

Session 4: Regional Resilience: Normative Frames and Narratives

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Case Studies of Resilience-Based Recovery Local Efforts in Tohoku: Possibilities and Challenges

Abstract:

Although extensive resilience studies and guidance of resilience at different levels exist, there are still major constraints in making resilience operational in public policy, disaster management and sustainable society. To contribute to narrowing in the gaps, this presentation will focus on specific case studies of resilience-based recovery local efforts in Tohoku after the 2011 Tohoku Disaster, and provide analytic insights on how their efforts are related with resilience, how resilience can be operationally built and what are possibilities and challenges in building resilience.

This presentation is based on analysis of specific local community projects which have been initiated after the Tohoku Disaster from resilience eyes through literature review, local interviews and professional discussions. One of major case studies of resilience-based local community efforts this presentation will provide is “Forest Wall” projects:

Forest wall projects in Tohoku initiated by scholars and civil society are different from major governmental policies which focus on concrete walls after the Tohoku Disaster. Overall, the forest walls are associated with resilience in that while the essential goal of the wall is to safe lives of people from tsunami, their target is beyond the goal and change the negative problems to positive solutions and address long-term sustainable society and psychological impacts of people through innovative and learning approaches and processes. For example, their projects reuse debris because there is air between debris and soil, the roots grow deep in the ground and the trees become more stable because the roots embrace the debris.

On the other hand, these case of resilience-based recovery local efforts are not necessarily linked with policy communities yet and there are major gaps at resilience-based local and national efforts in Japan. Overall resilience tends to be considered solely as community resilience or physical resilience separately, but the case studies in the Tohoku Disaster indicate that the lack of linkage of resilience-based efforts at communities and policies has impacted the community resilience. The case studies of Tohoku will provide critical inputs for resilience scholars and practitioners and contribute to creating better resilience frameworks for public policy, disaster management and sustainable society.