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Island Radio, Identity and Resilient Island Communities: a case study from Amami Oshima

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Abstract (oral presentation)

The Amami islands’ unique communicative ecology and distinctive identity within the southern Japanese archipelago provided a rich ethnographic study for a research that sought to develop a typology for mapping island communicative ecologies (ICE). One of the key findings from this ethnographic research indicated a new communicative ecology layer created in one of the islands, Amami Oshima, which has been experiencing in the last decade an emerging trend in community radio that binds the community together through ‘island storytelling’*.* These FM stations have not only contributed towards sustaining and strengthening the information ecosystem of the various island communities but also generating new cultural expressions through the promotion of contemporary island music and other cultural practices. Their content sharing has also forged stronger intra-island exchanges that are forging, in their turn, a stronger pan-island identity. The island’s mediated communication practices, unlike their mainland (national and prefectural) counterparts, are seen as part of a more fluid island interconnected network system that embraces both individual and collective island agents, reflecting island reciprocal relationships. The communicative ecology of Amami Oshima contains several elements of what makes island communities resilient, grounded in the island concepts of *yui* and *myar*. These elements include a healthy information landscape and dynamics of production, movement, access, use and impact based on local information needs, social trust and agents of change/cultural enablers. Resilience is seen here as a culturally mediated response to some of the challenges smaller Japanese islands often face, including heavy weather patterns, aging population and depopulation. This presentation explores aspects of island resilience through the mapping of their communicative ecology.