

Area Studies

-

Paper Theme 4

R.A.J. Wacanno

November 8, 2020

In areamaking, places can be given meaning through a narrative process. This is called narrative areamaking. When talking about narrative areamaking, three different perspectives can be identified to view this process. The first of these starts with a story, and uses said story to give meaning to a given area. The second perspective starts with an area, and uses a story to give it purpose. The third and last perspective tries to define narrative areamaking through the narrative understanding of events and actions. This last notion may seem more abstract, but it comes down to a narrative process that does not manifest itself in writing or imagery.

In this writing, I'd like to examine the case of the Japanese Suicide Forrest, or *Aokigahara-jukai*, as described in Takahashi (1988). The transformation of this initially ordinary seeming forest into a popular location for committing suicide can be explained through examination with each of the perspectives described in the beginning of this essay.

I'd like to start the analysis of this case from the perspective of narrative understanding. Through the initial actions of a few, namely committing suicide in this forest, the initial foundation for this example of areamaking is constructed.

Subsequently, this initial foundation is reported on in the news media, resulting in increased exposure of the newfound purpose of this area. This part can be explained from the area to story perspective. As a result of this storytelling in the news media, an increased influx of people using this forest as their last resting place can be observed. This process in turn can be seen as an example of the story to area perspective.

References

Takahashi, Y. (1988). Aokigahara-jukai: Suicide and amnesia in mt. fuji's black forest. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 18(2), 164–175.