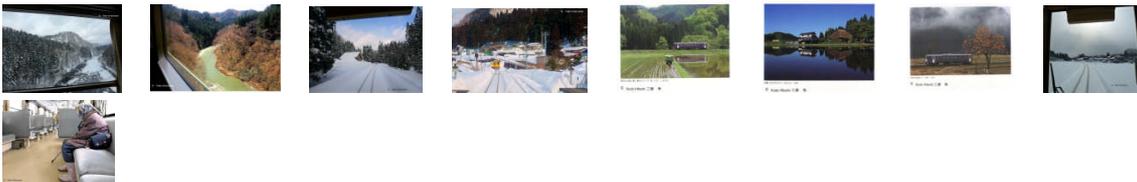




Tourism as a future for local rail services? An analysis of debates in Akita Prefecture.

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In 2004 I had the chance to travel by rail from Hirosaki through Akita's interior down to Kakunodate, a remarkable journey amidst majestic forests, across wild rivers, and past ancient farm houses. The elegance and calmness of the rural people as they went about their work or got on and off the little train left a deep impression. A few years later I was back again, this time in winter. The silvery beauty of the landscape, and the changes between brilliant blue skies and lashing blizzards remain unforgettable. I was thus alarmed to find that the Akita Nairiku Jûkan Tetsudô (The Inland Railway through Central Akita) figured high up on the list of railways earmarked for closure, as deficits had reached astronomic levels.¹



I wanted to know what the actual situation was in detail, and whether anyone was around to care. I also wanted to know how this situation had arisen, as the railway was not some old relict. No, it was new and had only been completed in 1988. And thirdly, I wondered what tourist potential this little line had, considering that its point of departure, the ancient town of Kakunodate, is on the Shinkansen directly from Tokyo. Can small railway lines contribute to a peaceful way of enjoying remoter regions, to green tourism in areas of natural beauty, and to the revitalisation of out-of-the-way towns and villages to which tourists could make journeys into the past? Was Japan keeping up with such developments as we know them in countries like Switzerland, France or Britain, and if so, did Japan have its own unique way of doing so?

1. The actual situation on the Akita Nairiku Railway

The line stands under the severe threat that if its deficit is not reduced to under 200 000 000 yen (about 1½ Million Euro) by the end of 2012 drastic measures will be taken,

¹ RJ 5/2010 (142-143), RJ 11/2012 (105). See also the collection of photographs of the railway in the course of the four seasons (Kudô 2006).

whatever that means.² However, in July 2013 it seemed that this target will be missed.³

Who has the power to pronounce such a threat, i.e. who are the main shareholders? They are Akita Prefecture (approx. 39%), Kita Akita City centring on Takanosu (approx. 23%), Senboku City centring on Kakunodate (approx. 15%), and local banks (approx. 8%).⁴

The Akita Nairiku Railway is an unusually long local line covering 94 km, for which it takes around 2½ hours. The population it served in 2010 stood at approx. 36 000 adults (against approx. 54 000 in 1990), approx. 7000 persons under 15 (against approx. 14 000 in 1990), and approx. 23 000 persons over 65 (against only approx. 15 000 in 1990).⁵

How has the railway been used since it was inaugurated in 1989? In 1990 it was travelled on by over 1 000 000 passengers,⁶ in 1995 the figure had fallen to about 900 000, in 2010 it stood at around 400 000, and in 2012 it had fallen to 370 000. Since 2003 the deficit has been consistently hovering around 250 000 000 to 280 000 000 yen (about 2 Million Euro). Not surprisingly, the directors of the railway, who stood close to the local administration that had to face severe budget cuts, were basically in favour of closing the line.⁷

Closure was imminent in 2005, but thanks to much support⁸ and a vague concept of including the Akita Nairiku Railway in plans for tourist development, the line still operates,⁹ though it suffered a blow in 2007 when it lost its important function of carrying elementary and lower secondary school children, who were transferred to school buses out of fear of crime.¹⁰

Apart from the rapid depopulation of the region heavy snowfalls have driven up costs, while tourism dwindled to a trickle in this part of Japan after the shock of the Great

² RJ 11/2012 (98-105), INT 10, INT 11, INT 12, INT 22, INT 25.

³ INT 11, INT 18, INT 22.

⁴ Extensive data on the Akita Nairiku Railway can be found in INT 34, INT 35. See also RJ 11/2012 (101), INT 19.

⁵ INT 19.

⁶ A description of the railway soon after it had opened is found in RJ 8/1990 (58-61).

⁷ INT 1, INT 2.

⁸ INT 2.

⁹ INT 12, INT 18.

¹⁰ INT 3.

East Japan Earthquake of 2011.¹¹



A look at the history of the line raises a few eyebrows. As mentioned, the Akita Nairiku Railway as we know it today only started operation in 1989 after a branch in the north and a branch in the south were joined together. This gave the opportunity to enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery in the mountains of Akita. However, the new section joined not only two cul-de-sac railway lines but also two very different geographical areas and cost the Japanese taxpayer enormous sums alone for the construction of Jûnidan Tunnel between them, almost 6 km in length. Local people still say there was no need to join the mountain valley of Ani in the north with the Tazawa Lake plateau in the south, as traditionally there had been no contacts between the villages on either side.¹²

I shall return to the puzzle surrounding the construction of the line as late as the 1980s presently, since it helps us understand some of the problems Japan's regions are battling with at present. Historically, only the upper end of the northern section, built in 1936, had any importance, connecting as it did the former copper mines at Aniai to the main Akita to Aomori trunk line. The rest of the northern cul-de-sac line through the valley as far as Hitachinai was built in 1963, while the southern cul-de-sac section from Kakunodate to the village of Matsuba went into traffic as late as 1971 and was earmarked for closure hardly had it opened. Both cul-de-sac lines were operated – and the deficits paid for – by Japan's National Railways JNR.¹³

Alone in the face of its huge deficit, its dwindling passenger figures, depopulation, and the ownership of cars in rural areas, the Akita Nairiku Railway is a disaster. Services have therefore been cut back, and bonus payments and other allowances for the employees dropped.¹⁴ Yet the new director of the line thinks we shouldn't get rid of it, and so do those who have enjoyed the attractive ride.

2. The history leading up to today's problems

The line's awkward name "Akita Nairiku Jûkan Tetsudô (Railway running lengthwise

¹¹ RJ 11/2012 (104), INT 6.

¹² RJ 8/1990 (61), INT 18, INT 33.

¹³ RJ 9/1981 (23-32), RJ 4/1995 (61-62).

¹⁴ INT 6.

through the interior part of Akita)" already shows that local transport, and not the enjoyment of the region, stood in focus. Other small railways that started service as private lines in the 1980s often had more appealing names associated with tourist sites, such as Hamanako Tenryû Railway in Shizuoka Prefecture or Watarase Keikoku Railway in Gumma and Tochigi Prefectures.¹⁵

Seeking to understand the present situation, and to a certain degree also the neglect of potentials of a rural railway like this one, we are invariably led to consider the turmoil that characterized Japan's furious industrial and social changes in the 1960s, '70s and '80s. This turmoil can be traced by looking at 3 institutions, the National Railways, the Japan Railway Construction Corporation, and so-called Third Sector Railways.

The National Railways of Japan (JNR) played a huge role in the country's post-war development, as a means of transport of people and goods, for inter-regional communication, and as one of Japan's most important job-providers.¹⁶ However, by 1964 rising expenditure, changes in transport needs, the demise of the coal industry, concentration of the population in the large cities and, of course, the private car and better roads, turned JNR from a profitable into a loss-making business. Rationalisation and the plan to close 83 lines was therefore propagated in 1968.¹⁷

With that, an endless period of agony began, while JNR's deficit grew and grew. I well remember how trains were filthy and late, services bad and infrequent, while strikes and conflict between labour and management paralysed JNR throughout the 1970s. The oil price shock of 1973 and the politically motivated reluctance to raise fares only made things worse. It was not until 1981 that, on the basis of the Kokutetsu Saiken-hô (the JNR Reorganization Law),¹⁸ the government started in earnest to get rid of the 83 lines (3158 km) scheduled for closure back in 1968. At that point in time, however, the Japan Railway Construction Corporation was busily building new lines, most of these serving few needs. When this activity was halted hundreds of half-finished bridges, tunnels, even complete railway systems all over Japan were left to decay.¹⁹

¹⁵ Referring to the wild Tenryû River, Lake Hamanako and the Watarase Gorge respectively.

¹⁶ RJ 6/1976 (30-32).

¹⁷ These lines were referred to as *tokutei chihô kôtsû-sen* (Special Local Traffic Lines). RJ 4/1995 (61-62), RJ 9/1981 (23-32), RJ 9/1982 (72-75)

¹⁸ RJ 9/1981 (23-32, 72-75), RJ 10/1988 (27-31).

¹⁹ RJ 6/1976 (52-60).

Thanks to the new law, of the 83 lines JNR had wanted to get rid of in 1968, 75 could be eliminated by the time JNR finally ceased to exist in 1987.²⁰

As for the Japan Railway Construction Corporation, (as we could expect) seated in Nagata-chô in Tokyo with its management coming down from JNR, Development Banks, and the ministry, this can be described as an organization enabling the accounts for the building of new lines to be done on separate books, without showing up as JNR's deficit.²¹ With regard to the Akita Nairiku line, the Construction Corporation had completed its southern section by 1971, and soon had also finished the long Jûnidan



Tunnel to connect the north with the south. Here it may be added that Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei (1972-74), known for his Nihon Rettô Kaizô-ron (Japanese Archipelago Remodelling Plan) propagated in 1972, thought of railways as a basic necessity for which the state should pay. Naturally, the local regions limited their activities to lobbying for new lines, without feeling responsible for them.²²

In the course of the 1980s the construction ban on new lines was only lifted when business interests were clear. However, and with this the Akita Nairiku line comes back into focus, the elimination of dead-end branch lines by joining these up with other lines was also considered a worthwhile investment, promising to create flows of traffic across regional borders.²³ This option was favoured wherever the Railway Construction Corporation had already completed much engineering work, as was the case with the bridges and tunnels between Hitachinai and Matsuba. Thus, amidst the great optimism of the bubble economy of the late 1980s, came into being one of Japan's longest new rural lines, now as the Third Sector railway Akita Nairiku Jûkan Tetsudô.

In the late 1980s the key concept "Third Sector railway" inspired local fantasies. "Third Sector" denotes an undertaking in which prefectural, regional and national administration (i.e. the First Sector) joins forces with private business (i.e. the Second

²⁰ RJ 8/1990 (62-63), RJ 4/1995 (60-63).

²¹ RJ 6/1976 (53-55), RJ 4/1995 (60), INT 33.

²² RJ 6/1976 (52-54).

²³ RJ 8/1990 (62-63), RJ 4/1995 (60-63). The main criteria for loosening the ban on the construction of new railway lines included access to tourist sites, poor condition of parallel roads, especially in winter, prospects of commuter traffic, the promise that the line would be operated by the local municipalities, and the elimination of *môchô-sen* ("appendicitis lines", dead-end lines) by linking them to other lines for through running (cf. RJ 10/1982 (87)).

Sector), both sides taking degrees of financial and operational responsibility.²⁴ Third Sector operations thus appeared to guarantee flexibility and more independence from rigid budgets, and at the same time made it easier to take business risks which would be cushioned by the local government. In effect this brought about a new role of the *chiiki shakai* (regional society, regional communities), which saw themselves (or needed to see themselves) involved in a variety of operations.²⁵

When Third Sector railways came into being, they reflected more closely the interests of the region, including tourism. Looking back, however, this has often not functioned well.²⁶ For one thing, the responsibilities between the administration and the private sector were seldom clearly outlined. Deficits were incurred by the local governments, and the debts paid for by the tax payer. Moreover, the railway business tended to be left as a kind of side job to members – or retired members - of the local government, while private business was quick to jump off as soon as initial enthusiasm had evaporated. The burst of the bubble economy and the subsequent pressures felt on all levels left most Third Sector railways just focused on survival, with few new initiatives in spite of the now overwhelming competition from trucks, highway express buses and the private car.²⁷ To make things worse, most Third Sector railways had set aside the subsidies received when they started business, seeking to operate mainly on their interest. However, interest rates dropped to almost nothing, while fares could not be raised for

²⁴ RJ 11/1983 (76), RJ 4/1995 (57-63).

²⁵ RJ 10/1988 (27-31), RJ 8/1999 (72), INT 2. INT 7 discusses the dilemma faced by Third Sector railways caused by differing interests of these local communities. If a community is situated on a JR line from which the local line branches off, it is often not interested in the local line, particularly if called upon to help finance it. On the other hand, smaller sized communities along a JR line might fear that if the branch line disappears JR's express trains won't stop at their station any longer. Then again there are communities situated at or towards the end of a branch line which, however, are not interested in it as they are far better served by an express bus, providing a direct link to a large city.

²⁶ RJ 8/1999 (67-76). This article points out, for instance, that official calculations were *amai* (irresponsibly optimistic), or that after first initiatives around 1988 administration was slow to react to changing realities. INT 33 refers to those responsible for operations as *kanryô no amakudari* (senior bureaucrats retiring to good positions), while INT 2 accuses the operators for bad management and leaving things to be run by old boy executives.

²⁷ Many articles since the 1980s draw attention to the fact that railways had rapidly lost their symbolic value. RJ 9/1981 (72-75) speaks of *reeru e no shinkô* (an (almost) religious belief in railway lines), RJ 8/1999 (76) illustrates the situation by reminding us that old proverb *tetsudô no nai machi ni wa yome mo konai* (to a place without a railway line no bride will ever come) is no longer true.

fear of losing still more passengers.²⁸

3. Is there a future for the Akita Nairiku Railway as a tourist line?

As the authors Kaneko Masaru and Takahashi Masayuki have well described in their book *Chiiki Kirisute* (Cutting off the Regions)(2008), during the first decade of the 21st century Japan's central government pursued a strict policy whereby regions should be responsible for themselves. For that reason, regional governments have come under very high pressure to bring down deficits. Yet one wonders how much vitality the director of the Akita Nairiku Railway, whose principal job was mayor of Kita Akita City, was actually investing when he stepped down from the railway at the age of 73. He was replaced by manager Wakasugi in 2009, a man from private enterprise well versed in leading resort and tourist projects.

Wakasugi had to face the threat mentioned initially that by 2012 the Akita Nairiku line's deficit had to be under 200 000 000 yen (around 1½ million Euro). Wakasugi may have realized that this target would not be reached. At any rate, with his withdrawal from the Akita Nairiku Railway we enter the next stage in Japan's debates about local lines. Now the new keyword is *kôbo shachô* (general managers found through public advertising).²⁹ It seems hard to believe that we had to reach the second decade of the 21st century before the concept of publicly advertising for the most able manager took hold!



The present manager of the Akita Nairiku Railway, Sakai Ichirô (65), has his home in Kobe and brings with him a vast amount of experience in dealing with the deficits and the restructuring of the Sogô Department Stores, and thus a bundle of ideas concerning better public relations and advertising.³⁰ Sakai sees a particular challenge in tourist railway business, which, unlike department stores with merely regional customers, can and must appeal to the whole country.³¹

As mentioned, staff on the railway has had to suffer by cuts in pay and allowances,³²

²⁸ RJ 8/1999 (74).

²⁹ RJ 11/2011 (40-65), INT 9, INT 14.

³⁰ RJ 11/2012 (98-105), INT 5.

³¹ RJ 11/2012 (102-104).

³² INT 6.

while the reduction of personnel has brought savings. Sakai himself is well integrated in exchanges within the young network of *kôbo shachô* around Japan,³³ all of whom like to be out in the field talking to passengers and observing operations.³⁴ For Sakai, not just the railway, but also its context is important, that is, not only riding the train, but also buying, eating, participating, or communicating.³⁵ Accordingly the Akita Nairiku line is now advertised in the context of drumming and many other regional festivals and events, the local hunting traditions (*matagi*), archaeological sites, nature trails, mountain flora and waterfalls, sake and local food, railway associated shops who also promote their goods on the internet, and, above all, *onsen* (hot springs).³⁶

As for marking the presence of the railway on a wider level in Japan, during 2013 I looked out for materials attracting attention to it both in Akita itself as well as in Tokyo. Many pamphlets and leaflets propagating a visit to Akita did indeed draw attention to the railway and to the beauty of the countryside through which it runs. However, Akita has a great variety of attractions to offer, such as hot springs, various typical foods, ancient buildings, museums, traditions, lakes and seaside resorts, art, theatre, regional festivals, mountains, waterfalls and interesting flora, with the result that only relatively little space is given to the Akita Nairiku Railway. Moreover, the majority of material was found at railway stations and published by JR East Japan, and I couldn't help getting the impression that JR East Japan first and above all propagated its own special offers for interesting railway trips throughout northern Japan, mainly the "Resort Shirakami" trains in the region of the Shirakami mountain range and the impressive Gonô-Line along the coast. However, I did discover one 23 page pamphlet published by JR East Japan which was fully dedicated to the Akita Nairiku Railway under the slogan "Kakunodate – Hirosaki, from ancient capital to ancient capital" and featuring a large number of interesting spots that can be reached from this line's stations. Certainly the Akita Nairiku Railway does not have an easy stand as it competes with many other offerings in Akita and northern Japan, and often enough has to put up with just a tiny thin line on the map, in contrast to JR's fat and strongly coloured lines which draw attention to access from Tokyo.

³³ INT 7, INT 8, INT 13, INT 14, INT 20, INT 26, INT 30.

³⁴ The manager of the Isumi Railway uses the term *jibun de ugoku* (moving around personally) (INT 7).

³⁵ RJ 11/2012 (102-105), INT 6.

³⁶ Green tourism is particularly propagated by the manager of the Yuri Kôgen Railway, another Third Sector line in Akita Prefecture (INT 7). Cf. also RJ 11/2012 (98-105).

In a summit of local railway managers³⁷ lines like the Akita Nairiku are defined as regional assets (*chiiki no zaisan*),³⁸ and we have also been reminded that the regions are not Tokyo: In Tokyo things may disappear, but then new ones take their place as a natural process (*shinchin taisha*). By contrast, what has disappeared in the regions has gone for good.³⁹ Therefore, such assets as the Akita Nairiku line should be cherished. At the same time, however, the manager of the Yamagata Flower Nagai Line draws attention to the fact that in the face of *kaso* (depopulation) and *shôshika* (dwindling birthrate) it will definitely not be possible to increase the number of school children or business people who use the train to commute.⁴⁰

In January 2013 a very extensive 141 page report was distributed containing detailed information on what the line had to offer, and supporting the drive for better publicity.⁴¹ The paper showed that structural reconsideration of the tourists visiting the region was necessary. It was found, for instance, that the most important centre of tourism in this part of Akita, namely the old samurai town of Kakunodate, showed little interest in being the terminus of the Akita Nairiku Railway. It will require much political skill to change this. Moreover, it was found that 90% of the visitors to the railway (as opposed to its regular customers) came from outside Akita, mainly from Tokyo. However, the fact that the line can be reached directly by Shinkansen from Tokyo needs far more advertising. It was amazing that only 10 % of the visitors to Kakunodate said they had travelled on the line, and that of the rest a full 60 % said they did not even know about it.



Intensive appeals have been addressed to women and children, including the director's call for more women to come and photograph the line,⁴² which has been given the name Akita Bijin Line, while Nairikkun appeals to children.⁴³

³⁷ Down INT 7, INT 8. Cf. also INT 13, INT 26, INT 30.

³⁸ For instance INT 4, INT 28, INT 29. INT 7 speaks of *chiiki no kyôyû shigen* (resources commonly shared by the entire region), RJ 11/2011 (51) of *kichô no kankô shigen* (precious resources for tourism).

³⁹ INT 18.

⁴⁰ INT 7.

⁴¹ INT 19.

⁴² INT 15.

⁴³ INT 23, INT 36.

A very remarkable effort has gone into associating the railway with art. There have been important picture displays of the line's beauty and an exhibition of "Nairiku-sen



Art". Moreover, attractive "Tanbo Art" (i.e. artistically arranged rice fields) is

produced along the line.  As often in Japan,

there is also the appeal to compose haiku related to the spot in nature through which one is passing.⁴⁴

Furthermore there is now a steady flow of events, not only in the form of galleries and exhibitions, but also festivals and dancing, as well as various possibilities for *taiken* (physical experience of doing or producing something).⁴⁵

For manager Sakai one of the most highlighted elements of revitalization is the sale of goods, and the enquête of January 2013 lists an amazing number of objects that could be sold at a profit, many of these being regionally produced handicraft and foodstuffs, or locally grown fruit and vegetables.⁴⁶ Some, such as special types of potatoes or chestnuts, would form important ingredients for the production of cookies elsewhere in Japan. Also, the railway passes through one of the few remaining regions where the *katakuri* plant - the original basis for *katakuri* starch – grows in large numbers.

The most encompassing appeal of the line, however, is certainly its link to nature: *shiki no fûkei* (the landscape in the course of the 4 seasons), *satoyama fûkei*, *satoyama bunka* (agricultural landscape and culture of village Japan), *fûkô meibi* (scenic beauty), or in winter *ichmen no gin-sekai* (a world of glittering silver) are key concepts. All this makes *shasô no nagame* (looking out of the carriage window) a particular experience, while *nonbiri* – which I shall translate as "slow life" – also forms a central appeal. On a business level these concepts are subsumed under the idea of *kankô shigen* (tourist assets), while on the level of a catch phrase they appear as "The Akita Nairiku line gives you the opportunity to experience landscape that speaks of the very basic stratum of Japanese identity" (*nihon no gen-fûkei*).⁴⁷

⁴⁴ RJ 11/2012 (98-105), INT 15, INT 16, INT 17, INT 20, INT 21.

⁴⁵ INT 24, INT 27, INT 31.

⁴⁶ INT 19 (75-80).

⁴⁷ RJ 11/2012 (105), INT 15.

To enable tourists to savour this *gen fûkei* the General information site of third sector railways in Akita Prefecture presents us with the most detailed information I have ever seen concerning its little stations, which are all described with their cultural and natural surroundings and together will all amenities.⁴⁸

Is there then a future for the line deriving from its tourist potential? Politically and with regard to necessary investments it is not easy to turn what is still looked upon a means of transport into a tourist attraction. How far the local, ageing population – as opposed to enthusiasts from outside - will go along with such an idea is also hard to tell. Moreover, a glimpse at the timetable shows that the Akita Nairiku Railway apparently cannot make up its mind whether it is primarily a means of transport or a means of tourism and recreation. Railways elsewhere that depend on tourism have often given up clumsily serving local needs and focused on tourist centres which are reached swiftly from a given point of departure. Where nature is attractive, panorama coaches are used. Small villages, however, are served by bus.

In the case of the Akita Nairiku Railway, fetching tourists from an attractive spot can only mean Kakunodate, yet this is not functioning in a satisfactory way. And then, where take the tourists to, especially now that the railway has given up through



running to and from Hirosaki over JR lines due to the costs?⁴⁹ This, I find, is unfortunate, as for instance returning from Tôhoku to Tokyo you could easily take the Akita Nairiku from Hirosaki to Kakunodate and there change to the Shinkansen. But does any one of the small intermediate stations in this thinly populated area have enough potential to draw significant numbers of tourists and thus warrant a stop?

As noted, Japan's large cities, especially Tokyo, appear to be the main source for future travellers. Maybe with a new manager from outside the closed circle of Old Boys in Akita, this major source of income can be better tapped. However, Akita still remains a remote place and will be fearsomely cold and bleak in winter. Even the Shinkansen

⁴⁸ INT 32.

⁴⁹ However, a special train "Moriyoshi Sanroku Kôyô-gô" (Autumn Leaf Express along the Foot of the Moriyoshi Mountain range) was operated between Kakunodate and Hirosaki on October 19/20 and 26/27, 2013.

derailed here this year due to mountains of snow.



Another serious question is whether the pattern of vacations in Japan will permit Tokyo to be a major source of tourists on the line. In Europe it is common to spend a week or a fortnight at places of natural beauty and enjoy all they have to offer. But in Japan the attractiveness of the Akita Nairiku Railway may well depend on whether it can appeal to tourists rushing up here to spend just one single night in the region. This is certainly a severe limitation to making full use of what it could offer.



Finally, how will the Akita Nairiku Railway find a symbiotic relationship with the private car? Basically it has to do what other tourist lines in the world are doing: Attract visitors who come by car, and offer them a ride that fits what they expect in terms of turnaround speed, i.e. getting quickly from a car park at A to a point B and then back to one's car at A. Moreover, to visit the many little places of interest propagated by the line's homepage it is practically impossible to use the railway at all, as the timetable would hardly allow the visitor to keep getting on and off the train to enjoy these. Finally, the photographs of the line, which the railway uses to show its beauty, can in fact only be taken from the private car, which is not contributing to the line's running costs.

I am certainly not alone in my enjoyment of slow life and of the charm of rural villages and local passengers. But whether the efforts of the Akita Nairiku Railway to tap new sources of income by staging events and offering regional products for sale will be enough is hard to tell, and whether the problems of the future can be tackled by appeals just to *chiiki no doryoku* (efforts of the local region) is also an open question. At least a more business-like approach promised by the new *kôbo shachô* gives us some hope.

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Internet Downloads

(note: AN stands for the Akita Nairiku Jûkan Tetsudô)

INT 1

AN wo tasukete kudasai! shiryô-hen (2003/2004) (Please help the AN! - Newspaper articles)

<http://homepage3.nifty.com/kumanotaira-mura/help!%20moriyoshi-railway-fail.htm>

INT 2

AN wo tasukete kudasai! (2005) (Please help the AN!)

<http://homepage3.nifty.com/kumanotaira-mura/help!%20moriyoshi-railway.htm>

INT 3

Anzen, anshin to wa? (2011) (What is safety, what is security?)

<http://bokukoui.exblog.jp/16002569/>

INT 4

Isumi Tetsudô shachô blog (2011/5/13) (The Isumi Railway manager's blog)

<http://isumi.rail.shop-pro.jp/?eid=653107>

INT 5

Nairiku-sen Sakai shin-shachô no omoi wo kiku (2012) (Asking the new AN railway manager Sakai for his opinions)

<http://www.city.kitaakita.akita.jp/news/2012/01/0131/robatakouza/aikawakouminkan.htm>

INT 6

Akita Nairiku 2012 4 1 shutsujin-shiki (The AN on April 1, 2012 – The ceremony of going into battle)

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/nairikutetu/archives/50760445.html>

INT 7

Zenkoku kôbo tetsudô shachô samitto (2012/6/9) (All Japan summit of railway managers chosen on the basis of public advertising)

<http://www.ecotran.org/act/120609/20120609fkouenroku2.pdf>

INT 8

Dai 4-kai chiiki tetsudô fôramu no kaisai (2012/6/9) (The 4th forum of regional railways)
<http://www.ecotran.org/act/120609/120609.html>

INT 9

Kôbo shachô wo boshû suru to iu koto (2012/6/13) (Publicly advertising for managers (of railway lines))
<http://isumi.rail.shop-pro.jp/?eid=820436>

INT 10

Kibishisa mashita akita nairiku jûkan tetsudô – kankô rosen-ka de katsuro wo miidasu doryoku (2012/8/22) (The increasingly severe situation of the AN – making efforts to find ways to (maintain) vitality through tourism)
<http://d.hatena.ne.jp/shoriuchi/20120822/1345588418>

INT 11

AN shachô – keijô akaji 2 oku en inai "bimyô" (2012/11/29) (The manager of the AN says it is doubtful whether the operating costs will be within the 200 000 000 yen limit)
http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASFB2907P_Z21C12A1L01000/

INT 12

(Akita-ken) Gikai – Kaigiroku Heisei 24/12/4, AN ni tsuite (Minutes of the Prefectural assembly 2012/12/4 – Concerning the AN)
http://gikai.pref.akita.lg.jp/read_detail_daihyo.phtml?division=%96%7B%89%EF%8Bc&name=%95%BD%90%AC%82Q%82S%94N%81%40%91%E6%82Q%89%F1%92%E8%97%E1%89%EF&name_isn=682&level2=079&qperson=%8EO%89Y%96%CE%901%81i12%8C%8E4%93%FA%81j

INT 13

AN to chiiki no kakawari wo kangaeru fôramu (Forum for exchange of ideas on the relationship between the AN and regional (society))
http://www.kitaakita-kankou.jp/blog/2012/12/post_309.html

INT 14

Isumi Tetsudô shachô blog (2012) (The Isumi Railway manager's blog)

<http://isumi.rail.shop-pro.jp/?eid=821051>

INT 15

Aidea renpatsu de akita nairiku-sen wo apiiru - Sakai Ichirô shachô (2012) (Manager Sakai Ichirô – a rapid succession of ideas for the AN)

<http://sankei.jp.msn.com/economy/news/120527/biz12052718000003-n1.htm>

INT 16

Tanbo Art on the AN

<http://www.akita-nairiku.com/info/topics/item.php?id=485>

INT 17

Tanbo Art

<http://www.akita-nairiku.com/info/topics/item.php?id=500>

INT 18

Heisei 24 nendo de akaji wo 2 oku en inai ni assuku dekinakereba haishi sareru, akita nairiku-sen (If the deficit is not reduced to under 200 000 000 yen by the end of the year 2012 the AN will be closed)

http://www.planar-zeiss.com/201205/article_35.html

INT 19

Fidea Sôgô Kenkyûjo (Fidea Comprehensive Research Center): AN o katsuyô shita chiiki kasseika ni kansuru chôsa kenkyû, Hôkokusho (1.2013) (Investigation of (possibilities) for "vitalisation" of local communities on the basis of putting the AN to (best) use – Report Jan. 2013, 141 pages)

http://www.kasseiken.jp/pdf/news/130129_press.pdf

www.kasseiken.jp/pdf/library/guide/nairikusen_honpen.pdf

INT 20

AN to chiiki no kakawari wo kangaeru fôramu (2013/1/21) (Forum for exchange of ideas on the relationship between the AN and regional (society)) (2013/1/21)

<http://www.zero-date.org/staffblog/2013/01/post-313.html>

INT 21

AN to chiiki no kakawari wo kangaeru fôramu (2013/1/21) – zerodate ga kangaeru AN

aato no imeeji bijuaru (Forum for exchange of ideas on the relationship between the AN and regional (society)) (2013/1/21) - The zero-date image visual of Nairiku-sen art)
http://www.zero-date.org/schedule/schedule_file/001328.html

INT 22

AN shachô – keijô akaji 2 oku en inai "bimyô" (2013/2/18) (The manager of the AN says it is doubtful whether the operating costs will be within the 200 000 000 yen limit)
<http://h1dlu6fnw5emv.seesaa.net/article/323470126.html>

INT 23

Nairikkun - Kodomo ni yume (Nairikkun – A dream for the children)
http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/e-japan/akita/feature/akita1361899688543_02/news/20130307-OYT8T00200.htm?from=popin
http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/e-japan/akita/feature/akita1361899688543_02/index.htm

INT 24

AN akaji 2 oku en inai ni - 13 nendo keiei keikaku (Towards keeping the deficit within the 200 000 000 yen limit – the AN's plans for operation in 2013)
<http://mainichi.jp/area/akita/news/20130403ddlk05020010000c.html>

INT 25

Chiji kisha kaiken Heisei 25 – 5 – 27 – Nairiku-sen no riyôsha genshô to kongo no mitooshi ni tsuite (Press conference of the Governor of Akita (2013/5/27): Dwindling passenger figures on the AN and the future prospects)
<http://www.pref.akita.lg.jp/www/contents/1369636228793/index.html>

INT 26

Chiiki tetsudô fôramu – tetsudô jigyo no saisei, kasseika ni mukete (2013/6/8) (Forum of regional railways - towards regeneration and revitalisation of railway operations)
<http://www.ecotran.org/act/130608/130608.html>

INT 27

AN Blog (2013/6/29)
<http://blog.livedoor.jp/nairikutetu/archives/2013-06.html>

INT 28

Rôkaru tetsudô samitto: mune o hareru akaji wo – keieisha-ra ga giron (2013/8/25)
(Summit of managers of local railway lines: Deficits to be proud of – Debates among the operators)

<http://mainichi.jp/feature/news/20130825mog00m040003000c.html>

INT 29

Nagai-sen hyaku-sai (2013) (100 years Nagai-Line (in Yamagata Prefecture))

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/otona/railwaynews/02/yamagata/20131020-OYT8T00434.htm>

INT 30

AN Blog

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/nairikutetu/archives/50800426.html>

INT 31

AN kabe-shinbun (2013) (The wall newspaper of the AN)

<http://www.akita-nairiku.com/info/content/index.php?id=25>

INT 32

Akita-ken no dai-san sekutaa tetsudô sôgô jôhō saito (2013) (General information site of Third Sector railways in Akita Prefecture)

<http://common.pref.akita.lg.jp/jango/nairiku/>

INT 33

AN no jûnidan tonneru wa hitsuyô dattan desuka? (2013) (Was the Jûnidan Tunnel on the AN really necessary?)

http://detail.chiebukuro.yahoo.co.jp/qa/question_detail/q11110787781

INT 34

Akita Nairiku Jûkan Tetsudô – Wikipedia (2013)

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%A7%8B%E7%94%B0%E5%86%85%E9%99%B8%E7%B8%A6%E8%B2%AB%E9%89%84%E9%81%93>

INT 35

Akita Nairiku-sen (the AN line) – Wikipedia (2013), including links to tables on revenue and passenger figures

<http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E7%A7%8B%E7%94%B0%E5%86%85%E9%99%B8%E7%B8%A6%E8%B2%AB%E9%89%84%E9%81%93>

B8%A6%E8%B2%AB%E9%89%84%E9%81%93%E7%A7%8B%E7%94%B0%E5%86%85
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