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Springfield campus (with video conference)

*REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT:  
CONNECTEDNESS, BUSINESS AND  
LEARNING:  
CREATING SUSTAINABLE  
COMMUNITIES*

Conference Sponsors

University of Southern Queensland.

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Contact person: Margee Hume [margee.Hume@usq.edu.au](mailto:margee.Hume@usq.edu.au);

Dianne Hall [D,Hall@usq.edu.au](mailto:D,Hall@usq.edu.au)

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Springfield Campus, Brisbane, Queensland. 4300

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## **The Conference Preface**

by Associate Professor Margee Hume

The 2012 *Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning* colloquia at USQ Springfield campus is the initiative of the School of Management and Marketing and the Faculty of Business and law at the Springfield Campus. It is designed to advance the current knowledge in the areas of developing regional and sustainable communities and focuses on the associated areas of connectedness, business and learning.

## **Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning colloquia**

*Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning* conference complies with the academic research conference guidelines as set down by Department of Education, Science and Training, Australia (DEST), and other organisations. For Australian delegates, the Proceedings are Category E, Conference Publications: E1 \* Full Written Paper \* Refereed.

*Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning* also complies with the requirements of the Performance-Based Research Fund administered by the Tertiary Education Commission and other organisations. For New Zealand contributors Proceedings are classed as Quality-Assured Conference Papers (Refereed). All papers have been subject to a comprehensive, double-blind peer review process. All such papers which have passed the competitive review process are accepted for presentation at Building Business Communities: Justice, Performance and Change conference.

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### THE CONFERENCE PREFACE

by Associate Professor Margee Hume

*Regional Development: connectedness, business and learning* colloquia at USQ Springfield campus is the initiative of the School of Management and Marketing and the Faculty of Business and law at the Springfield Campus. It is designed to advance the current knowledge in the areas of *connectedness, business and learning in communities* connecting communities has become one of the latest topical areas of research in particular for regional

areas. The rollout of the national broadband network, the increase in the role of social media and digital devices in work and learning and the ability of socially, emotionally and geographically isolated communities to become connected have positioned this area of research as a vital area of investigation . The colloquia brings together researchers in the area of information technology, management , regional development, education and marketing and engages them in discourse related to community and regional development, digital futures, education in regional environments and sustainability.

Community engagement and connectedness is a term that refers to interaction of people with their community and the connectedness of the community as a whole. Community engagement provides the opportunity for social connectedness, which enables people to achieve shared goals in business and societal values. Social connectedness is linked not only to the health of individuals but to the health of communities. It incorporates employment security service provision, job satisfaction and esteem, well-being, economic strength, social stability and sustainability. Community engagement and connectedness mean different things to different people and the term is advancing to include how we connect and the impact of connectiveness and the digital world. Clearly there is a need to enhance connectedness in local communities; it doesn't occur naturally. The aim of this colloquia is to address the many aspects of how to improve, enable and benefit from improved connectedness, learning and build community resiliency and business practice for future development and performance.

This conference expands the research and practitioner focus in the area of connectedness business and learning capturing the new recognition of the changes and public issues for community consumers and business. The set of the papers presented in the proceedings represents works of considered scholarship and have been produced through the process of double blind peer refereeing. Conferences, however, are more than their published proceedings. They represent a valuable venue for formal and informal exchange among academics/ professional / industry / practitioners and community stakeholders. It is through these interactions that we develop both ideas and collaborations that allow us to advance and evolve the important issues and agendas for building sustainable communities.

We thank the Keynote addresses from Dr Mustafa Ally. We appreciate the interest from international affiliates and research higher degree students including:

City University

SEGi University College – Malaysia

Han Chian College – Malaysia

SEGi College – Kuala Lumpur

SEGi College – Penang

SEGi College – Sarawak

SEGi College – Subang Jaya

Far Eastern Federal University - Russia

Proserve Education Management Development Institute (Thames Business School) – Pakistan

EASB institute of Management – Singapore

The Institute of chartered Accounts – Sri Lanka

AEA Training Centre – Mauritius

South Africa Australian Education Centre (SAAEC) – South Africa

College for Higher Education Studies – CHES – FIJI

UUNZ Institute of Business – New Zealand

And finally, the support and contribution from the Australian centre for Sustainable Business and Development. The many contributions to the conference have focused on the overarching theme of building regions and communities and the drivers of connectedness, business development and learning. Many of the authors are working with international and national collaborators in major projects that form the basis of the discussions and research papers presented. We thank the national collaborators for their support and acknowledge the enriched contributions evidenced by the colloquia to support and contribute to the advancing national and international work in the area of sustainable communities. We thank the contributions and interest from the higher research degree students who reside in many diverse international settings.

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## **Sustainability and the change in public opinion: Natural disaster empowers Japanese citizens**

*Teruyo Omura*

University of Southern Queensland

Faculty of Business and Law

School of Accounting, Economics, Finance & Law

Springfield, Queensland, AUSTRALIA

Ph#: +61 07 3470 4536

Email: [teruyo.omura@usq.edu.au](mailto:teruyo.omura@usq.edu.au)

### **Abstract**

Disaster is pushing Japan towards more sustainable and ecologically friendly energy technology. Nuclear energy has been a national strategic priority since 1973. Development of new technology in fast-breeder reactors was backed by government ministries, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency and the Federation of Electric Power Companies. Electricity supply by Nuclear power was expected to increase to 40% by 2019. This is now under review following the 2011 Fukushima accident. The 2011 disaster had a major and disruptive effect



on energy supply in Japan. Japanese society began questioning the nuclear energy policy and is starting to focus on energy saving strategies leading to sustainable lifestyles which will be beneficial to future generations. They are moving on from grieving by focusing on finding new solutions to their community problems. Perhaps there is a lesson for us in Australia.

Keywords: Government Policy; Public Opinion; Natural disaster

## **1. Introduction**

Ginza which is the famous central business district of Tokyo and one of the most affluent shopping areas in the world used to be brightly lit at night, but now this darker view is what Tokyo looks like at night. Lights have gone out all over Japan since the disaster of the Tsunami of 2011 (Shears 18 March 2011).

It is the first time in Japanese history except during the war, that we have been faced with electricity shortages and blackouts. Our everyday life has changed. This is largely because the Fukushima nuclear power plant was totally damaged.

## **2. Japan's use of nuclear energy with some background**

Energy sources in Japan have reported that the first commercial nuclear power reactor began operating in Japan in middle of 1966 (World Nuclear Association 2012). By 2011, Japan's 50 main reactors were providing some 30% of Japan's electricity (Acton & Hibbs 2012). Japan has a full fuel cycle set-up, including enrichment and reprocessing of used fuel for recycling.

Nuclear energy has been a national strategic priority since 1973. Recently Japan has moved to accelerate development of fast breeder reactors. In 2007 the government selected Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) to be the core company to develop this new technology. This was backed by government ministries, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) (Japan Atomic Energy Agency 1956) and the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan. Electricity (FEPC Japan) supply by Nuclear power was expected to increase to 40% by 2019.

This is typical of the top-down setting of national priorities, with major companies forming a part of the national strategy determination process. This was consistent with historical patterns

of decision-making from the Shogunate to the MacArthur military and civil administration (Omura 2010). This system has been very robust and it is only the current emergency situation that suggests it may break down, as the whole energy policy is now under review following the 2011 Fukushima accident.

### **3. Effects of Tsunami – Plants out of action and reduction in power**

Tokyo Electric Power Corporation (TEPCO), owner of the Fukushima plants, and supplier of about one third of the country's electricity, reported that in mid May 2011 was operating at 1/3 of its previous capacity at 3 Plants.

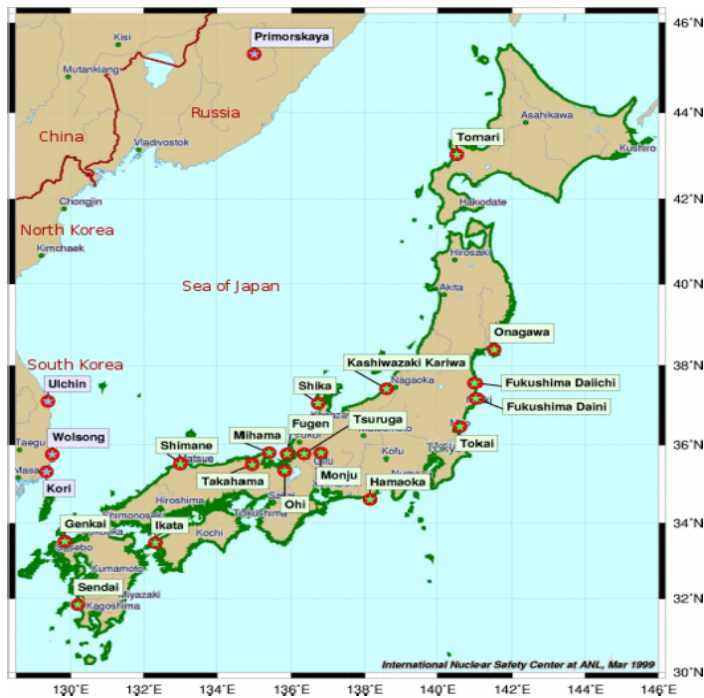


Figure 1: Japan Nuclear power plants map (15 March 2011)

source : <http://www.insc.anl.gov/pwrmaps/>

The World Nuclear Association reported that only 17 out of Japan's 50 remaining nuclear power reactors were in operation in mid 2011 and also this was supplying 30% of the electricity previously available from Nuclear energy (World Nuclear Association 2012). In January 2012 only three of Japan's 50 nuclear plants were in operation.

### **4. Responses to disaster with regard to power supply**

In the mid year of 2011 the Japanese government formulated an energy saving execution plan, and declared that the country should reduce consumption of electricity by 15%. A 12% reduction was achieved but reduction in peak demand actually reached 18% because public concern was so great.

In July 2011, after the 11 March Fukushima meltdown, the Japanese government ordered the nuclear authorities to conduct tests on all reactors (World News 2011) which have been progressively shut down for testing since and still await for approval to reopen. However, experts doubted the accuracy of Japan's Nuclear plant test (McCurry 2012).

In October 2011 the Japanese government published a White Paper confirming that "Japan's dependency on nuclear energy will be reduced as much as possible in the medium-range and long-range future" (World Nuclear Association 2012). The White Paper also highlights weaknesses in the energy system and says that a new energy policy will be developed by Japan's ministerial-level Energy and Environment Council by August 2012 (World Nuclear Association 2012). Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Noda, said that that the national Basic Energy Policy would be revised from scratch. However, people are still suspicious of government intentions and its ability to withstand the powerful nuclear lobby.

In March 2012 Japan Atomic Industrial Forum (JAIF) announced that 35 nuclear reactors might be restricted in their output and the future of others was uncertain. Therefore, a 12% shortage of electricity is still expected in Japan right now for this summer. Another negative outcome has been that carbon emission had risen 14% above 1990 level, and the cost of additional fossil fuel imports was \$40 billion per year (over \$300 per person).

In early January 2012, International Atomic Energy Agency experts began a review of safety tests but the IAEA says it is the responsibility of the Japanese government to approve reopening. The last domestic nuclear power plant was shut down for safety testing on 5 May 2012, and Japan's nuclear supply had become a "zero run" for the first time in 42 years (McCurry 2012).

According to newspaper Asahi Shimbun, on 16 June 2012, Japan Prime Minister, Mr. Noda, agreed to the re-running of the plant at Oi-cho, (Fukui Prefecture) and for Kansai Electricity Power Corporation (KEPCO) to start Unit 3 and 4 operations at full capacity in early July (2012). Actual approval was authorised by the local Fukui Prefecture.

British Guardian Newspaper reported in January that Mr Hiromitsu Ino, an emeritus professor at Tokyo University and a fellow member of the nuclear safety agency advisory panel, said the tests were flawed

because they had been introduced before the full facts of the Fukushima disaster were known. Experts inside and outside in Japan are still expressing grave doubt about the accuracy of all the safety testing and the whole issue is becoming very controversial.

## **5. Public Opinion**

Japan is the only country to suffer from nuclear attacks in war time. Yet Japanese people believed strongly in the peaceful use of nuclear energy as a clean source of energy and were happy to support government policy and increase reliance on it. Japan's Asahi Shimbun reported for a 2007 poll that only 7% of Japanese wished to use other than nuclear energy (Penney 2012), which increased to 11% in April 2011, a month after the March 2011 disaster. In November 2011, the number further increased and 70% of Japanese voted for elimination of nuclear plants and 93% of people support the increase of renewable energy.

There has been a change in the attitude of Japanese people. They trusted in Government policy in the past but now they doubt it. They have discovered that before the disaster, the Japanese Government was not transparent and covered up inadequate safety procedures and inspections (Acton & Hibbs 2012). During the disaster, when Fukushima was shut down, important information was withheld by the government and Tepco from the Media and Japanese people could not believe or rely on the government to release relevant information. Also the government backed Tepco financially to help compensate victims about a 1 trillion yen injection of public funds (Sheldrick 2012), but it is now known Ex-Tepco CEO received a huge retirement bonus when he stepped down (Sheldrick 2012).

Public opinion is growing stronger and more important. Japanese commercial media traditionally support government policy and does not publish all opinions being expressed by Japanese people so they may seem to the world to be accepting of official reports. However social media is highlighting great changes in public attitudes. In May 2012, with all Japan's active nuclear reactors shut down for testing but waiting approval to reopen, protesters marched to call for a permanent end to nuclear power generation (Euronews 2012).

Recent demonstration (video clip) against reopening of power plants was conducted on 5 May 2012 (Euronews 2012).

Another example of the change in attitude to the dependence on Nuclear energy can be seen in a survey of citizens of Obu city in May last year. It was carried out by Macromil, a leading Japanese online market research company. Obu is located on the West side of Japan and suffered some aftershock, although not seriously affected by Tsunami. However, it is close to major nuclear plants which are now being re-opened. Their results show that over 70% of Obu citizens have changed their views on Japan's future in energy supply as majority of people think that we should be using less electricity in the future and 93% support increase of renewable energy. Thus there is a significant change in perception how energy supply should be in 30 years (Macromil 2011).

Japan has been disrupted by the electricity shortages, but Japanese people are not confident that the Government has the situation under control. Japanese business and individuals are looking to themselves for solutions. Overall trends in businesses and small farming operations are moving towards the micro-grid type of distributed energy and away from centralised energy distribution to local generated power sources.



Figure 2: Micro hydrate power generator is set at the irrigation of the paddy field (Sources: Nasugahara Hyaku-mura power plant (2012; 2009))

This is an example of micro hydro power plant in Nasu Hyaku-mura which was the first case for micro hydraulic power, where a small local generator is set up at for the irrigation of the rice field in Japan (Nasugahara Hyaku-mura 2012; Suwa 2009).

This micro-hydro power generator system was introduced by ALCO Inc. (ALCO Inc. 2012).

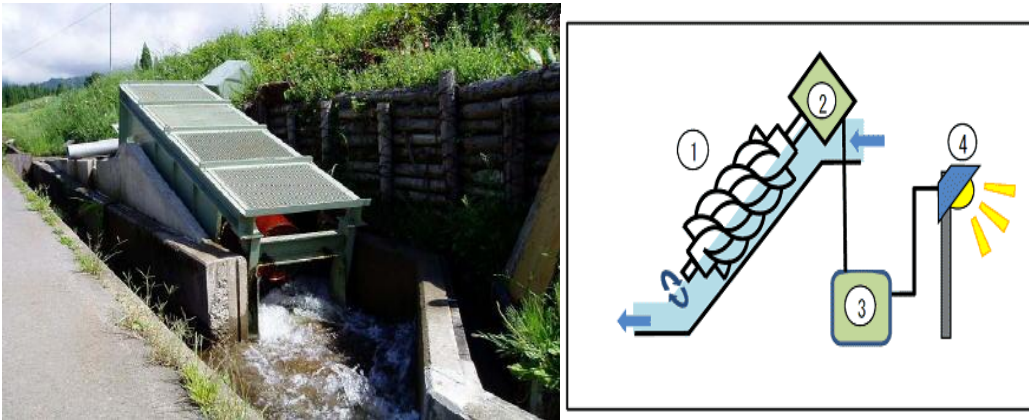


Figure 3: Micro hydrate power generator by ALCO Inc. (Sources: ALCO Inc. 2012)

There are many other examples of this trend away from the centralised power supply. The Fuji Electric company invented the micro-grid type of distributed energy (Ibaragi, Suzuki & Nii 2009). The Kyoto Eco-Energy Project (KEEP) is conducting the research in new energy plants with seven participating entities, Fuji Electric, Kyoto Prefecture, Kyotango City, Amita Company, Obayashi Corporation, Nissin Electric Corporation and Nomura Research Institution. KEEP uses the combined power sources of wind power and solar energy and constructed a new energy supply system (Takahashi, Kanazawa & Suzuki 2011).

Macromil also conducted the opinion poll about future energy of Japan to 1045 Japanese Men and women aged 20 or over in Tokyo region which suffered the influence of the Fukushima nuclear power plant melt down (Macromil 2011). The opinion poll revealed that for over 70%, the lifestyle after the energy crisis has changed. People have changed their behaviours drastically. Over 50% have started saving electricity and joined those 44% who have always tried to save electricity and in total 95% are saving electricity. Over 90% would like to continue saving electricity even after electric power shortage is over.

## **6. Conclusion**

Now we can understand why Tokyo, once a city of light, is now willing to cut down on excessive power usage for the benefit of the nation (Shears 18 March 2011).

The 2011 disaster had a major and disruptive effect on energy supply in Japan. But it may be bringing about more fundamental societal changes. My recent research has revealed that there

are positive outcomes emerging. Japanese people are becoming more vocal about government policies and Japanese society is starting to focus on energy saving strategy leading to sustainable lifestyles which will be beneficial to future generation. They are moving on from grieving by focusing on finding new solutions to their community problems.

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