckless perpetrator of foreign invasion and war, and continued this activity to the point where an egregious holocaust was visited on its people in the form of two nuclear bombs. I believe institutionalised psychological structures governing the relationship between Japanese state and society at this time persist in some form today, despite unconditional wartime surrender, the new constitution, and the postwar democratisation of Japanese society. The structures persisted in the post war period, and underpinned Japan's adoption of a reckless nuclear power policy that began in the mid-1950s and continued throughout the postwar period, eventually leading to the devastating Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster (see Miyadai Shinji and Iida Tetsuya, *Genpatsu shakai kara no ridatsu*, Kodansha, 2011).



Japan's education system was a focus of the postwar democratisation of the nation-state system (the *Fundamental Law of Education* was enacted in the same year as the new constitution, and is understood to be a key piece of legislation supporting the constitution). The democratisation of Japan's universities was seen as an essential part of the reforms. (Article 23 of the Japanese constitution, which guarantees freedom for academics, is a relatively unusual clause in comparative law terms.) But, times change. The *Fundamental Law of Education* was amended in 2006 to become more socially conservative, and tertiary education came to be determined primarily by the competition between universities to survive. This fact is well demonstrated in the threat to academic freedom and university self-governance that the now-popular 'industry-university partnerships' represent. Overnight, universities became part of an 'industry-university-government' alliance. This change, together with a serious decline in the ability and willingness of Japanese universities to resist the impositions of the corporate world and government, shows fundamental divergence from the prior mode of university governance.

This history of a decline in democratic process at Japanese universities is a causative factor in the response of Fukushima University to the

recent nuclear disaster. In the next section I describe this response in the disaster's immediate aftermath.

'Follow the government's directions'

A massive earthquake erupted in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Japan's Tohoku region at 2.46pm on Friday 11 March 2011, causing a tsunami to come onshore. The following day, at 3.36pm, the first reactor of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant exploded. At 11.01am on 14 March, the third reactor at the same plant also exploded. On 15 March at around six in the morning the second and fourth reactors then exploded in succession.

From 3pm on 15 March—nine hours after the explosions of the second and fourth reactors—the radioactivity monitoring post located at the Oyamacho community centre in the northeast of Fukushima prefecture recorded a sudden rise in levels from the normal 0.04uSv/h, as per Table 1.

Table 1

Time	Measurement (μSv/h)
2.30pm	0.05
3pm	0.08
3.30pm	0.13
4pm	1.75
4.30pm	9.87
5pm	20.26
5.30pm	22.57
6pm	23.18
6.30pm	24.18

Following this, for more than 20 hours until 4pm on 16 March, the level wavered between 17 and 24 μSv/h. From 5pm on 16 March to 2pm on 19 March, the level was between 10-15 μSv/h. From 3pm on 19 March and 8am on 24 March, the level was still between 5-10 μSv/h. For the remaining days in March it ranged between 3-5 μSv/h.

On the day of the earthquake (Friday 11 March), the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and department heads of Fukushima University established a 'Fukushima

University Crisis Management Directorate'. But the members of this Directorate did not meet on either the 12th, when the first reactor exploded, or on the 13th with the second explosion. The first meeting was held on the morning of the 14th. The University campus was closed for two days on the 14th and 15th, and a graduation ceremony scheduled for the 25th was cancelled. The second-semester university entrance exam was scheduled for the 12th, but it wasn't until after 4pm on the 11th that the decision was made to cancel this exam. The University declared it would reserve its decision on whether or not to postpone the first-semester entrance ceremony (scheduled for 4 April) and the commencement of classes on 8 April.

It is publicly recorded that the Vice-Chancellor made the following comment at a meeting of the Directorate: 'The University cannot independently decide how we want to respond to the nuclear issue; we must follow the government's directions'. This is the stance Fukushima University persists with to the current day in relation to the nuclear accident. It continues to deprioritise the safety of students, and University decision-making from the start has been shaped by a disavowal of independent action and a commitment to following government directions.

'Do anything you can to report to work'

In a surprising move, the University adhered to its plan to re-open the campus on the 16th and recommence operations as normal. This was on the day that radiation levels were at an extreme high, at around 20 μSv/h (it was indeed later confirmed that radiation levels were at their highest on this day). The University's former Chief Operating Officer made the announcement to staff to 'Do anything you can to report to work' (the Officer was away on business when this was announced, and wasn't actually in Fukushima prefecture). This was at a time when none of

the trains were running, major arterial roads were impassable, and petrol supplies were still cut. It was an extraordinarily harsh directive. As a result of the directive, many people in the world's most irradiated area on 16 March 2011 and thereafter (notwithstanding, of course, the accident site itself and the immediate evacuation zone) were forced to travel by tram or on foot for hours to commute to work.

On 16 March the University announced the cancellation of classes till 23 April, and the postponement of the graduation ceremony till the end of April. From 17 March, the University's gymnasium and accommodation facilities were turned into shelters for 310 evacuees of the disaster zone.

At this time the University was preoccupied with the possibility that further nuclear explosions would occur, and Fukushima city itself would fall within the government-mandated zone for residents to stay indoors or, worse still, to take refuge outside the prefecture. The government was forced to repeatedly expand the borders of the zone around this time; before 15 March the evacuation zone spanned a radius of 20kms around the first reactor site, and residents were ordered to stay indoors for a further 10kms. The city of Fukushima lies within a 50-60km zone of the nuclear plant. On 18 March a draft memo from the Vice Chancellor to academic staff was leaked. It directed staff as to how they should continue to carry out their work in the event of a government decree for Fukushima city residents to stay indoors. In the midst of this controversy, the Vice Chancellor explained that his intention was to 'express his feelings of gratitude as a university head' for the fact that 'many academic staff were demonstrating great self-sacrifice in continuing to carry out the work of the University'.

From mid-March, the University began to externally project an organisational direction

toward 'reconstruction', and promote itself as most concerned about 'supporting the community' toward this goal. A 'Message from the Vice Chancellor' was released on 25 March, directed at current students, students newly enrolling in the first semester, and their parents. The message included the following.

As a university we have also been expending great efforts toward reconstruction and supporting the local community...While higher than normal levels of radiation are currently being recorded on campus, these levels have declined significantly since 15 March, and they are predicted to decline to around one thirtieth of their current level by the first day of the semester. I anticipate absolutely no problem in being able to welcome you all on the first day of the new term. Universities are both repositories of learning, as well as fortresses of scientific thought. We do not yield to unscientific speculation or rumour. We will ensure the safety and security of all students, and welcome you to an environment cultivated for education and research.

On 27 March the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Takaki Yoshiaki, visited the University. On 28 March the University made a provisional announcement that the new student intake ceremony would be held on 9 May, and classes would start on 12 May. This decision was officially confirmed on 12 April. Despite the fact the announcement was only provisional, on 31 March a 'Message from the Vice Chancellor to new and returning students' was posted on the University website:

In anticipation of the upcoming new semester, we have decided to hold preparation sessions for ceremonies to welcome incoming students between 9-11 May.

With the posting of this message, the Vice Chancellor brought to an end the twenty-day period that had been unlike any other conclusion to the academic year, which began on 11 March when the long darkness first descended.

‘There is a chance of meltdown’

Whether one was able to avoid initial radiation exposure or not depended on having information about the dangers of radioactive contamination and, most decisively, on having cultivated, from before the disaster, a “correct” skepticism about TEPCO and the government. Already by 6.25pm on Friday 11 March (just three hours and forty minutes after the earthquake), a Fukushima-based anti-nuclear activist had sent out a global email to all his contacts predicting a dire nuclear accident and urging preparations for evacuation. The text of the email read:

All of the emergency diesel generators at the plant have stopped. There is a possibility of meltdown. It is likely that a terrible accident has already occurred. We must wear masks, rainsuits, gloves and boots. Make sure you seal this gear with plastic tape.

At 11.40pm on the same day, I received a later email announcing his decision to set out for the Aidzu area. The next day, reunited with family members, he left the prefecture before the first reactor exploded. The reason this activist and his family evacuated Fukushima even before the first reactor explosion with the intent to

‘get away as quickly as possible and as far as possible’ was doubtlessly because they believed the nuclear plant could not withstand the massive earthquake and tsunami, as well as because of their belief that TEPCO and the Japanese government would hide the reality of the disaster the worse it became. This pessimistic outlook came from his many years of experience campaigning on the issue.

Unfortunately, his pessimistic prediction proved correct. Neither accurate information about the disaster nor warning about the approaching radioactive plume would come from TEPCO or the government. As has already been revealed, information had been collected, but it was deliberately concealed. As a result, tens of thousands of Fukushima prefecture residents, including members of Fukushima University, were exposed to large doses of radiation.

‘Radiation levels aren’t high enough to cause health problems’

On Tuesday 12 April, the government decided to raise its evaluation of the seriousness of the Fukushima Daiichi accident to the highest possible ‘level 7’. On this same day, Fukushima University’s Crisis Management Directorate announced that the first-semester student entrance ceremony would be held on 9 May, and classes would begin on 12 May. From the day of this announcement, the Directorate found itself locked in a battle over measures it would have to take to secure the safety of the approximately 4500 graduate and postgraduate students it had committed to welcoming to the University.

On 21 April the University released a ‘message from the Vice-Chancellor to new students, returning students, and parents’:

Radiation pollution levels at the University campus have been fully analysed, and we can now accurately predict levels going forward. Accordingly, we anticipate one year’s outdoor

exposure from 1 May will be between 6.8 and 15mSv, and indoor exposure between 1.1 and 2.3mSv. These radiation levels aren't of a level high enough to cause health problems. Even the part of the campus most heavily exposed to radiation, which was measured at 2.4 μ Sv/h on 19 April, is still below the maximum 3.8 μ Sv/hr level specified by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. On the basis of these facts, Fukushima University, as a repository of learning, is not merely a victim of the disaster, but is committed to working together with its academic community to analysing the world's first earthquake-induced nuclear disaster, and locating its outcomes within the course of human history...The University will take full measures to secure the safety and maintenance of the environment.

On 2 May, one week before new students were due to arrive on campus, the University again issued a 'message from the Vice Chancellor to parents':

We have calculated anticipated levels of radiation particle exposure for the one-year period between 1 May 2011 and 30 April 2012 (assuming 24-hour exposure with no clothing protection). The highest level anticipated at the soccer/rugby ground is 15mSv/year, and the lowest level in the L4 classroom is 0.79mSv/year. However, exposure calculated on the basis of normal daily activity including outdoor exposure is 8.1mSv/year...There are various views on the issue, but...the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology calculates a maximum safe exposure level of 20mSv/year (which is 3.8 μ Sv per hour)...Radiation levels in Fukushima City have dropped dramatically since the time of the accident, and are now not at a level that could cause health problems. It goes without saying, of course, that lower levels are always better in terms of health. Accordingly, the University will take measures to minimise student exposure, including distributing face masks, surveying

life on campus for ongoing measures that can be taken, and creating a manual for students to guide them in ways to minimise exposure...The University will also take measures to equip itself in case of an emergency and to secure a safe academic environment, including: 1) Information gathering on nuclear accidents and radiation levels, 2) monitoring of radiation levels on campus, 3) creation of a testing facility for radiation exposure checks for those requesting them, and 4) revision of the University earthquake and aftershock evacuation procedure manual. In addition, the University will consider measures to ensure the emotional wellbeing of students and stress reduction...We are committed to expending the utmost efforts to secure the safety and wellbeing of students on campus from the day classes commence.

Disaster preparedness training at Fukushima University

'A fortress of scientific thought' versus 'submission to the government'

It is a recent and common practice for universities to proclaim themselves committed to both an 'education focus' as well as the 'training of human capital'. Worldwide it is becoming an entrenched approach of universities to supposedly 'value' students as customers, and Fukushima University is no exception. In fact, the University's corporate slogan according to the April 2005 '[Declaration of Fukushima University's Rebirth](#)' is precisely 'a university that cultivates human capital with an education focus'. In substantive terms, however, we might question whether the University really does have a focus on education or the cultivation of the individual.

Fukushima University postponed the start of classes till the first weeks of May, but this decision to postpone wasn't taken out of consideration for student health in relation to radiation exposure. A number of academic departments at Waseda and Tokyo universities

also postponed classes till the first weeks of May out of consideration for newly enrolling students coming from disaster-affected zones, and to avoid problems arising with the scheduled electricity blackouts that were planned for the capital after the disaster. The Vice Chancellor's proclaimed commitment to 'following the government's directions' after the disaster extended as far as 'following' the government's claim that radiation exposure levels in Fukushima City were 'not of a level high enough to pose an immediate threat to human health'. This commitment was articulated in the repeated messages of the Vice Chancellor I have referred to.

The Vice Chancellor's attitude of 'following' political direction contravenes the slogan that heads the 'Declaration of Fukushima University's Rebirth' to 'respect a spirit of freedom, autonomy and independence'. It also prioritises political 'rationality' over scientific 'rationality', and so contravenes the Vice Chancellor's oft-repeated description of the University as a 'repository of learning' and 'fortress of scientific thought'. The approach also stands in stark contrast to the University's commitment to 'questioning unscientific conjecture and false reporting'. If the Vice Chancellor meant to suggest the University had no choice but to follow the government's directions, then the University should have requested that the education and science ministry issue immediate instructions with regard to measures to protect student safety, avoid radiation exposure and enact emergency evacuation procedures. In fact, members of the University's Crisis Management Directorate during meetings did repeatedly request these instructions be sought, but there is no indication that the University followed suit.

'Information was seriously lacking'

Earthquakes always occur unexpectedly, but of course it is always possible to prepare for their occurrence. The same can be said about

nuclear accidents. However, absolutely no preparation for nuclear accident prevention or evacuation had been undertaken by Fukushima University, the prefectural government or the city government. Ninety-nine per cent of the population had no accurate information whatsoever about what they should do in the event of a serious accident. Moreover, the citizens of Fukushima prefecture, living in a prefecture hosting ten nuclear reactors, were in exactly the same state of ignorance as the university located in the same prefecture, in spite of its claim to being a 'repository of learning' and a 'fortress of scientific thought'. One departmental head has lamented of the time:

Information was seriously lacking. Not only was there a dearth of information provision in the early stages of the disaster, but we had no idea whether the prefectural government had any disaster prevention or evacuation plans in place, and indeed the University itself as an administrative organ within the prefecture didn't know what measures it should take in response to arising circumstances.

Accordingly, the University descended into chaos as the earthquake hit, followed by the tsunami, and then the nuclear disaster. A number of academic staff evacuated the prefecture immediately or soon after. A number of other staff outside the prefecture rushed to return to the University. Administrative staff effectively had no choice about evacuation; they had to remain at their posts. As the government and media rolled out its 'safety campaign', both academic and administrative staff began to believe they were safe, and the majority came to believe evacuation wasn't necessary. Criticism of academic staff who decided to stay outside the prefecture began to emerge among both academic and administrative staff.

The university union wasn't able to respond to the disaster in a coordinated way. They were

divided on the question of safety and the need to evacuate. As differences of opinion between academic and administrative staff became apparent, the union lost its overall cohesion. Nonetheless, the union secretary did lodge objections and requests for revision of some of the more unreasonable demands that were made of administrative staff during the period.

There were in fact serious objections and reservations among academic staff about the University's decision to resume classes in May. However, these were relatively few. There were no academic departments that opposed the resumption at a departmental level. In an environment of overall support for the University's decision, academics with objections or reservations felt that waging departmental level opposition to the decision was likely to be futile. Furthermore, most of the academics strongly against the decision had evacuated the prefecture, so weren't part of the discussion that took place in March and April about when to resume classes. This was a big factor in the lack of success in changing the University's decision.

University failure to respond to two sources of danger

There were two different sources of danger facing members of the University community following the disaster. The first was the threat to health posed by radiation in the atmosphere. The second was the threat to health posed by potential further nuclear disaster (caused, for example, by a large aftershock). It wasn't acceptable for the University to announce the commencement of classes while there were no measures in place to protect students against either of these two sources of risk. There were varying opinions among academic staff opposing the May commencement of classes, but there was at least consensus around opposition to classes being held on campus in the first semester (and even in the second). There was also consensus that students should

be offered an alternative means of participating in University classes other than attending campus.

The University and its Vice Chancellor adopted the same stance as the government in declaring that radiation levels were 'not of a level high enough to pose an immediate threat to human health', but they did this without meeting two conditions for the commencement of classes on campus that would have made the stance meaningful. The first was the use of the phrase 'immediate threat' in relation to radiation levels and health. This phrase does not explicitly deny the possibility of future damage to health; indeed, we could say it implicitly acknowledges such possibility. Given this, the University should have pointed to measures it had put in place to prevent long-term threats to health posed by radiation on campus. The second condition the University failed to meet was the development of an evacuation plan for students in the event that another nuclear disaster occurred, causing radiation levels to become dangerous on campus. A number of Crisis Management Directorate members requested such measures be put in place, but the response of the University was slow, and the issue ended up being dealt with at a departmental level. It was also a response strongly called for by the students' association. But, surprisingly, even 80 days after the plan to commence classes was announced, and 50 days after classes actually began, the University still hadn't put in place an action plan for another disaster event. Fortunately, the original disaster occurred in March when students were not on campus, but a future disaster event had the potential to affect as many as 4500 students.

Surely a university that proclaims an aim to 'cultivate human capital with an education focus' would prioritise the health and safety of its students. In the case of Fukushima University, however, during the very time period it should have been expending all

possible efforts to achieve these priorities, on 13 April it concerned itself with launching a research centre called 'Beautiful Future Fukushima' (later renamed the Disaster Reconstruction Research Institute). The Centre's mission was described as follows.

We have experienced an unprecedented earthquake and nuclear power accident, and humanity's first ever earthquake-induced nuclear disaster. We are committed to examining and researching the facts of what has happened, and assessing future problems for research on the basis of these facts. We are further committed to overcoming these problems, and as the prefecture's only comprehensive tertiary institution, will become a repository of knowledge on the subject, and the newly created Research Centre will not only become an international hub for disaster science, but also an active site for reconstruction support planning for future disasters.

Granted that this was a response to government funding suddenly showered upon it, but how did the University imagine it was going to 'take steps toward building a future that is newly safe and secure' when it couldn't guarantee the 'safety and security' of its actually existing students?

Protest activism

It is not as if there were no selfless or richly critical efforts on the University campus that prioritised the safety of students and their future health and wellbeing. This activism began from day one, and continues to the current day. I introduce just a few examples of it here.

In the Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences, an independent decision was taken to hire eight charter buses to operate on 17 and 18 March to ferry students (from any faculty) back to their homes (e.g., in Yamagata, Niigata and Nasushiobara) after the disaster when transport was unavailable. There were 162 students who used this service, but it had to be discontinued after two days when fuel supplies ran out. The decision to hire the buses was taken by the Faculty while the University dithered in its response to the disaster.

Debate over the decision to commence classes in May took place while students were absent from the campus. The Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences independently decided to survey students as to their opinions on the recommencement. There were 182 students who responded to the survey, and 46 per cent agreed with the planned recommencement date, 24 per cent disagreed, and 30 per cent indicated no opinion on the question. There was no expectation that students opposing recommencement would be the majority of survey responses, given the government and media 'safety' campaign underway at the time. The purpose of the survey, rather, was to convey to University authorities the 'urgent voices' of students who had not been persuaded by the government's campaign, and who had retained an acute recognition of the danger of the situation they found themselves in. One student wrote:

Hasn't the University thought about transferring the campus to a safer place? The Vice Chancellor has said that 'by the time classes commence, radiation levels will have fallen to one-thirtieth of their present level and there will be no difficulty whatsoever in welcoming all of you to a safe environment,' but there is no basis for this opinion, and I can't help feeling

he's either taking an overly optimistic view of the disaster or just trying to ease our minds. After all, the plant hasn't been brought under control yet ...Students are just going to be taking classes fearful of being exposed to radiation. Are we going to have to wear masks and protective clothing while we take our classes?

Lecturers at the University also individually took the initiative in organizing lectures responsive to their needs and those of students.² For example, DVDs of documentaries produced by the film company Mori no Eigasha interviewing Kyoto University's Koide Hiroaki and Imanaka Tetsuji, as well as Dr Murata Saburou, were screened on 25 May as a joint project of the film company and faculty and students of Fukushima University. A workshop addressing issues of trauma counselling for disaster survivors was held on 1 June and attended by Boston University's Bessel A. van der Kolk, and Ikeno Satoshi from Kwansei Gakuin University. In contrast to this, the University invited Kamiya Kenji, who had been appointed 'Fukushima prefecture radiation health risk management advisor' to campus to hold a workshop for all staff on 28 April. The aim of the workshop was for Dr. Kamiya to explain to staff the effects of radiation on the human body so that staff could learn accurate information as to the current risk of radiation exposure in Fukushima City, thus enabling the promotion of staff understanding.

The aim of the workshop was essentially to have all staff absorb the prefecture's 'correct understanding' about radiation exposure risk.

The undergraduate and postgraduate student associations, together with the student dormitory association, on 6 May collaborated to submit to the Vice Chancellor 'items of demand to ensure the safe and secure living of students on campus'. This submission protested the

decision taken to recommence classes without consulting with students (the only communication with students had been the website announcement from the Vice Chancellor). It contained 16 items of demand in relation to seven different areas.



Decontamination work at Fukushima University

On 1 April, a forum was held among staff under the title 'Fukushima University earthquake disaster support forum'. The Forum undertook to 'form a group to collaborate across academic departments to hold discussions about the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor accident and recommend safety measures to be put in place by the University, the prefecture and the government'. In relation to the fact the 'University is forging ahead with preparations to recommence classes while not discussing any effective measures to protect against radiation exposure', the group undertook to 'prioritise the personal safety of students and staff in its discussions, conduct safety checks of their housing and living environments, and work towards measures for improvement of these environments'.³ Questions posed by the group to the University with regard to the recommencement of classes were officially submitted on 6 May, the group's responses to the University's 'Q&A sheet' were published on

17 May, and the group submitted a list of demands to the prefectural governor on 6 June. Further, on 3 July, the group issued an emergency statement calling for testing of all prefecture residents for radiation exposure levels. All of these documents are posted on the group's website.

Advertisement for Fukushima University radiation contamination consultation service

Conclusion

Only recently has the University, which has hitherto been reluctant to take substantive measures, announced plans to embark on irradiated waste removal on campus. Between 6 July and 2 August the University has said it will remove fallen leaves and soil sitting in u-bend pipes on campus and begin flushing out stagnant waste areas. They will also remove weeds and vacuum dust and dirt from common areas on campus. The reason why they announced this work for July, rather than before the commencement of classes as might be expected, is that there is an open day for prospective students scheduled for 7 August.

to set up a partnership with the Japan Atomic Energy Agency. On 25 June, the prefecture and city governments began decontaminating routes taken by children to and from three primary schools in the city (which was actually just a ruse to justify the continued residence of children in the city). The University has listed itself alongside the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Tohoku University, Kyoto University and the Fukushima branch of the Japan Atomic Energy Agency as a partner in this project. In other words, before taking the initiative to decontaminate its own campus where students gather each day, the University has chosen to cooperate with bureaucratic decontamination activity held for propaganda purposes. At the same time, when a group of academic staff, including the author, in partnership with Society for Studies on Entropy members professor Yamada Kunihiro and others from Kyoto Seika University, sought to use a University truck with 'Fukushima University' painted on it for a 'Decontamination and Renewal Project' for the benefit of Fukushima residents, the University refused because of a single complaint call from a single resident. Where does the University have its sights set?



Decontamination work at Fukushima University



Signing of the agreement between Fukushima University and the Japan Atomic Energy Agency

Fukushima University is currently attempting

The words in the University's 'Rebirth' declaration, to 'carry out its mission as an independently administered tertiary institution in a spirit of freedom, autonomy and independence', can serve merely as a hollow marketing slogan to attract new students, or it can serve as a guideline for action for the University's protection of student safety and health now and into the future. All members of the University community, including myself, are watching to see which path the University will take.

Epilogue by Nakasatomi Hiroshi

The author and his family (wife and 4-year-old child) left their home in Fukushima on 12 March 2011, the day after the earthquake, and took refuge in a neighbouring prefecture. They then heard on the radio that the Fukushima nuclear reactor had suffered a meltdown. Upon hearing this news, they immediately boarded the last flight out of Niigata direct to Osaka. The author returned to Fukushima at the start of the university semester, but commuted to campus from Yamagata prefecture. He resigned from Fukushima University one year later to take up a post at Tokushima University in western Japan.

In the one year he taught at the University after the nuclear disaster, he gave lectures in his specialist field of constitutional law, but tailored these lectures to consider nuclear power from the perspective of citizen rights protection and democratic governance. These lectures aimed to engage students in a sustained discussion about the issue, and local activists who were critical of the government's denial of ongoing safety issues after the disaster were invited as guest speakers.

However, these invitations prompted phone calls and emails of protest from parents and local community members complaining that lectures promoting the dangers of living in

Fukushima should not be hosted by the prefecture's own university, that the University's future would be put at risk by lectures promoting the dangers of living in Fukushima, and that 'a lot of Fukushima residents are unhappy with Professor Nakasatomi who should be ashamed of himself for giving these lectures to students and community members who are doing their best to continue living in the prefecture when he himself has evacuated the area and is living in Yamagata, and has sent his wife and child outside the prefecture because he's so scared of radiation'. There were the further complaints that 'it's strange that a Fukushima University lecturer has run away from the prefecture when the University itself has said the area is safe and is recruiting students to enroll next year', 'people remaining in Fukushima are bearing the brunt of reconstruction and contaminated waste removal, and it makes me angry that those residents who voluntarily decided to evacuate the prefecture just worry about getting compensation, and they keep running back now the radiation levels have gone down', and 'what does that professor think he's teaching students, when they're the ones who have to take on Fukushima's reconstruction'.

On 3 May 2012, after relocating to Tokushima University, Nakasatomi gave a seminar for the Japan Constitutional Law Association under the title 'Nuclear power and the Constitution'. In this lecture he raised some of the above-mentioned criticisms he had received from Fukushima residents as a way of introducing discussion about how the division and internal hostility that had arisen among residents since the disaster might be overcome. Nakasatomi gave, as the reason for this 'division and hostility', the government's refusal to designate 'areas with low-level radiation contamination' (including Fukushima City) a mandated-evacuation zone. The consequence of these areas becoming voluntary-evacuation zones was that the ability to evacuate became the

'privilege of the strong' (i.e., of those who had the economic wherewithal). As a result, he went on to state, the feelings of the many people who wished to flee but could not because of economic reasons erupted in a form that had the character of 'the arguments of the resentful weak'.

To overcome this structurally-imposed division among residents, Nakasatomi proposed that the government should recognise the 'human right' of any citizen to choose to take refuge out of the prefecture and provide financial assistance toward that end. However, an audience member who heard Nakasatomi make this argument misinterpreted him to be saying that the criticisms directed at him were merely the 'arguments of the resentful weak', and that he was writing them off. The audience member then posted this misinterpretation to an internet forum. This online forum, even two years later, still receives a high number of hits and the misinterpretation of Nakasatomi's statements continues to circulate.

But his argument was that residents should recognise that the government had instituted a policy that was inevitably going to promote hostility between divisions of the socially 'weak' and 'strong', even though residents should have been united after the disaster as fellow victims of nuclear fallout. Nakasatomi advocated that residents should seek to overcome this structurally-imposed division among themselves through forging a human rights framework for thinking about the situation. There was no basis or reason for the misinterpreted argument posted to the internet forum. On the contrary, far from writing-off criticisms of his decision to evacuate the prefecture, Nakasatomi was trying to clarify dispassionately the structure of division and suggest a constitutional human rights path for overcoming it. NH

Caroline Norma is a lecturer in the School of Global, Urban and Social Studies at RMIT

University, Australia, and has a forthcoming book with Bloomsbury (2015) *Japanese comfort women and sexual slavery during the China and Pacific wars*.

Recommended citation: Nakasatomi Hiroshi, "After Nuclear Disaster: The decision-making of Fukushima University authorities, the threat to democratic governance and the efforts of a countermovement," Vol. 11, Issue 23, No. 2, June 23, 2014.

Related articles

- Kyle Cleveland, [Mobilizing Nuclear Bias: The Fukushima Nuclear Crisis and the Politics of Uncertainty](#)
- David McNeill, [Japanese Government Squelching Efforts to Measure Fukushima Meltdown](#)
- Shoji Masahiko, [The Rage of Exile: In the Wake of Fukushima](#)
- Adam Broinowski, [Fukushima: Life and the Transnationality of Radioactive Contamination](#)
- Paul Jobin, [The Roadmap for Fukushima Daiichi and the Sacrifice of Japan's Clean-up Workers](#)
- Anders Pape Møller and Timothy A. Mousseau, [Uncomfortable Questions in the Wake of Nuclear Accidents at Fukushima and Chernobyl](#)

Notes

¹ Nakasatomi Hiroshi, 'Fukushima daigaku ni okeru daigaku toukyoku no ugoki to taikouundou,' Vol. 117, *Kagaku, Shakai, Ningen*, July 2011.

² The translator refers readers to: Kamanaka Hitomi and Nakasatomi Hiroshi (eds), *Kamanaka kantoku vs. Fukushima daigaku 1nen sei: 3.11 o manabu wakamonotachi e*, Tokyo, Kodomo no mirasha, 2012.



³ [Fukugenken.com Workshop Prospectus](#)