

## Treasure Hunts in Rural Japan: Place-making at the Limits of Sustainability

### 49. Minisymposium des Zentrums für Umweltgeschichte

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#### *Abstract:*

Decades of rural outmigration, aging, and economic torpor have left Japan's countryside sapped of vitality and facing pressing concerns about the future. Based on ethnographic research in northeastern Japan, this talk examines community mapping and heritage food initiatives that aim to "activate" dormant regional energies and resources as a way of reversing rural decline. Reflective of a vision of sustainability that values local diversity and agency as foundations for future viability, both initiatives also align with decentralization policies that demand streamlined and self-sufficient regions suited to a neoliberal reform agenda. Examining this overlap, I argue that the celebration of self-initiated and localized rural renewal is part of a political climate of devolving responsibility in 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan.

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**Zeit / Time:** Dienstag, 19. Juni 2012, 18.00 Uhr