

Contemporary art and tourism on Setouchi Islands, Japan

This case study is based on research by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Japan.

The Seto Inland Sea is surrounded by the Japanese islands of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. It has been an important transport route linking the Kinki region, including Kyoto, Nara, Osaka and Kobe, with the Kyushu region and other Asian countries. Since the 1980s, Naoshima Island, one of the islands in the Seto Inland Sea, has housed several contemporary art projects, such as museums, outdoor artworks and workshops. Known as the Benesse Art Site Naoshima (www.benesse-artsite.jp/en), these projects have been supported by Benesse Holdings, Inc., an Okayama Prefecture-based correspondence education and publishing company, and the Fukutake Foundation, which was established under Benesse's patronage. As Naoshima became known as "the island of contemporary art", similar art projects spread to other islands. This long-term art project is the first topic of this case study.

In 2010, the first Setouchi International Art Festival (www.setouchi-artfest.jp/en), also known as Setouchi Triennale, was held in the seven islands in the Seto Inland Sea and Takamatsu and Uno ports. The Setouchi Triennale Executive Committee is composed of representatives from the government, creative industry and local business, including from the tourism industry. The second topic of this case study is this festival's impact on tourism and local economy.

While the islands have become an attractive tourism destination, their population is very small and has declined in the last 15 years. The population of Naoshima (3 277 in 2010) has decreased by more than 17% and the share of people aged over 65 has increased from 24% to 33%. Naoshima Island's economy was developed by the smelting industries, pollution from which damaged the environment of Naoshima and its neighbouring islands. While the municipal government and the smelting company have made efforts to support reforestation, the image of Naoshima was primarily industrial (Kasahara, 2011). However, contemporary art projects have changed the image of these islands to "islands of art" and created added value for tourism. The groundwork for the change was laid by Benesse Art Site Naoshima since the late 1980s.

Benesse Art Site Naoshima

The development of tourism in Naoshima is based on the town development plan established in the 1980s. This plan aimed to develop the south side of Naoshima Island as an educational and recreation site to promote sustainable tourism. In 1985, the founder of Fukutake Publishing (the precursor of Benesse) and the mayor of Naoshima subsequently agreed to co-operate in developing the south side of Naoshima as an educational and cultural site. Succeeding his father in 1986, Soichiro Fukutake later

presented the “Naoshima Cultural Village” concept, which aimed to develop Naoshima as an educational place for visitors. The Naoshima International Camp for children and tourists was developed in 1989 under the supervision of Tadao Ando, a 1995 Pritzker Architecture Prize winner (Ihara, 2007; Kasahara, 2011).

Soichiro Fukutake established and financially supported the art projects through his network in the creative industries and launched the Setouchi Triennale, with the vision of turning Naoshima into a world-class island of nature and culture, preserving its natural beauty and synergising it with contemporary art to attract visitors to the island for community revitalisation (Jodidio, 2006; Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2009). The islands’ beautiful natural environment and its history of environmental pollution are believed to accentuate messages of contemporary artists, which might be lost in urban museums (Fukutake Foundation, n.d.-a). This concept has attracted tourists and contemporary artists and improved the tourist offer of the islands.

Site-specific artworks

An outdoor sculpture by Karel Appel was installed in the Naoshima International Camp in 1989, followed in 1992 by the opening of the Benesse House Museum, which included a hotel designed by Tadao Ando, thus launching the contemporary art development of Naoshima (Kasahara, 2011). Contemporary art was not an immediate success on the island. Several planned exhibitions and workshops were held in the museum between 1992-95, but the number of visitors to the Benesse House Museum was only 11 000 in 1997, which is about one-ninth of the number of visitors in 2011 (Japan Tourism Agency – JTA, 2012).

From 1996, the Benesse House Museum began to commission artists to create site-specific works (Ihara, 2007). Artists ponder how their works look in the surrounding environment and how their works can connect with regional culture and history. The 1994 exhibition, *Out of Bounds: Contemporary Art in Seascapes*, was a catalyst for site-specific works. Contemporary artworks were exhibited in the natural surroundings of the island, which allowed visitors to enjoy the island along with the artworks.

Site-specific works have since expanded from the south of the island, where the museum is located, to the whole island. In 1998, the Art House Project began to preserve the historical townscape, with Benesse buying or renting old unoccupied houses and land and then commissioning artists to turn these spaces into artworks. In 2001, the exhibition *Standard* featured the work of 13 artists in old houses and public spaces in the island (Mizuho,

2007; Kasahara, 2011). By 2013, seven artworks of the project had been completed and permanently displayed.

Civic participation and impact on tourism

The shift to commissioning site-specific works established a relationship not only between artworks and the nature of the island but also between artworks and residents. The contemporary art museum and exhibitions were not initially welcomed by the aging population of the island (Mizuho, 2007). The major industries on the island had been milling and fishing; art and tourism had no relationship with daily life. To promote residents' understanding of contemporary art, the museum provides free admission to residents and invites them to art events.

The Art House Project, which began in the middle of the community, cultivates in residents a sense of affinity to contemporary art (Kasahara, 2011). Artists created their works in a zone of daily life and residents could not only see the creative efforts of struggling artists but also participate in the creative process themselves. The flow of visitors has been strengthened by a number of events, such as the opening of the Chichu Museum designed by Tadao Ando for a permanent display of works by Claude Monet, James Turrell and Walter De Maria in 2004, the *Standard 2* exhibition in 2006, the opening of Naoshima Public Bath designed by artist Shinro Ohtake in 2009 and the Setouchi Triennale festival in 2010. In 1995, 11 000 people visited the Benesse House. Visits to the Benesse Art Site Naoshima have since risen to reach 512 756 in 2012, covering nine different museums and projects and peaking in 2010 (704 460) (JTA, 2012; Benesse Art Site Naoshima, unpublished raw data). The majority of the buildings are located underground to ensure the museum does not affect the natural scenery of Naoshima. The museum itself is one of the site-specific works.

The large tourist flows have made residents think about how they can make their town more attractive to tourists. For example, residents began to lead art projects in which they use local artist-designed Japanese curtains and nameplates at the entrance of old buildings to beautify their townscape. Residents also recognised the need for an effective tourism operation and established the non-profit Naoshima Tourism Association in 2003. The association operates a tourist information centre and the Naoshima Public Baths. In 2004, members of a local history study group established an association of tour guides. This association aims to introduce local history and culture to tourists visiting art projects. They guide an average of 2 000 tourists a year (JTA, 2012; Kasahara, 2011). The art projects on Naoshima have thus promoted citizen participation, which is indispensable for success in tourism and local revitalisation.

Site-specific works also have stimulated tourism. For example, in 2000, Naoshima was listed by American travel magazine, *Condé Nast Traveller*, as one of the seven wonders alongside Paris, Berlin, Alexandria, Bilbao, Rio and Dubai. The opening of the Chichu museum in 2004 captured more attention. The Benesse Art Site Naoshima was quoted by about 20 foreign and 160 domestic media in 2007, about 30 foreign and 150 domestic media in 2008 and 133 foreign media in 2011 (Fukutake Foundation, n.d.-b). The share of foreigners among guests staying at the Benesse House hotel was about 18% in 2009, most of which were from France, Korea or the United States (Kasahara, 2011).

In 2008, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT) and the Japan National Tourist Organisation (JNTO) chose Naoshima as one of the four areas advertised in its promotion activities marking the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and France and subsequently continued to support the promotion of this region. Benesse and the Fukutake Foundation held an exhibition in France and Italy to introduce Naoshima. The number of visitors to museums and artworks has increased. While before 2004 there was no restaurant in the Honma district in Naoshima, by 2012, about 50 new restaurants and inns had opened to meet growing demand (JTA, 2012).

In order to leverage the creative economy for tourism, it is necessary to link creative products with tourist destinations. While a masterpiece of architecture or contemporary art is not replicable and attracts people by itself, if there is no linkage between the artworks and their location, it will not become a resource for sustainable tourism. In the Naoshima case, however, commissioned site-specific works establish a strong relationship between the landscape/seascape of the island and the artworks, which strengthen the oneness and uniqueness of the artworks along with the attractiveness of the island as tourist destination.

Regional revitalisation

The annual influx of tourists is more than 100 times larger than the municipal population, which creates opportunities for elderly residents to communicate with young visitors and strengthens their feeling of pride in their island (Committee, 2010). The large number of local volunteers demonstrates a positive attitude of residents to the art projects.

The number of service industry employees, including tourism, increased by about 38% from 2000 to 2010 while other areas of employment have remained steady or declined (Kagawa, n.d.; Naoshima, n.d.). While the population of Naoshima has declined by more than 17% in the last 15 years, the net number of out-migrants is declining. This might be caused by a

decrease in the number of young people leaving the island due to employment or advancement to higher education, but the art projects and tourism-related business might also influence population outflow (Nomura, 2012).

Operating structure

The Benesse Art Site Naoshima is joint operated by Naoshima Bunkamura Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Benesse, and the Fukutake Foundation. Naoshima Bunkamura Inc. runs the Benesse House, while the foundation runs the other museum and art projects. The foundation is financed by admission fees and dividends from Benesse stocks (Mizuho, 2007). Benesse's support of the development plan of the municipal government is one of the critical success factors for increased tourism. The Naoshima municipal government spent about JPY 19 million in 2011 for social education, including the establishment and operation of educational facilities such as museums, community centres or libraries (Kagawa Prefectural Board of Education, 2012). The Benesse Art Site Naoshima has also improved the corporate image of Benesse and in 2006, Benesse and the foundation received an award for their work on Naoshima. Benesse's patronage is indispensable for building and running the art museum and commissioning artworks. For a local government which faces financial challenges, strengthening the relationship with private patronage is an effective method to revitalise the community and promote tourism.

Local government

The then mayor of Naoshima provided the original vision to develop sustainable tourism using natural and cultural assets rather than developing a large-scale resort which tourists might see anywhere (Ihara, 2007). This has been the basis for development by Benesse, with Soichiro Fukutake's support for this vision indispensable. The Naoshima municipal government has not been actively involved with the art projects since the 1980s, based on a development agreement with Benesse. The government has, however, made an effort to preserve the historical townscape to retain the island's attractiveness, created by a contrast between contemporary art and the historical and natural assets of the island. In 2002, the government established the regulation for landscape preservation, in which the government subsidises building renovations that meet the purpose of the regulation. The municipal government also began to subsidise the Japanese Curtain Projects mentioned above (Kasahara, 2011).

In 2004, the Fukutake Foundation carried out a preliminary research project to establish an art network in the Seto Inland Sea. This regional network aims to promote domestic and international tourism using the

popularity of contemporary art at the Benesse Art Site Naoshima. This project strengthened co-operation not only between local government and the foundation, but also among communities and non-profit organisations (Kasahara, 2005). While the Benesse Art Site Naoshima has been mainly led by Benesse, the local government, especially the Kagawa prefectural government, has played an important role in launching and operating the Setouchi International Art Festival.

Setouchi International Art Festival

As part of its goal to develop more art tourism in the area, in 2007 the Kagawa prefectural government announced its participation in the Setouchi International Art Festival. The Kagawa Art Tourism Plan 2010-15 aims to leverage contemporary art in the islands in the Seto Inland Sea to pull in visitors to other museums in the wider region, traditional cultural sites, such as shrines and temples, natural sites in seaboard cities and restaurants with local specialty food. The target is a 5% increase in the number of tourists and length of stay of domestic and international tourists in the prefecture. The Setouchi International Art Festival is the most important tool to achieve this goal (Kagawa, 2010).

The Setouchi Triennale has been developed through collaboration between the local government, aiming at tourism promotion, Soichiro Fukutake supporting regional revitalisation by art and the art director Fram Kitagawa. The art projects in Naoshima have strengthened the belief that interaction among elderly residents, young tourists, artists and volunteers through art activities revitalises local communities. This has been influenced by the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale, which has been held every three years since 2000 and which aims to revitalise the aging communities in mountain forests in the Niigata prefecture (MLIT, 2009). This contemporary art festival is directed by Fram Kitagawa, who was later invited to be the art director of the Setouchi Triennale.

Operating structure

Established in April 2008, the Committee brings together representatives of local government, the local business community and the creative industries. The Committee is chaired by the Governor of the Kagawa prefecture. The President of Kagawa Prefecture Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Mayor of Takamatsu are the vice chairs. The President of the Fukutake Foundation, Soichiro Fukutake, is also a leading figure in promoting, managing and producing the festival. The director is Fram Kitagawa, who has vast experience in the operation of international art festivals and is the art director of the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale.

The Committee is operated mainly by the Kagawa prefectural government. For the 2010 festival, the secretariat of the Committee was composed of 12 officials from the office of Setouchi International Art Festival in the Kagawa prefectural government, which was established in 2009, and 3 officials from the Takamatsu municipal government, supervised by a chief and a deputy chief of the Tourism Exchange Bureau in the Kagawa prefectural government (JTA, 2012).

Impact of the 2010 festival on tourism and regional revitalisation

The first Setouchi International Art Festival was held between July and October 2010 on the seven islands in the Seto Inland Sea and at Takamatsu and Uno ports. Seventy-five artists groups from 18 countries and territories participated (Committee, 2010). According to the report by the Committee (Table 1), the 2010 festival had more than 900 000 visits. The total number of visits was counted at 24 places on the islands and the Takamatsu port. If one visitor visited three festival sites, this counted as three visits.

Table 1. Visits to the festival, 2010

Islands	Visitors
Naoshima	291 728
Teshima	175 393
Megijima	99 759
Ogijima	96 503
Shodoshima	113 274
Oshima	4 812
Inujima	84 458
Takamatsu	72 319
Total	938 246

Source: Committee (Executive Committee of Setouchi International Art Festival) (2010), “Report of the Setouchi International Art Festival 2010” (in Japanese), www.setouchi-artfest.jp/images/uploads/news/report_20101220.pdf.

A survey showed that more than 70% of visitors were from outside of the Kagawa prefecture, about 70% were female and more than 70% were under 40 years old. About 1% of visitors were from abroad, mainly from Australia, Chinese Taipei, France and the United States (Committee, 2010). While the share of foreign visitors to the Kagawa prefecture is small, in 2010 it grew by 65% from the previous year (JTA, 2010; 2011).

The festival not only exhibited artworks but also hosted 208 symposiums, stages and concerts, which had more than 53 000 visits. In addition, “municipal day” events were held to promote tourism sites and local products in each municipality during the festival. The local

governments aimed to leverage the festival to introduce their tourism spots and local products to tourists. These events had about 26 000 visits (Committee, 2010).

The 2010 festival produced JPY 104 million in surpluses from donations and ticket sales, while contributions from the local government and the foundation covered more than half of the expenditure. Ticket sales revenue was JPY 222 million and donations totalled JPY 152 million. In 2009, the festival received nearly JPY 9 million in government subsidies from Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, which aims to support regional creative activities and human resource development in the creative industries (MLIT, n.d.).

Although it was hoped that festival visitors would visit other tourist sites in the wider region, more than half of visitors only took a day trip and about three-quarters visited only the festival. During the festival period, the number of tourists to other major tourist sites in the Kagawa prefecture had decreased, such as Ritsurin Garden (19.6%), Yashima (11.8%), Kotohira (5.7%) and Syodosima (3.3%). However, the number of tourists visiting Kagawa from outside the prefecture has increased from 7.9 million in 2005 to 8.9 million in 2012 (Kagawa, 2013). The Benesse Art Site Naoshima and the Setouchi Triennale are likely to be among the causes of this growth.

The Takamatsu branch of the Bank of Japan estimated that the economic impact of the 2010 festival was about JYP 11.1 billion, which is more than twice the predicted JPY 5.5 billion. The bank affirmed that the main reasons for the 2010 festival's success are synergy between artworks and natural assets as well as the hospitality of residents and volunteers. They also identified challenges in terms of co-operation with surrounding tourist sites and commercial facilities in the wider region, meeting growing demand for local food restaurants and hotels, the expansion of the festival venue and improving satisfaction among foreign visitors (Bank of Japan Takamatsu Branch & Committee, 2010). After the festival, some of the artworks continued to be exhibited on the islands. While the number of tourists to Benesse Art Site Naoshima decreased from 2010 to 2011, they rose from 2011 to 2012.

During the 2010 festival, the local authorities hired almost 300 people using the emergency job creation fund by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The foundation and Benesse hired 51 employees. However, further study is needed to evaluate the festival's long-term impact on employment (Committee, 2010).

Public relations activities led to the Setouchi International Art Festival being quoted in 645 media, including 40 foreign media. The foundation held exhibitions about Naoshima at Venice Biennale and in Paris in 2009. The

official website of the 2010 festival had 980 000 hits from June to October 2010 and the number of Twitter followers was 10 759 in October 2010 (Committee, 2010).

While only 69% of residents surveyed said they had expected that the festival would revitalise the communities, more than 82% of them agreed that it supported revitalisation. More than 88% of residents also acknowledged that artworks exhibited in their communities had a positive impact. About 89% of residents appreciated the activities of volunteers and affirmed that the festival had attracted young tourists. In November 2010, the number of registered volunteers was 2 606, about 40% of whom are from the Kagawa prefecture and about 16% from the Okayama prefecture. The festival provided residents opportunities to communicate with young volunteers and tourists (Committee, 2010).

2013 festival

In 2013, the second Setouchi International Art Festival was held. The Committee changed the 2013 festival period to three seasonal sessions: spring, summer and autumn. This provides tourists with opportunities to appreciate artworks in three different natural surroundings and eases the burden of residents who live around festival venues. The new structure also contributes to overcoming the summer-dominated seasonality that the Kagawa prefecture faces. The Committee also expanded the festival by adding five more islands, to show the diverse culture on the different islands in the Seto Inland Sea.

The Japan Tourism Agency implemented public relations on the Art Site Naoshima and 2013 festival in the International Luxury Travel Market 2012 in Shanghai and conducted a familiarisation trip to the islands in the Seto Inland Sea for foreign tourism agencies.

The Committee reported that the 2013 festival attracted record visit numbers by the end of the year with more than 1 million visits.

Concluding remarks

In 2009, the JTA appointed Soichiro Fukutake as a “Visit Japan Ambassador” in appreciation of his efforts for regional development by contemporary art and development of the islands’ attractiveness for visitors. Contemporary art has played an important role in various regional development projects in Japan. The Benesse Art Site Naoshima and the Setouchi International Art Festival provide lessons about collaboration between the creative industry and the tourism sector. Key identified outcomes to date are as follows:

- commissioned site-specific works attracting international and domestic artists and tourists, enhancing natural and cultural assets of the region
- active participation by local residents in art projects and tourism
- collaboration between a robust municipal development plan and significant long-term local corporate support to promote creative activities in the region
- contemporary art festival as a means of regional branding, revitalising ageing local communities, promoting art and culture, and stimulating tourism
- strengthened relationships between the representatives of local government, local business and the creative industries for developing creative tourism in the wider region
- the art festival’s significant impact on tourism and the local economy, energising local communities.

It should be noted, however, that despite the significant achievements of the festival, the Committee needs to develop a new strategy to pull in festival tourists to other tourist sites and increase their length of stay to promote tourism in the wider region. While further studies are needed to evaluate the effects of 2013 festival and the long-term impact on the local economy and regional revitalisation, the Art Site Naoshima and the Setouchi Triennale clearly demonstrate that the creative industries and contemporary art can revitalise local communities and promote the tourism industry.

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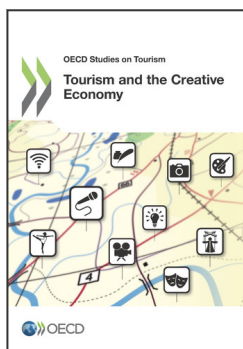
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