

Ecological Imaginaries in Civil Data in Post-Nuclear Japan

Ina Kim

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Registration: Not required



How can we reimagine and reconfigure humans' relationship with the environment through data after a disaster? How do different types of data reflect and address various ethics and ideologies? This talk ethnographically examines various ecological imaginaries (Gandy 2006; Eaton 2011) represented and performed through radiation detection data in post-Fukushima Japan. In the wake of the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, over 100 citizen radiation detection labs (市民放射能測定室) have been established across Japan. These labs emerged in response to the government's failure to provide sufficient and reliable data needed for citizens' health and well-being. Citizen labs have questioned the government's data collection methods and sampling practices as well as the ethics and ideologies underlying the production and distribution of such data. In their work, these labs not only measure radiation levels in food and ambient radiation but also various environmental components, including soil, water, plants, and both human and non-human bodies. Over the 14 years since the disaster, these citizen labs have broadened their worldviews through their activities, expanding their scope and scale beyond Japan and beyond humans. By ethnographically exploring the environmental data collected by citizen labs in Japan, this talk illuminates how scientific knowledge intersects with ecological ethics, ideologies, and the materiality of technology in the aftermath of environmental crises.

Ina Kim (she/her) is an environmental and medical anthropologist specializing in nuclear ecology, environmental health, and data in both Japan and the U.S. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of California, Irvine, and is currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

This talk is organized by Dodom Kim (Assistant professor of Anthropology, Sophia University).

