

The Final Coal Mines in Japan: A Historical Overview of the Gentrification of Former Coal Mines

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Abstract

This paper examines the last few coal mines (Ikeshima, Yūbari, Takashima, Miike and Taiheyō) shut down in Japan as case studies of how former mines were gentrified and revitalized. First, the paper is interested in analyzing the implementation of mine closure policies in the most mature phase of the Japanese coal mining industry. The second focus of the paper is to contextualize these coal mine closures within Japan's economic transition from heavy industries to service industries and hi-tech manufacturing/research industries. The third emphasis of the paper looks at how mine closure policies were implemented in an age of corporate social responsibility towards the local community. The article makes the following three major arguments. First, there is a need for regulations to govern mine closures; second, the need to manage complexities of mine closures when there are competing agencies and departments with different agendas preventing a centralized shutdown of mines in a systematic manner; third, post-closure accountability towards the environment and the local community. (Chilean Copper Commission 2002: 4, 7, 17).

Key words: Japan, coal, energy, mines