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Community-based Renewable Energy Structures

A Case of Small Hydropower in a Japanese Rural Community

A virtual *u:japan* lunch lecture by Fukumoto Junko

Thursday
2021-12-09
12:30~14:00
online



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Since the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011, Japan has started to turn its attention towards renewable energy. Before the accident, renewable energy attracted little attention in Japan, and the rate of expanding energy production in that direction was very low. Unlike Austria or Germany, Japan has been slow to implement new institutional or political measures to stimulate the expansion of renewable energy, which is why it is still not among the popular ways of energy production. Further, the public's interest regarding renewable energy is rather low and the popularization due to social movements cannot be anticipated anytime

introduction of small hydropower generation is still scarce.

However, while their numbers remain low, it is indisputable, that small hydropower plants are looking back on a long history within Japan. How are they being sustained, even though they receive neither favorable treatment by official the government, nor support by citizen's high environmental consciousness?

In this presentation I will use an ethnographic case-study to disclose, how the preservation

of small hydropower plants hinges on the traditional ways in rural communities throughout Japan. In order to find a realistic way to expand the usage of renewable energy in Japan it is essential to first understand the current



Junko Fukumoto is a lecturer at Fukuoka Prefectural University. After graduating from Waseda University, she continued her studies at Kumamoto University, specializing in Community Sociology, Environmental Sociology and Rural Sociology. Using ethnographic fieldwork, she focusses mainly on research regarding depopulated rural hamlets, the application of renewable energy and topics regarding life in rural areas, such as the problems surrounding agricultural leaders and damages due to wildlife.

soon. Due to Japan's rather steep topography, one might expect small hydropower generation to be an obvious choice of energy production. However, just like other forms of renewable energy, the

state of rural communities. While considering the aspects mentioned above, I will introduce the structures and equality of rice cultivation in rural hamlets in Japan.

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