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Nuclear Displacement: Two Patterns

Total Number of Fukushima Evacuees: 160 000 (May 2012)

1. From Evacuation Zones defined by the government

Mandatory Evacuation (110 000)

Recognized as displaced (legitimate victims) by the government

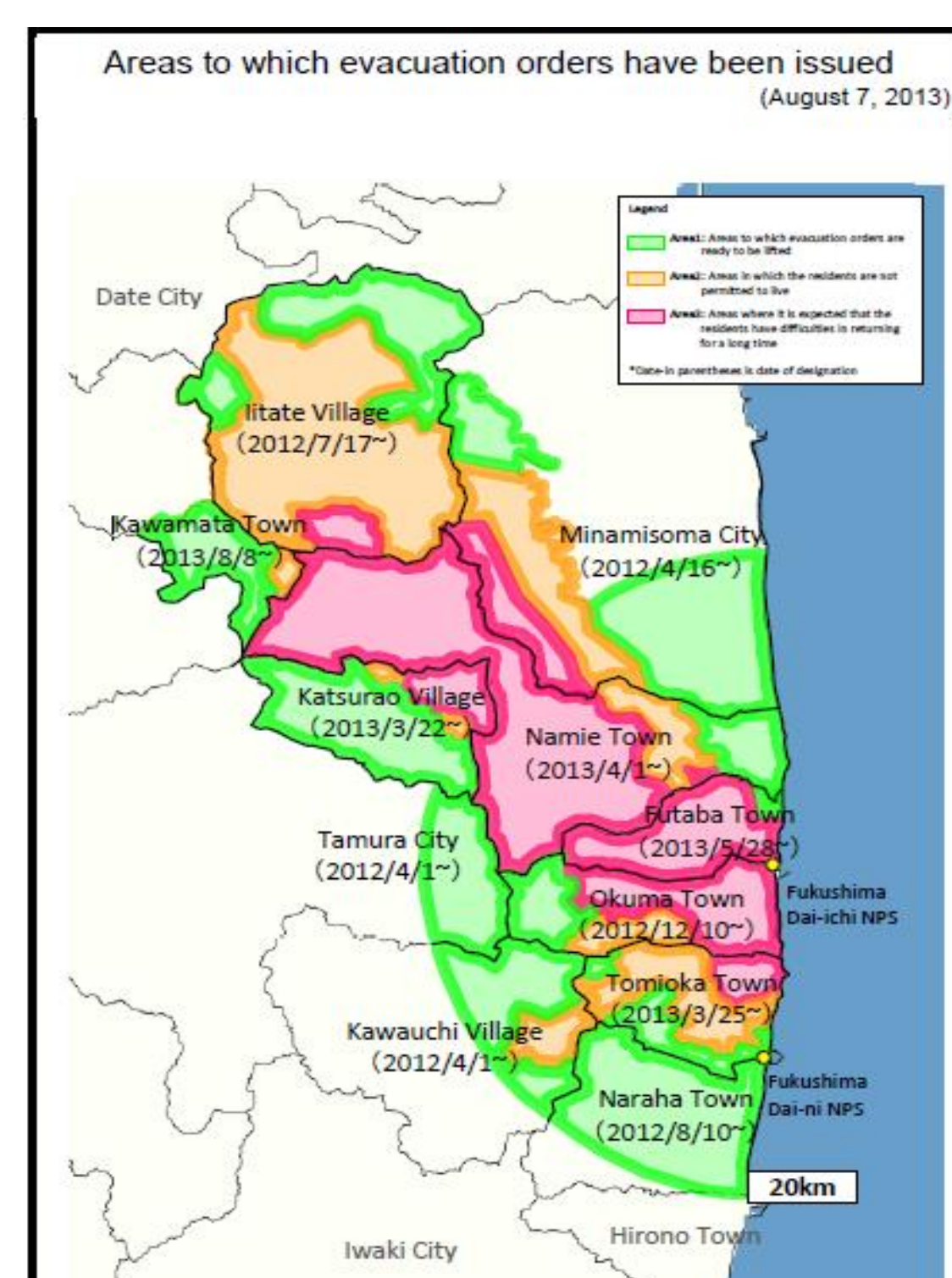
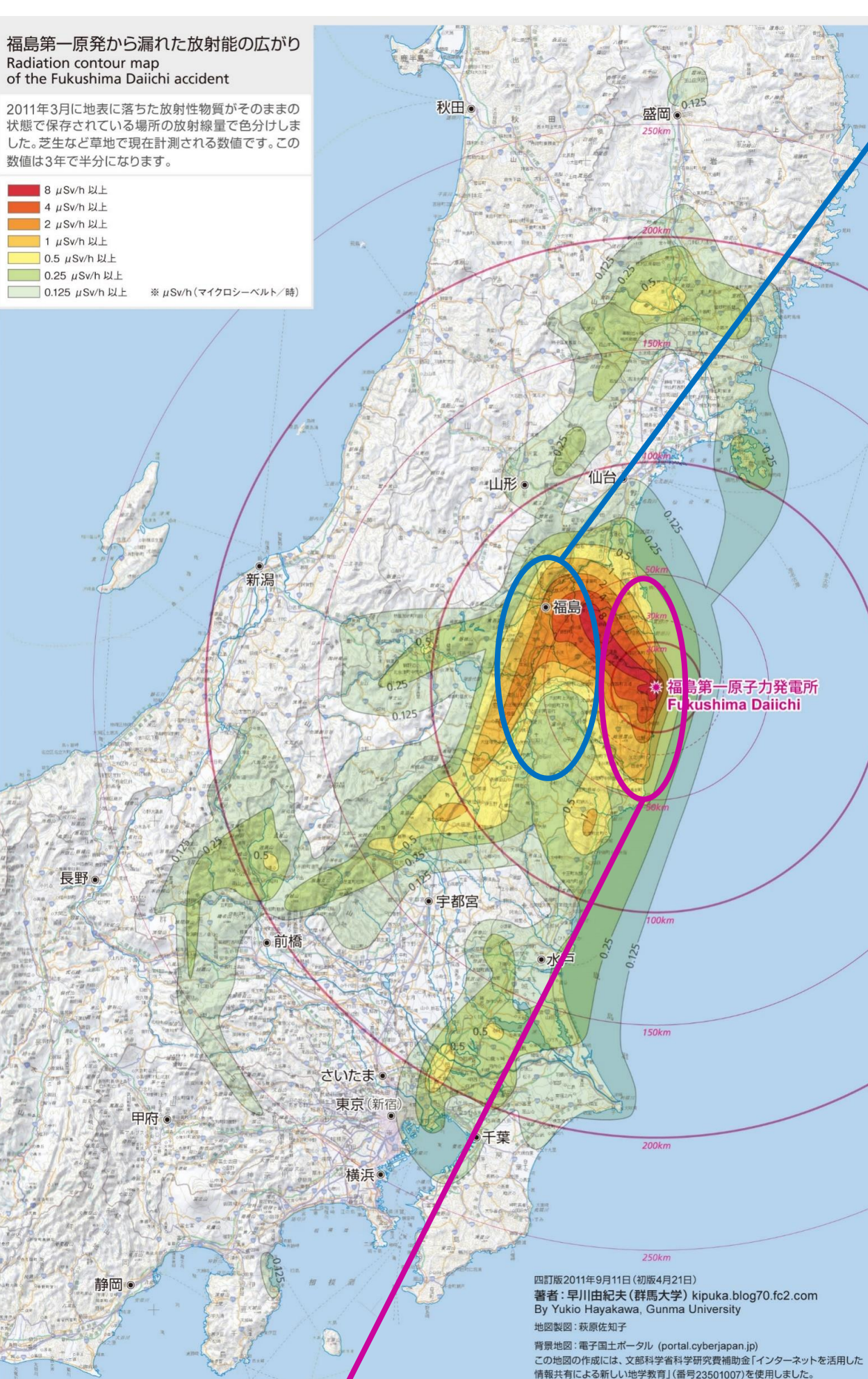
Financial compensation and assistance

2. Outside of Evacuation Zones

Voluntary Evacuation ("Self-Evacuees") (50 000)

Not recognized as displaced nor victims by the government

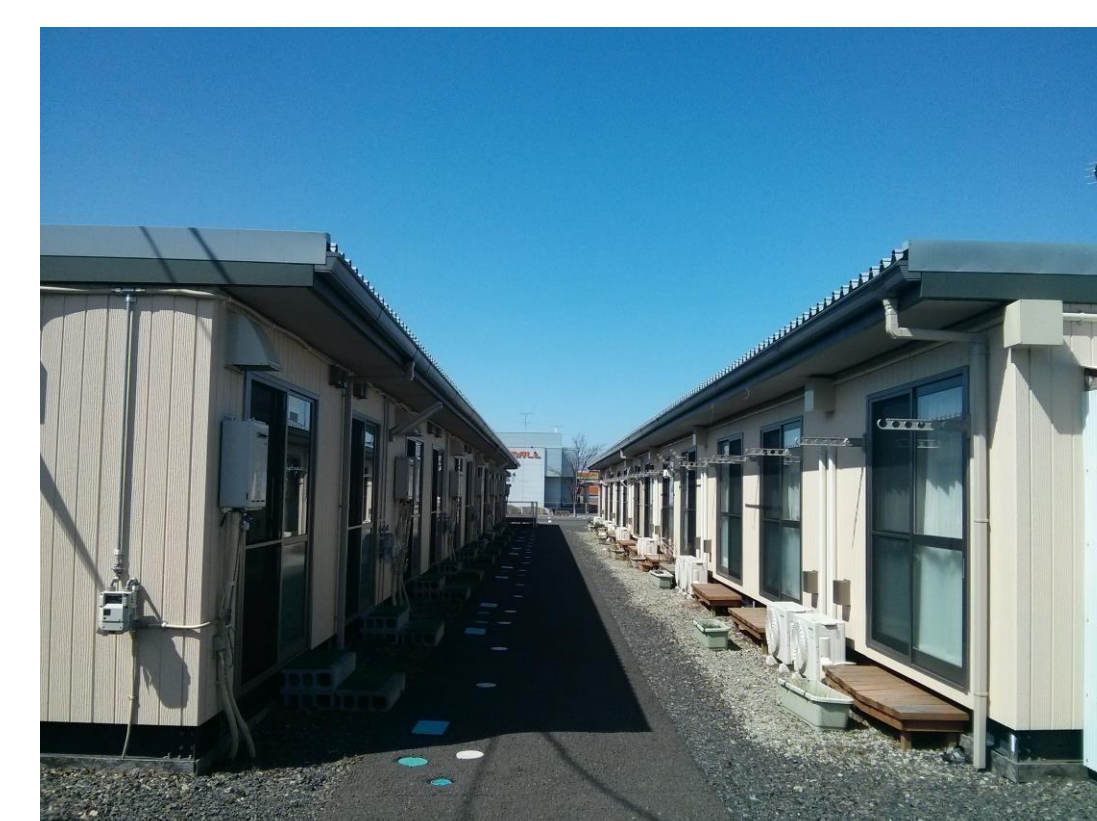
No (little) compensation and assistance



Source: Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) 2013

Evacuation Zone: Encouraged Return

- Return encouraged with financial incentives by the authorities based on the new safety limit (raised from 1 to 20mSv/year)
- Question of return, highly politicized by the authorities, tied to the sense of loyalty to the community and glorified notion of "resilience"
- Evacuees often remain skeptical and undecided.
 - radiation effect (suspicious on government's reassurance)
 - economic prospect/basic social infrastructures
 - close distance to the crippled station
- Only 20% of residents wish to return (More than 60 years old, deeply attached to their land)
- "Unsustainable Return": towns with no children or young generation
- Those who choose not to return will be considered as "self-evacuees"



Temporary shelters for Kawauchi nuclear evacuees in Kooriyama city (Fukushima) @ Rina Kojima, 2015

Family separation (between older and young generations)
Physical disappearance of towns (four towns have no inhabitants today)

Outside of Evacuation Zones: "Live with Radiological Contamination and Risk"

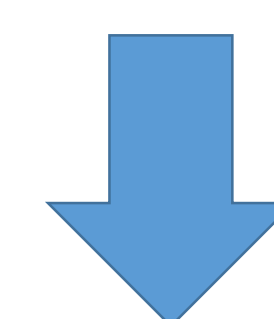
- Concerned population: about 1 million
- The authorities raised public radiation exposure limit from 1mSv/year (international guideline) to 20mSv/year and reassure and encourage residents to stay despite elevated radiation levels
- Many mothers with children evacuate, leaving husbands to stay working (family separation)
- Without financial assistance of the authorities, those who have financial means and social capitals leave on their own.
- "Voluntary evacuation" = a taboo subject
- 20-30% of Fukushima City residents still wish to evacuate (Fukushima city, 2012; 2013)

Dividing communities
- those who evacuate on their own
- those who stay but remain anxious about radiation
- those who stay and do not worry about radiation



Damaged reactor no.4 of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant @ TEPCO 2011

After nuclear disasters: encouraged return and imposed adaptation to risks are becoming the norm...



This research explores the categorization of nuclear disaster displacement.

Nuclear Evacuees = IDPs? Environmentally displaced persons? Environmental migrant?

- Definition of IDPs in **Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement** (UN, 1998):
"Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border."
- Jacobson (1988) identified a type of environmental refugees as:
"those who migrate because environmental degradation has undermined their livelihood or poses unacceptable risks to health"
- Renaud, Bogardi, Dun and Warner (2007) distinguished environment-related mass movement into three categories:
environmentally motivated migrants ("may leave", pre-empt the worse)
environmentally forced migrants ("have to leave" with decision-makings)
environmental refugees (extreme events, disasters)
- In a background paper prior to the launch of the **Nansen Initiative**, Walter Kälin (2008) proposed three criteria to identify environmental displacement: **permissibility, factual possibility and reasonableness of return.**
Is it permissible to make people return (to a situation where their life or limb is at risk)?
Is it physically, administratively or legally possible?
Is it reasonable to send people back to a situation with no assistance or zones considered inhabitable?
- The notion of **"well-founded" fear** in the case of environmental migration or voluntary evacuation after nuclear disasters (Interview with W. Kälin in 2012)

Is "self-evacuees" of nuclear disasters "environmentally forced migrant"?

Is evacuees under evacuation order "environmental refugees"?

What could be considered as "well-founded" fear in case of voluntary evacuation after a nuclear disaster or environmental change?

Conclusions

Examining nuclear disaster displacement through the notion of IDPs and environmentally forced migrant/refugee, we can draw following conclusions:

- In terms of gaps,
- Three main debates surrounding the notion of environmental migrants/refugees (e.g. Castles 2002): 1. the terminology "environmental refugee"; 2. whether environmental factors are the root cause of displacement; and 3. who should provide protection (Renaud et al. 2007). In the case of nuclear displacement, the second and third questions are irrelevant.
 - Because nuclear accidents are human-made disasters, there is a factor of operator's and state's responsibility/liability issues as well as considerable political and economic interests in managing the aftermath.
 - For the protection of environmentally forced migrants, there is clearly a gap in international normative frameworks and instruments, compared to IDPs (which was much aspired from refugee protection principles). Kälin calls it "legal and operational limbo" (Kälin 2008)

- In terms of relevance,
- Recognizing them as IDPs, the competent authorities are to follow the recommendations made within Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UN, 1998) and the Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs (UN, 2009) including:

"under no circumstances should IDPs be encouraged or compelled to return or relocate to areas where their life, safety, liberty or health would be at risk" (UN, 2009: 12)

Three durable solutions are to be proposed to the displaced: voluntary return, local integration or resettlement.

"the rights, needs and legitimate interests of IDPs should be the primary considerations that guide all policies and decisions relating to internal displacement and durable solutions" (UN, 2009: 16)

- Recognizing them as environmental forced migrants, the Nansen Initiative could provide a way forward for their protection although it does not currently cover the internal displacement caseload.
- Kampala Convention (2009) (the first legally-binding instrument on internal displacement) recognizes IDPs due to the effects of climate change.
- In the context of environmental and sanitary protection, the precautionary principle could often be invoked in decision-makings when a risk is recognized but with scientific uncertainties (e.g. Rio's declaration, 1992: art.15). Following this notion, voluntary evacuation following a nuclear accident could be a legitimate mitigation/protection strategy.



Geiger counter @ Rina Kojima, 2015