David Novak

speaks on

Music, Sound, Noise and the Antinuclear Movement in Post-3.11 Japan

Friday, Feb. 14, 11a.m.-12:30 p.m. HAH 202 (Anthropology seminar room)

This talk explores the recent mix of “sound demos,” art installations and antinuclear music festivals in contexts of political protest in Japan since the tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi on March 11, 2011. I focus on a performance festival called Project Fukushima organized by experimental musician Ōtomo Yoshihide, poet Wago Ryoichi, and punk rock legend Endō Michirō to provoke public discourse about nuclear power and the future of the partly-evacuated city. Only a few months after the meltdown in 2011 and again in 2012, this group of underground performers brought audiences in the thousands back to Fukushima. Bands performed on stages, in the streets, and on local trains; the audience sat on a gigantic furoshiki cloth tapestry conceived to protect them from the irradiated ground. In addition to his role as primary organizer and performer in Project Fukushima Ōtomo has written powerfully on the role of arts and culture in the response to the Fukushima Disaster, gives public talks about cultural activism, and writes widely circulated blog posts and tweets about the antinuclear movement. Through my ethnographic research in Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukushima in 2012 and 2013, I contextualize Project Fukushima as part of a series of public actions of music and noise making and “reclaim-the-streets” performance tactics that galvanized public response to the nuclear restart and the future of energy policy in Japan.