

Fukushima Dai-ichi and the Ocean: 10 years of study and insight Abstract Submission Form : Entry # 22

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Abstract Title (English, limited to 300 characters)

The 'turn' to sensing as a civic affirmation of a right to produce risk information

Abstract (English, limited to 2000 characters)

The 2011 Fukushima disaster and the blossoming of radiation monitoring initiatives 'from below' have taught us that distinctive modes of engagement with disruptive socio-environmental disasters are emerging. This civic 'turn to sensing' could be viewed as a human attempt to elicit, receive, and process impressions and information, both in the mode of intuitions or feelings, and in terms of data, quoting Johns. Abe stressed that the act of producing civic data over environmental risk 'give[s] visibility to ordinary citizens that lack official spokespeople'. From a social justice perspective, Kimura and Kinchy argued that 'transformative [radiation] citizen science' can help marginalized communities to be heard. Yet, delving into (successful) situated examples of radiation civic monitoring, we realize that they did not structurally challenge the rights' allocation when it comes to accessing or contributing to environmental data. Despite the essential need that humans have to access (good) information in times of crisis, no right as such has been recognized. We witness emerging trends of civic actors producing information when they perceive that they cannot access – or trust – official information, both in the context of ongoing health and environmental crises. In 10 years from the Fukushima disaster, however, these trends did not really challenge legal entitlements and the regulatory system. We will affirm a need to rethink existing rights and even conceive new ones such as a civic right to produce environmental information when the official information is scarce or lacking. A spark of hope is found in the European Citizen Science Association's push for this avenue in occasion of fall 2020 UN Economic Commission for Europe call for consultation on the update of the "Recommendations on electronic information tools," which is part of the Aarhus Convention.