

Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien
German Institute for Japanese Studies

DIJ Forum



Thursday, 01 April 2010, 18.30 h
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University of Vienna

Policing obesity in Japan. Health politics and Japanese-style risk society

This lecture focuses on the background and the repercussions of the new mandatory Special Health Checkup which has been popularized under the name of *Metabo Health Checkup*. I will place the Japanese government's long-standing interest in surveying the national body and the recent shift towards mapping adipose bodies into the context of the sociological discussion on risk and reflexivity in modernity. In doing so, I focus on three major issues: the fabricated nature of risk in contemporary society; the political weight of experts and expert knowledge in contemporary forms of governance; and the changing relationships between individual, state and society. Hence I also ask to what degree the current debate on health and obesity in Japan has been tainted by neoliberal politics. Drawing on official sources, including minutes from diet sessions and parliamentary committee meetings, I will argue that the emerging "surveillance medicine" is dissolving established distinctions between ill and healthy people, and that experts are crucial in shaping as well as questioning a new kind of "bio-political correctness". As responsibility and blame are shifted on insurers and municipalities and only indirectly towards hopefully "health-literate" citizens, Japan's health policy is characterized as a corporatist version of neoliberal politics.

Wolfram Manzenreiter is associated with the Department of East Asian Studies at Vienna University. He is past president of the German Association of Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF). His research is mostly concerned with social anthropological aspects of sports, popular culture, and technology in a globalising world. Recent publications include *Social Science Matters: Inquiries into the Current State of the Social Sciences in Japan* (OUP 2008), *The Sociology of Mega-Events* (Blackwell 2006) and *Football Goes East* (Routledge 2004). Currently he is working on a new monograph on *Sport and the Political Economy of the Body in Japan* and a co-edited volume on *The European Spectacle. Governance, Citizenship and the New European Football Championships*.

The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on **Thursday, April 01, 2010 at 6.30 p.m.** at the DIJ. Admission is free, please register at:

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