The Weather after Fukushima (with Laura Beltz Imaoka)

[opening music]

00:20 **Juan Llamas-Rodriguez**: Welcome to the Global Media Cultures podcast. I'm your host, Juan Llamas-Rodriguez. Today we are discussing radiation, information crisis, and the management of risk. Our guest is Dr. Laura Beltz Imaoka. She's an Assistant Professor of Instruction and Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs for the School of Arts, Technology and Emerging Communication at the University of Texas at Dallas. She received her PhD in Visual Studies from the University of California Irvine, and her MA in Anthropology from California State University Northridge. Her work has been published in the journals *Communication, Culture and Critique, The Canadian Geographer*, *Environment and Planning A* and the *Media Fields Journal*. Her research interest engage the areas of Visual Studies, Film and Media Studies and Critical Geography, with a particular interest in the political economy of geospatial technology and the geospatial imagination of disasters. Laura, welcome to the Global Media Cultures podcast.

01:20 **Laura Beltz Imaoka**: Thank you so much for having me, Juan. I'm glad to be here.

01:24 **JL**: I wanna start by asking you about these research interests. How did you come to be interested in these very topics, why do you think they're an important area to study?

01:35 **LI**: So, the article that we're gonna be discussing is part of a larger body of work which addresses this inundation of society screens with interactive maps. We probably think first of Google Maps and geolocated aspects of social media. But also something like map traffic reports or in the local morning news. So we have this convergence of maps with mass and social media and mobile technologies, which influences how and when we consume and communicate information about the Earth's surface. And this technology, which is often called Geospatial Technology or geographic information systems (GIS), it's really this black box technology. If we wanna use Bruno Latour's notion there and that is it's technical, it's scientific work that's behind what we interface with is made sort of invisible by its own success. We see its output, its

usefulness rather than its complexity and its oftentimes deviousness in terms of data privacy.

02:28 **LI**: So for me, opening that black box of technology, which is sort of a social constructivist approach to it, is trying to understand those internal workings. So, my research has looked at geospatial technology, the industry itself. I was looking at a company called Esri, which is the largest GIS company globally. It's branding, it's technology, which is this consumer history that dates back the last half century to become this ubiquitous machine that we see today. As well as considering the government agencies, the transnational digital corporations like Google. The everyday person involved in that data collection and mapping practice as well as the media and media practices that bring forth interaction with that data. And so for me, the thing that I'm really interested in here is maps as media. So as media, maps they mix with other forms of media, they produce meanings and understandings. And we always are reading these maps in their media contexts.

03:21 **LI**: So television news broadcasts, online social media sites, and through our smartphone applications. So it's relevant to understanding that technology. And I think it's even more cogent when dealing with disasters and ongoing cases of risk. So maps, they make global and local risk visible. But invisible, there's institutions, media practices, individuals involved in producing and essentially curating geographic data into individual narratives and interactive databases. So I have this approach to maps. Maps is my main interest, but it goes further into thinking about just where they're embedded and what narratives they're being used within.

04:03 **JL**: So today we're discussing your article, “Rain with the Chance of Radiation, Forecasting Local and Global Risk after Fukushima,” which came out in the edited collection, *Extreme Weather and Global Media*, published by Routledge in 2015. Can you give us a brief history of this essay, when you began working on it, how did the project come about and whether and how the ideas changed in the process of researching and writing it?

04:31 **LI**: Sure, so it was an extremely early dive into my dissertation research. The call for papers was really generously set forth to me by one of my advisors at UC Irvine, Dr. Victoria Johnson. And at first, I wasn't entirely starting to looking at Fukushima through the lens of an extreme weather event. Essentially class it in the same frame, as superstorm Sandy for instance. That was a big extreme weather event during that time period but in communication with the books authors, Diane Negra and Julia Leyda,

their interest was in the media event aspect of these large scale disasters. And how this promotion and consumption of what is extreme weather takes up the slack or public conversations societies are not having about the environment or this feeling of powerlessness that people have in their environment, when they have really no control over it. So in many ways, it was what provided me the lens I needed to understand the mediation of radiation and how weather was actually how media conceptualized it. So it was definitely an abstract before the research approach, and so it was labor intensive, me writing this article.

05:37 **JL**: Great. But sometimes that's how research comes, right?

05:41 **LI**: That's how research comes. Absolutely, absolutely.

05:45 **JL**: Okay. So the main focus of the context of the article is the Fukushima nuclear disaster of 2011. So why that event? Can you give us a brief introduction of what's significant about that event? Especially from a media studies perspective.

06:00 **LI**: Yeah, absolutely. I was in grad school, when Fukushima happened. And it wasn't long before that that I was actually living in Japan. I lived in Tokyo for about two years. And so during this time period when this happened, I had quite a lot of acquaintances in Tokyo. I have family in the Kansai area of Japan. And so my eyes were fixated on this event when it happened, and I was very concerned obviously about my acquaintances there and their effects of this because they were dealing with this international news versus local news aspect, whether they should leave or not leave?

06:37 **LI**: Are they safe? Are they not safe? They were very confused 'cause of these two competing systems that we'll talk about more, of course. Basically what Fukushima is, some background: it's 2011, it's quite a while ago now, but I think everybody remembers it. But essentially what happened was on March 11th, 2011, there was a magnitude nine earthquake. It occurred about 100 kilometers off the pacific coast of Japan's Tohoku region, and it triggered a really devastating tsunami wave that resulted in over 20,000 deaths. The wave then also breached the protective walls and knocked out the main electricity supply and back up generators for the wind systems that ran about six nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. And what this led to was we had this collapse and explosion about three reactors, severe damage to a fourth reactor and the plant’s containment systems. And then also ocean water, invading the facility, and also escaping it with radioactive

materials and also escaping into the atmosphere. I think about 140,000 residents were evacuated within a 20 kilometer radius among... Perimeters of the plant as well, so we had this mass evacuation. It's essentially what happened in Japan at that time was this triple disaster, so quite an intense thing to happen to a country.

08:04 **LI**: For me, having that happen and then seeing the news reports of it, I was immediately drawn to learning more about it. Then with Fukushima it's such a big disaster. We have Chernobyl that happened, all of us know about this from 1986 in Ukraine. And that's one of the worst to date. We think it killed 31 people, it damaged 7 billion dollars of property. According to the WHO, it had estimated at about 4,000 additional cancer death, were related to it. And Fukushima was actually placed in the same category, a seven, which is on an International Nuclear Event Scale. It was only Chernobyl and Fukushima have gone to a level seven. It was a huge event and Fukushima continues to leak radiation, so it's an ongoing disaster, if you will, and it just continues to be something that is fascinating to study, as horrific as it is as well.

09:07 **JL**: Right. Yeah, and as you point out, it was a triple disaster, it was the earthquake, tsunami, nuclear meltdown, but it was also a media event.

09:16 **LI**: Right.

09:17 **JL**: What's interesting is your argument, and your focus is on how media takes up these three disasters and does all sorts of management of risk. One of the aspects that you focus on is, what you call the “weatherization” of radiation, which I find fascinating. Can you explain what you mean by this concept, and why it's central to understanding the media response to Fukushima?

09:45 **LI**: So it's two-fold, one is scientific. Once the containment systems were breached, nuclear reactors exploded, and what became the scenario of growing concern was this circulation of radiation within the atmosphere. Radiation and these particles can travel in jet streams in the stratosphere, which is a layer of atmosphere that's about 30 miles above the Earth's surface, and these radiation particles can travel with no wind currents on the Pacific Ocean, and then be dragged down with dust or heavier particles by spring storms to settle in soil and drinking water. Obviously, that's this idea that becoming weatherized, it molds into the environment and this risk of radioactive contaminated wind and rainfall is dependent on how far it travels. Obviously within Japan, within Fukushima prefecture, risk was extraordinarily higher for

local communities within that evacuation zone. But for the US it was pretty negligible, for traveling such a long way over a certain amount of time.

10:42 **LI**: And then obviously the other part of weatherization is through the media, so nuclear fallout was taken up and framed as a weather event because we can't really necessarily view radiation, it's invisible, and that's kind of what makes it dubious. You can't see it, you can't taste it, you can't really feel it, you have to rely on scientific instruments, technologies or experts to tell you what radiation level is and to understand the risk of those levels. And so, obviously, the average person is not really schooled in understanding what a sievert is, or a rad or rem is, what that means. In media reports, dealing with just numbers, in especially the US media reports in the first couple weeks, they really didn't know how to deal with it either. So there's a lot of incorrect units that were used, comparison to various averages, x-rays, bananas, and anything you can imagine confusing citizens, and that's sort of what's fascinating about this is that when you can't represent it directly, how do you represent it in a very visual environment that is media?

11:47 **LI**: And I think by thinking about it as weather it kind of prioritized creating visuals through this movement of a plume, if you will, and to kind of have simulations about where this radioactive cloud is moving, and all of this, these decisions can be made constructing these narratives through weatherizing it, if you will.

12:14 **JL**: Yeah, I think that's one of the peculiarities of radiation as an event and as a phenomenon is that it resists this visualization, and we're so accustomed to visualization as a way to make sense of threats. So without radiation being able to be represented directly, it essentially necessitates mediation in order for the public to make sense of it in any sort of way, right?

12:43 **LI**: Absolutely, absolutely. And in Japan, it was the opposite. So instead, radiation risk was really being subdued. And it was interesting, this was also part where I was thinking about the weather aspect of it, where it was in the ordinary weather report. Though, you think of the weather reports of having today's highs and lows, if it's gonna rain, if it's not gonna rain. So instead, they sort of... In Japan, they just had numbers of radiation levels with those other numbers that you get in your ordinary report. And again, that's weatherizing it. It's a different way of visualizing it, it's subduing it into something that's every day and ordinary, while The Weather Channel and stuff could be extreme weather events get visualized in a way that's more shocking, more sensationalized.

13:29 **JL**: Yeah, so one of the things you compare is precisely this, right? The Japanese media's weatherization of radiation versus US media's weatherization of radiation.

13:41 **LI**: Right.

13:42 **JL**: Could you talk to us a little bit about these stark differences and how they're related to how the media industry is structured in both different countries? How that relates to how they treat the weatherization of radiation?

13:58 **LI**: Absolutely. So in the US, we can think of the news as a freelance system. So The Weather Channel, other media outlets, they're not really considered direct conduits for government information. Now, they receive reports from the government or from government organizations for example, the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency. When this happened, they accelerated their routine sampling schedule. They have something that's called RadNet, which is a nationwide monitoring system. And so they accelerated the sampling schedule, they did disseminated statements to media outlets during this three-month period. They devoted a substantial part of its website to providing the public with information about what's happening and continually followed up with that stating basically there was really not a lot of health concern to be made.

14:46 **LI**: But the channels, their reporting decisions aren't really made on that. They're instead based on capturing market shares, maintaining an audience, providing returns on investment. So what ends up is that coverage is not the objective hazard itself but the indicators of social and political activities surrounding it. And Japan is really fascinating. This is something I found really fascinating doing my research, knowing that it's not a freelance system. Because not only do you have Broadcast Law, which is basically a law stating that news reporters need to be impartial, maybe they'll avoid disturbing public security, they need to present controversial matters from several viewpoints. And in the event of a disaster, to produce programming that minimizes harmful effects.

15:28 **LI**: So you're not gonna hear catch phrases or words like catastrophe or massive, just a centralized event. At the same time, they have something that's called Press Clubs, which serve to control access to and presentation of the news. So you have these specialist reporters who are granted this really exclusive access to certain politicians, or government agencies, or business organizations. And there's this

unspoken understanding that these sources are not... That they're not gonna be undermined by unauthorized reports or special investigations. And so you have this relationship between official sources and journalists. It discourages independent analysis and critique, there's conformity among stations as well.

16:07 **LI**: So one looks somewhat like the other in what they're reporting. So unlike this sort of dramatic radioactive cloud migrating over the Pacific Ocean, which really heightened US residents' anxiety. In Japan, daily forecasts made radiation risk seem manageable and along with these government reassurances benign, downplaying any threat. In Japan it was fascinating 'cause social media became actually really valuable not only for the disaster as a whole, but in terms of Fukushima really calling out the negligence of the government. So NHK which is this national broadcasting channel in Japan, and they even have more regulations on them than other channels to be linked with the government.

16:52 **LI**: They couldn't do much to sway when they had negative rumors or public trust, when there's damning proof of failures of government oversight. There was delays in disclosing information to the public, which was being brought out through social media. There is something called the SPEEDI scandal, which SPEEDI is a system for prediction of environmental emergency dose information, which is a mouthful, but it's basically the same thing as RadNet for the EPA. It's basically a simulation system designed to forecast real-time radiation based on measurement data, and then predict how weather patterns are gonna disperse that fallout in the environment, but it was sort of forgotten by the government.

17:30 **LI**: They just forgot that they had it. And it was actually a physics professor on Twitter, Ryugo Hayano, who drew attention to it. He was saying, "Why aren't we using this data? It's here, we need to use it." And not using that data actually put several towns at risk. I think there were towns that were told to evacuate to places that actually were in the pathway of the plume. So these sort of things were happening. And it was social media, it pulled in the other direction and made people question the news reports that were coming out. So a very different response than what we had in the US.

18:07 **JL**: Right. It's interesting in the sense that it's both how the industry structured, will determine the goals and the strategies that the producers will take, right?

18:19 **LI**: Right.

18:19 **JL**: If it's part of the clubs, the special clubs, then they will follow the government directives.

18:28 **LI**: Absolutely.

18:29 **JL**: For fear of never getting that access again. And then you have something like cable news in the US, which its main interest is sensationalism and getting more viewers. And so, how do we play up anything in some way to do that, right?

18:44 **LI**: Right.

18:44 **JL**: At the end of it though, it seems like both responses had some severe drawbacks, right?

18:49 **LI**: Yeah.

18:49 **JL**: So you have the spectacularization of radiation risk has its own problems because suddenly people, especially in the Pacific Northwest, are thinking that their food was contaminated and they were never able to eat anything.

19:02 **LI**: Absolutely.

19:03 **JL**: And then the opposite side, you have complete negligence and non-communication with people, so whatever the government was officially sending through Japanese news broadcasts was actually putting people in danger and having them move into the areas. How do they ultimately compare? Is it both equally bad? Was there any better sense of what could have been done better in any of them?

19:28 **LI**: Yeah, I don't know. In the US, I think, we are stuck in a system that does this routinely. So, we have this... I like using Brian Massumi's term of media-driven effective conversion circuit, where you have these two weeks of just like an event happens, it basically saturates our media and our press, and eventually things kind of dim out. They capture it into human narratives and then a next event happens and the thing happens again. You've got this media sensationalization and then it dims out and the next big event happens. And it leaves us no time for reflection. We don't learn from it, we don't reflect on it or fully reflect on the dangers of the lived environment.

20:12 **LI**: Where we have a lot of aging nuclear facilities and a more volatile environment with climate change. And so, that's... I think in a way, that's kind of depressing. That we don't have this time to reflect because of the way the media environment sweeps up into certain things. And in Japan, obviously, this flawed system ended up with a good thing because it ended up people questioning their media and questioning their government, and seeing that the system itself was flawed. So, both systems absolutely have their flaws. For me, I definitely would love to have more science-based information provided by experts on the news rather than have a sort of muddled and conflict of conspiracy theories. That's just me. [chuckle] Yeah.

21:01 **JL**: Yeah, oh yeah. Unfortunately, having scientists on TV doesn't attract as many viewers as tragedy and destruction.

21:06 **LI**: No, no. Right.

21:12 **JL**: In the US context, you refer to this concept that Richard Grusin uses, which is pre-mediation to explain sort of their approach, especially their approach as the weeks went on. Can you explain why this concept to think about how the US media was reporting on the disaster weeks after?

21:33 **LI**: Absolutely. So, Grusin came up with this, I think it was 2010, and he's just describing this shift in news' focus after 9/11. So we think about 9/11, and what happened on that day. There was a lot of stuff that happened and the press just did not know how to deal with online. Live broadcast and this event with the two towers being... With planes flying into it, and then obviously collapsing, not knowing how to deal with that event. And so what happened was in order to avoid this shock that happened to the news system at that time period, it shifted from detailing the past, to pre-mediate the future, that is pre-mediation is not really correctly predicting the future, but proliferating these multiple mediations of the future to prevent that recurrence of shock.

22:26 **LI**: But we see this pre-mediation aspect coming with map simulations. So, there was a lot... So, through my content analysis of news articles, there was a lot of map simulations being made that showcase where there's projected spread of nuclear particles crossing the globe. Now, scientists were already doing this, I talked to a couple of scientists up at the national laboratories in Washington where they do nuclear testing, they were already picking up on this. And so they were doing this and already trying to figure out where these particles were going. But even before then,

there were sort of simulations of projection. And so it was envisioning that future occurrence, again, preventing the shock that something horrible comes to fruition. And of course, when you play these simulations, when you see the spray of the cloud, you have this anticipation of that event, which produces an anticipation that, again, will probably return you to that page or return you to that event to kinda see what's happening now, if it's gonna hit the US at a certain time, what's that gonna look like.

23:28 **JL**: Yeah, and it's... So, on one level, it's the advantage of all these new emerging media technologies which allow for developmentive models. In weather sciences, the model is the science, it's building on what you do know and how things in the world operate to create this model of what could happen. The issue then becomes, moving this to, as you've previously detailed, a system or an industry where it's interested in capturing viewer's attention, capturing viewer's attention for two weeks at most and then just letting it go. You can use those same media to basically create possible catastrophe upon possible catastrophe, even if they never come to happen, but you just grab viewer's attention through it. So, it's a fascinating move to use those technologies for that.

24:17 **JL**: And the creation of these maps, of maps that were either pre-mediating or sometimes purposely misinforming becomes even more... It becomes a triple disaster, it becomes even more accentuated with something like social media. So, you write also about the spread of misinformation in social media. And these sort of altered images and the effect this has on citizens who are just trying to figure out what to do, especially the ones who feel like they're in the path of radiation at any given point. What are some conclusions that we can get from your research into this incident that are still relevant to, I guess, to current disasters that we're living through?

25:04 **LI**: Sure, sure. Yeah, I think you're mentioning thinking about social media and the spread of misinformation, I think that's something we're very aware of today. And that was the first thing that interested me in Fukushima, as well, was just these fake maps that were being spread. These mis-read maps that went viral on social media, and they were just full of fear, just basically kept fueling the fear and uncertainty. There's this gorgeous map made by NOAA, which is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and it was this really stunning colorful map that... What it actually showed was tsunami waves emanating from the epicenter of the earthquake in the Pacific Ocean. But it was continuously re-shared and disconnected from its data. And so people were taking it up as actually showing radiation within ocean waters instead. And so people feared that this is, "Oh my gosh, it's spreading into the oceans

from Fukushima. This is all the leaking in." So it was fitting certain agendas or narratives through that.

26:01 **LI**: And today we really see with current disasters the same thing always happens where we have this disconnect from the data. The Australian bush fires that happened at the beginning this year. There was this really powerful visualization of the continent on a black background, it's coastline... The coast was engulfed in these data points colored in molten red. It just looked like the whole country was just on fire. It went viral, I think Rihanna even retweeted it. And it was so disconnected from the data, 'cause the artist that made it... Basically, what the artist was doing was taking a month's worth of location points where the fire was detected. It wasn't a real time image of Australia burning. So it wasn't you're seeing Australia as it was at that time period where everything was on fire. It was just over a month of locations and many of those locations were extinguished with the fire. But obviously, people took that as a literal representation because it got disconnected, and through this disconnect or misunderstanding, especially in dealing with data is something that's continuously dealt with today. And I think that's just the way that those images are used either in mass media or in social media.

27:12 **LI**: So as we know with certain websites and things like that, images are where our eyes go. We retain visual information better. Social media marketers know this very well. They know that they need visuals in order to sell. News organizations know this as well. Maps are these attention-grabbing visuals. At the same time though, what makes this type of form or media is that it imparts a sense of credibility. So we have these historical claims to science which really privilege the map as a source of objective reason. And so maps carry this legacy, which we might call, Western historical practice or a scientific worldview, which just casts them as trusted communicators of spatial information. And as we know maps or any sort of chart or form, it's a socially constructive object. It's edited, it's constructed. And so, it can be constructed really quite easily to spin a story.

28:14 **JL**: Yeah. It's too many problems all...

28:17 **LI**: Too many problems.

28:18 **JL**: Coming together at once.

28:19 **LI**: It is, it is. Absolutely.

28:20 **JL**: It's not even the let's think critically about maps as media and as representations, and how do we break those down. But then compounding on that is scientific information is heavily politicized and then heavily politicized and used for entertainment. So it becomes just part of this larger discourse. And then you have something like social media, which allows for a barrage of information to come at you all at once from different sources. So even if you were critically analyzing any one piece of information, you suddenly have thousands. So how do you even process that? It's a lot. It's a lot.

28:57 **LI**: It's a lot. It was quite a lot of social actors involved within one event, and I think that's true for every sort of big event like this. There are just so many people involved within it.

29:08 **JL**: Yeah. Yeah. And we're working through it still. One thing that your article does, I think really well, is tracing out these two distinct media contexts that we've talked about. The Japanese news industry and then the US news industry, and then think about how there's also two different publics. The Japanese public is getting information from their own national service, but then also internationally, because now we have easier access to broadcasts from elsewhere. What do we learn as students from this kind of comparative analysis, of thinking about two... Seeing the same event, let's say, from two places or from two different publics?

29:52 **LI**: Absolutely. It's definitely... And thank you. I think that was something that I tried really to strive for, to try to unpack both media contexts within this. And for me, it really served as a reminder to de-localize yourself from your space of information gathering. I always think, I go back to Eli Pariser's idea of the filter bubble, which speaks to our own social media situation-ness, and you have these personal algorithms on social media that filter out other voices in our sphere of influence. But it also can be scaled to larger national systems of media practice as well. And having some cognizance of media or the fact that there's different internets, there's different news systems, there's different audience relationships. And especially when unpacking a global event, you have to see that event through different lenses. And for students or researchers, it reflects on your own biases, it gives a fuller picture of that event, its repercussions. And I don't talk a lot about it in the article but it's just also our understanding of place gets shifted from doing this distinct... Two different places with one event research.

31:01 **JL**: Yeah. For sure. You mentioned that this was an early project in your graduate career. How have you built on it since? Or expanded on it since its publication?

31:12 **LI**: Expanded, yes. Since its publication, Fukushima really continues to be a focal point in a lot of my research, and particularly the different media context that grew out of the disaster. I also looked at Japan's tourism industry response to the disaster and post-disaster economic recovery efforts, and all of the media campaigns that were produced from that. Tourism industry and its response to this, because tourism obviously dropped dramatically in Japan following this disaster. People were not going to Japan, even in regions very far from Fukushima, places that were not affected at all by this. Tourism was really shot and economic recovery often takes place trying to recover from it, and tourism is a big industry in order to get recovered. So I was looking at the media production where these are these texts that are capitalizing on disaster, and seeing how certain constituencies were playing... What role they were playing.

32:15 **LI**: I've also looked at iterations of *Godzilla*, the film franchise, as well. I was looking at not only during that time period, how that was used as a meme or a reference to Fukushima with Godzilla, so there was quite a lot of that in the news during that post-disaster period. But also the movie franchises as sort of having this being a symptomatic text of the evolving nuclear threat that was Fukushima. Those have been continuously things that I've looked about in this research.

32:50 **JL**: Great. Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, any other recent developments in the world or in your research since that have added or gotten you back to thinking about these initial arguments that you're proposing in this article?

33:08 **LI**: Yeah, just in general, I think what I'm seeing, especially today, is these similar conversations and fusions towards what is personal risk and affirming, sort of re-affirming what it is to live in what we call a risk society, if I'm gonna use social theorist Ulrich Beck's understanding of it. Now we're sort of in this era of ecological crisis, environmental risk, where it's not any longer just sort of a product or a manageable side effect of industrial society. It really doesn't stop at national borders anymore, we have risk production everywhere. So just thinking about that in terms of how we assess any sort of risk and the difficulty of that discussion when it's primarily being done in scientific categories and those affected by that risk are at the mercy of experts' judgements. But at the same time, those questions that we have get muddled in media that defines it, that tries to relay that information to us and we have these

systems, these freelance systems that further sensationalize it. So my ongoing interest in Fukushima is also this lack of reflection on cause and effect.

34:22 **LI**: In the beginning of Fukushima, post-disaster, and also in the beginning of the shut down phase of the pandemic, I should say, there is always hopes by environmentalists to raise awareness of human actions or inactions that have harmed or are harming the planet, ecologies and setting humanity at risk. And Fukushima, as with nuclear incidents of the past, it always brings some urgency to contemporary debates on nuclear energy technology. It starts to disrupt some nuclear energy agendas in several countries, including Japan, it highlights the vulnerability of certain aging nuclear facilities worldwide. And I think with the pandemic, we saw this discussion about climate change and deforestation, pollution, animal agriculture, that makes pandemics actually occur. That this thing is gonna happen again, we're gonna get more viruses because of the way that we're treating the planet.

35:16 **LI**: But what always ends up happening is that we get these moments of the course, but it just gets swept up and entangled in political controversies and conspiracies. Those that are in power and the social actors that are responsible for this sensationalization, they're just throwing this confusion at us. And you rather than kind of think about a larger reflection on what we can do to change these realities, we kind of just individualize it into a personal risk rather than a larger collective learning of what's happening. So I think I can just seriously see that happening in the world throughout, we have these major disasters, and we're not really changing that part of our society to mediate what's going on.

36:08 **JL**: Yeah, it's our hope that we could learn from them and change, but it seems like we learned that we've repeated the same mistakes of the past, and just do them all over again with new media.

36:20 **LI**: I did wanna give a shout out though to a digital archive, it's Japan Disasters Digital Archive online. It's this great project out of Harvard University Institute of Japanese Studies there. And this archive is this evolving collaborative space for anyone, citizens, researchers, students, policy makers. It's a site of shared memory for those directly affected by the events of 3/11. I was gonna say 9/11, but 3/11, and the digital archive is this great place if you wanna learn any more about the Fukushima disaster or the triple disaster that happened in Japan, it has this really advanced search engine of archive materials from all over the web. It's got testimonials, suites, any content I can imagine from various different international partners, so it's a great place

to start a search, and that's just jdarchive.org, and it's in English and Japanese. It's a pretty cool spot. Yeah.

37:23 **JL**: Sounds great. I hope people will check it out.

37:25 **LI**: Yeah.

37:30 **JL**: Laura, thank you so much for joining us.

37:31 **LI**: Thank you very much for having me.

[closing credits music]

40:45 **JLR**: This episode of the Global Media Cultures podcast was produced by me, and edited by Alan Yu. Opening music by Podington Bear. Closing credits music by cloud mouth. This project is supported in part by the School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication at the University of Texas at Dallas.

The Global Media Cultures podcast introduces media scholarship about the world to the world. I'm Juan Llamas-Rodriguez. Thank you for listening.