

## Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

### *Recovering the past*

One year after the March 11 triple catastrophe, volunteer work in Tōhoku is taking on various forms. One of them is the restoration of photo albums washed away by the tsunami (see the picture on the right taken in Sendai's Wakabayashi district last February). The photos are recovered from the debris and cleaned up carefully before they are displayed in a public exhibition hall – in the hope that at least some of them can be returned to their rightful owners. S.K.



### *The struggle to return to normalcy*

**One year after the catastrophe, the last cracks in the concrete walls of the DIJ are being repaired. Outside on the streets, in the shops and stations, the lights seem to shine brighter than ever: energy-saving efforts are nothing like as obvious as they were last summer. In Tokyo, the scars of the Great East Japan Earthquake have almost disappeared. But in those areas that were more strongly affected by the disaster, it is a different story.**

Although by now, in the designated disaster area, it is not only basic cleanup efforts but also more delicate tasks that are conducted (see picture), the situation there is still severe. As of today, about 300,000 people are still living in temporary housing or staying in other non-permanent accommodation. In Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, not only the deaths of the official 15,852 casualties and the 3,287 people still missing one year after the tsunami are being mourned – the prefectures are also suffering from decreasing populations as inhabitants move to other regions. In Fukushima alone – the prefecture most affected by the nuclear accident – the number of emigrants, among them many women and children, has exceeded the number of immigrants by more than 30,000. Furthermore, the decontamination of areas affected by radiation has turned out to be a rather difficult endeavour: Neither the feasibility nor the allocation

of costs are settled issues yet. While one year after the catastrophe only two of the country's 54 nuclear reactors are left operating, and only about 20% of the population is willing to support an unconditional restart of the power plants, the nuclear phase-out is officially not an issue, at least not within the major parties. This shows that the consequences of the catastrophe also have a broader national dimension. The government and public institutions are suffering from a continuing loss of confidence caused by the constant power struggles between Japan's political parties, and their remoteness from the citizens, as well as by the supporting measures in response to March 11 – measures that have been perceived by the public as highly bureaucratic and inflexible.

Although the ways back to normalcy take on different forms depending on the degree of affectedness, they still seem to be very long, even one year after the catastrophe, as exemplified by the problem of the 22.6 million tons of debris, of which only 5% has so far been disposed of. One of the few silver linings is the commitment and dedication of the many non-governmental actors who accomplished unprecedented work in countless volunteer projects. In contrast to Europe, "Growing (together) out of the crises" is more than a mere political slogan in Japan, and perhaps the only way to overcome the crisis. K.I.-W./T.T.

### **Dear readers,**

A year on, the traumatic after-effects of March 11 linger on. Our sympathies go out to the victims who lost loved ones, possessions and livelihoods.

Our means to react to the catastrophe in a meaningful way are limited. However, we are trying to do what academics can do best: study.

Within the confines of our two research focuses, "Challenges of Demographic Change" and "Happiness in Japan", we have set up several new projects involving fieldwork in Tōhoku as well as data analysis to study the consequences of the disaster.

The present issue of our newsletter offers a glimpse of the work in progress, and extends an invitation to all who are concerned and would like to learn more or collaborate with us, to contact us. F.C.

Read  
Trust and Etiquette  
by Florian Coulmas  
[http://www.dijtokyo.org/articles/some\\_societal\\_consequences.pdf](http://www.dijtokyo.org/articles/some_societal_consequences.pdf)

## Parental well-being in post-3/11 Japan

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► Parents and children taking part in an anti-nuclear demonstration in Suginami-ku (Tokyo) on February 19, 2012.

► **Dr. Carola Hommerich**, sociologist, investigates status anxiety, social cohesion and happiness in Japan. In this context she is especially interested in the function of trust.  
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**Common wisdom has it that, in recent decades, Japan has not been a country known for mass demonstrations. Yet, after March 11, 2011, this has changed.**

Fears about radiation and food safety have risen, and parents in particular have been seen taking to the streets demonstrating. And even mothers and fathers who are not publicly voicing their concerns, display significant anxiety for the safety of their children in interviews conducted for this study on parental well-being.

It is our hypothesis that these fears have an influence on the overall well-being of parents in Japan. Our German counter-study has identified seven dimensions of parental well-being, namely partnership, educational, economic, employment, family, policy, and physical well-being.

We originally scheduled a nationwide survey on parental well-being among mothers and fathers with at least one child aged between 0 and 6 to be conducted in spring 2011. Due to the disaster, however, the survey was delayed until January 2012. This in turn allowed the inclusion of additional questions – specifically in response to March 11 – focusing on food safety and the environment (including radiation).

The study will allow us to determine which types of parents are influenced in which ways by the existence of these fears. Furthermore, we will be able to determine if and to what degree these particular factors influence the overall well-being of the parents. First results will be reported in summer 2012.

### High anxiety, low trust – results of a DIJ survey

**Several months after the March disaster, the population is disquieted, while trust in government and media is low. Results of a DIJ survey from September 2011 – 1,632 persons were interviewed in northeastern Japan and the Tokyo region – show that recovery is taking time.**

Worry and anxiety can be attributed to two main sources. One is fear of another natural disaster: 82% report being afraid of another earthquake of comparable magnitude. Similarly high is anxiety over the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant: 81% of respondents in the Tōhoku area and 69% in the Tokyo region fear radioactive contamination.

#### No trust in experts

Meanwhile, trust in authorities that could assist risk assessment by providing expert knowledge is low. The government and media – entities that are expected to fulfill this role – are not considered trustworthy: Only 6% of respondents say that they trust information published by the govern-

ment about the nuclear accident. This corresponds to the level of confidence in information released by TEPCO which just 5% regard as trustworthy. The vast majority of respondents do not differentiate between the government and the operator of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Trust in the media also proved to be low: Only 13% believe that news coverage is objective and comprehensive. This is a dramatic drop from 24% in 2009.

#### Personal affliction

Trust levels vary by personal affliction: Respondents who were personally affected by the disaster had significantly lower trust in the government and media. Their trust in family, friends and their local community, however, was above average. Furthermore, among young respondents, personal affliction was connected to a strong motivation to become actively engaged in the recovery of the local community.

## The debate on nuclear energy policy after March 11

**Since the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, energy policy has been discussed on an unprecedented scale in Japan. How has the debate developed? Opinion polls can reveal whether people are for or against denuclearization; however, they do not show the reasons behind these opinions. How can this be studied in a systematic manner?**

This research project examines how nuclear power policy has been discussed in Japan by utilizing a text-mining approach, that is, a method to analyse which terms are employed in a large quantity of texts, and how they are correlated with one another. The aim is to investigate what kinds of claims are instrumentalized in today's energy debates.

Specifically, this project explores how the two biggest national newspapers, the *Asahi Shimbun*, which proposes the phase-out of nuclear power, and

the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, which supports its continuation, have respectively deployed their arguments.

Preliminary results suggest that the *Asahi Shimbun* problematizes the closed-off administration of nuclear energy plants, including the absence of public monitoring, and relates it to the greater question of “democracy”. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, on the other hand, raises “techno-nationalistic” concerns over hampering Japanese technology in global competition. The debate thus goes beyond a simple discussion of specific measures of energy policy, and has evolved into a debate on the fundamental principles of society. This research project is intended to further explore this aspect of the current nuclear debates.

◀ **Dr. Yuki Abe**, political scientist, is in charge of the research project “The Debate on Nuclear Energy Policy in Japan.”  
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## Changing civil participation?

**How do citizens in Japan influence political decision-making after the triple catastrophe on March 11, 2011? How do people respond to the consequences of the nuclear accident and to the question of the future of nuclear energy in Japan? Does the crisis lead to a change in civil participation?**

Anti-nuclear protests such as the one in Tokyo on September 19, 2011, which attracted around 60.000 participants, make it clear that there is a high level of concern among Japanese citizens – concern that has become even more visible today, and which might trigger new forms of activism.

The 1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in Kōbe had a strong influence on the development of the Japanese civil society, bringing in its wake further political consequences such as the NPO Law (Law to Promote Specified

Nonprofit Activities) in 1998 and reforms for more decentralization in the 1990s, reforms designed to strengthen the role of citizens in the political process.

“Political Participation and Happiness in Japan” is the title of a new project at the DIJ that started in January 2012. Among others, this project will take up the question of whether and how political participation changed after March 11. It will investigate the currently available channels of participation in terms of whether they (still) fit people's needs when it comes to taking an active part in the political process. By collecting and analysing qualitative data, several types of political participation as well as other independent variables – such as gender, age and education – will be taken into account.

*Asahi* focuses on democracy deficits,  
*Yomiuri* fears technological setback.

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## Volunteering in Tōhoku

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► Volunteers cleaning photo negatives in Sendai's Wakabayashi district, February 2012.

**A new project initiated at the DIJ on the topic of March 11 deals with volunteers and their reasons for volunteering in Tōhoku. In the wake of the triple disaster, a record number of volunteers has been recorded in the Tōhoku region, especially younger ones.**

Interviews with volunteers between 20 and 40 years old are being carried out during fieldwork trips to north-eastern Japan, and in Tokyo. The project focuses on students as well as young company employees who took part in volunteering trips organized by their companies. The study aims to explore the reasons and incentives of individuals for engaging in volunteering and to analyse qualitatively how repeated altruistic activities affect the values and life satisfaction of these individuals – the latter aspect links the project to the existing DIJ research focus on “happiness”.

A further research question is what volunteering means for these individuals: How do they evaluate their

engagement retrospectively and what consequences did volunteering have for them personally? What positive and negative associations do interviewees have with their experiences of supporting others? What types of volunteers can be distinguished? Oral narratives of individual encounters with the local population will also be scrutinized.

The empirical data gained from this ethnographic study will shed light on whether the recent volunteering trend in Japan after March 11, 2011, could be seen as the start of a fundamental societal change, such as the turn to non-material values and increased emphasis on interpersonal relations, or whether it is merely a short-term phenomenon. First results of this study will be presented at the German-speaking Conference of Japanese Studies in Zurich in August 2012.

## Consumption and economic sustainability after March 11

**The March 11 triple disaster has had vast consequences not only for the regional economy, but also on the attitudes toward business as well as actual economic behaviour in the country as a whole. This DIJ project analyses these consequences in three separate studies, with a focus on consumption behaviour.**

### *Ethical consumption*

The first study deals with the way consumers take into account environmental and social responsibility of products and their production in their purchasing decisions. The issue of ethical consumption has gained importance after the nuclear disaster, and based on the ongoing research (since 2009), this project looks at changes in attitudes as well as in actual purchasing behaviour.

### *Charitable donations and volunteering*

The second study is based on a broad definition of consumption including donations and volunteering work as consumption activities. The study

analyses why people donate time, money and labour, as well as the emotional consequences of doing so. Under normal circumstances, the dimension of charitable donations in Japan, as well as the hours spent volunteering, is relatively small in international comparison. With respect to the triple disaster, the project will analyse how attitudes toward charitable donations and volunteering have changed in the aftermath.

### *Consumption-related coping with the disaster*

The third study uses participant observation to investigate the consumption-related coping process and its relation with other coping mechanisms in relation to the disaster. A substantial number of studies on psychological coping with disasters and their consequences are available. However, consumption behaviour as an important coping mechanism has been widely neglected in the literature so far.

► **Dr. Florian Kohlbacher**, head of the DIJ Business and Economics Section, investigates the business implications of demographic change as well as business-related sustainability issues.  
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## Older people's housing situation and future prospects in the Tōhoku region

**This project on the living situation of elderly people in Tōhoku focuses on the question of whether – and to what extent – alternative (co-housing) forms of living for older people are supported by the local authorities.**

These forms of housing for older people had first been built in larger numbers after the Kōbe earthquake in 1995 as a measure against isolation of those older people who had lost their houses. In light of the differences of social and age structures as well as cultural differences between the rural areas of Tōhoku and urban Kōbe (and other urban areas where

alternative housing has predominantly emerged), one of the questions that has to be addressed is how different conditions change the requirements for alternative housing.

Another part of this research project examines older people's hopes, anxieties and expectations concerning their future housing situation. How do they envision the coming years in terms of their housing situation? Given the large number of elderly people in the region hit by the disasters, the housing situation of older people is of particular importance.

◀ **Dr. Maren Godzik**, head of the DIJ Social Science Section, works on alternative forms of housing and living arrangements in the ageing society.  
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## Happiness in Japan before and after March 11

**One year on, the costs of the March 11 catastrophe are hard to quantify and uncertain. However, there is no doubt that the economic damage caused by the crisis and its aftermath is of an unprecedented scale.**

Apart from the economic costs, the question also arises of how the crisis has affected the personal well-being of the people. Since “happiness” and “life satisfaction” are increasingly considered important policy goals, the Japanese government started in

fiscal 2009 to collect data on personal happiness and its determinants through a nationwide survey. The DIJ research project “Happiness Economics before and after March 11” analyses how the triple catastrophe has affected people's life satisfaction. By conducting a statistical analysis, the project examines in which areas of Japan the negative effects on life satisfaction have been most severe, and how these effects relate to other factors such as unemployment and nuclear fallout.

◀ **Dr. Tim Tiefenbach**, economist, works together with Dr. Florian Kohlbacher on the research project “Happiness Economics before and after March 11”.  
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## “Fukushima” literature

**The triple disaster that began on March 11 last year has exerted a profound influence on almost all aspects of life in Japan. Efforts to cope with, and eventually overcome, the calamity are equally broad. It has already become clear that art and (popular) culture play an important role in this respect.**

Be it film, manga or literature – in a variety of genres, authors have set out to explore disaster-related traumas. Literary and popular cultural reactions to “Fukushima” in particular are at the centre of a new project at the DIJ. In what way are these texts

political? Which aspect of the nuclear catastrophe is being focused upon and to what effect?

Special attention is given to the *zainichi* Korean author Miri Yū, who has committed herself to the documentation of “Fukushima” with particular dedication. The analysis will include not only the author's various publications on the topic, but also her activities on-site in Fukushima Prefecture. The project aims at locating Yū in the broader “Fukushima” discourse, but also at relating her work to the author's self-stated “rootlessness”.

◀ **Dr. Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt**, head of the DIJ Humanities Section, analyses “Fukushima” literature as well as literary and popular cultural representations of precarity.  
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## First exhibition about the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in Misawa, Aomori Prefecture

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Although Aomori, the northernmost prefecture of the main Japanese island of Honshū, has not been designated as part of the crisis region of Tōhoku, damage to the area was still visible in late autumn of 2011 in, for instance, the port of Hachinohe. Maren Godzik and Susanne Klien visited the Misawa City Museum of History and Folk Customs and the Hachinohe Portal Museum in a field trip in November 2011.

This unassuming museum hosted the first exhibition dedicated exclusively to the topic of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan under the title “The Earthquake and the Roar of the Sea – Watch out, the tsunami is coming! 2011: How the Great East Japan Earthquake affected Misawa’s fishing industry”. The exhibition was conceived and curated by the renowned folklore scholar Hiroyuki Hashimoto, professor at Morioka University, in cooperation with the local Fisheries Association, the Shūji Terayama Museum and the Municipal Education Council.

The aim of the exhibition was to show historical material about previous earthquake disasters and tsunamis and to thus place the recent disaster in a larger temporal framework. Visitors were provided with a multi-sensual experience of the earthquake: Equipped with flashlights, guests entered the darkened showroom where

they could experience the tsunami visually and acoustically with the help of video material. The exhibits included personal objects that had been washed away and found in the area, displayed in styrofoam boxes formerly used for fish. Further, the exhibition contained personal notes by residents of Misawa about the earthquake and tsunami. In addition, visitors were encouraged to leave messages for Misawa citizens



► Personal notes about the disaster by residents of Misawa.



► Styrofoam boxes containing flotsam and historical documents referring to previous disasters in the region.



► Flotsam and video installation.

with the aim of opening up a dialogue between locals and non-locals. The notes by citizens living in various areas of Misawa illustrated how perceptions of the catastrophe differed between people living near the coast and those living in higher areas further away from the sea.

Hashimoto aimed to break with conventional norms of museum presentation by exhibiting flotsam both in front of the museum in the entrance area and in the exhibition rooms. His experiment was a success: Over a period of time, the flotsam placed in front and inside the museum gradually changed – children from the neighbourhood removed some objects, while others were added. The result of Hashimoto’s progressive concept was a dynamic event in which visitors could actively participate. The show was complemented by lectures delivered by invited experts from renowned institutions all over Japan, including the National Museum of Ethnology (*Minpaku*) in Osaka.



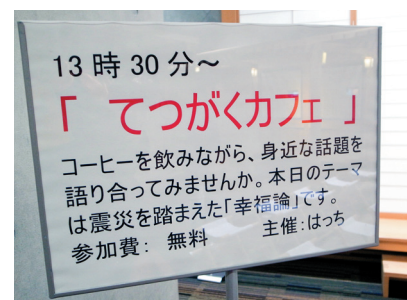
## Revitalization, art and philosophy in Hachinohe

The northeastern region of Japan has long been seriously affected by demographic ageing and the shrinking of the population – two factors that now, after the earthquake, aggravate the problems of rebuilding the towns and cities in the area.

For instance, prior to the earthquake, Hachinohe, in the centre of southeast Aomori Prefecture, had started to implement measures to make the city more liveable for its inhabitants. An important part of these measures is the Hachinohe Portal Museum, or “Hacchi” for short. Founded last February by the city office and based in the centre of the city, it combines a range of diverse functions, including a historical museum and childcare facility, exhibition space for local products and traditional crafts, an experimental art venue, theatre and an indoor play ground, as well as ateliers for artists in residence.

instance during last year’s art event in bars and old cinemas. The number of visitors has been impressive. People not only take advantage of various events, but also understand Hacchi as a public space, where students do their homework, people surf the Internet or simply meet and talk.

The tsunami caused considerable damage to Hachinohe’s harbour area, but the damage here seems manageable in comparison to other places along the Tōhoku coast. Nevertheless, the events of March 11 have left their mark on Hachinohe’s inhabitants and should not be forgotten. Against this backdrop, Hacchi seems to have obtained a new role – not only for the inhabitants of Hachinohe, but also as a model for other cities. As a place that addresses the needs of a wide range of people, and as a place where the inhabitants



► The “Philosophy Café”, a monthly event held at the Hacchi (<http://hacchi.jp>).

◀ Dr. Maren Godzik  
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► Talking about “happiness” after the earthquake and tsunami.

The childcare facilities, which are open before and after the opening hours of conventional childcare centres, are as important for Hacchi as exhibitions and other events. Moreover, the concept includes active participant involvement: there are rooms that can be rented for a variety of purposes so that artisans, for example, can sell their products and offer workshops there. Hacchi plays an active role in the city, as for

can meet to contemplate the future of their city together, Hacchi can contribute to new perspectives on the city and its inhabitants. When we visited Hacchi in November 2011, people in the “Philosophy Café” (*tetsugaku kafē*), a monthly event that is open to everyone, were discussing the topic of “Happiness after the earthquake catastrophe”.



► Traces of destruction in Hachinohe's harbour.

## Forthcoming events

### DIJ Forum: Happiness in Japan Before and After the Great East Japan Earthquake

Speaker: Yukiko Uchida,  
Kyoto University.  
(DIJ Tokyo, IV/5/2012,  
18:30–20:00).

### DIJ Forum: Happiness: The Viewpoint of Economics

Speaker: Bruno Frey,  
University of Zurich.  
(DIJ Tokyo, VI/25/2012,  
18:30–20:00).

## Recent publications

### Holger Rockmann:

*Demografischer Wandel in  
Japan und Deutschland.  
Bevölkerungspolitischer  
Wechsel in der Familienpolitik*  
(Monographien aus dem  
Deutschen Institut für Japan-  
studien, Vol. 49). Munich:  
Iudicium, 2011 (350 pages).



## Call for Papers

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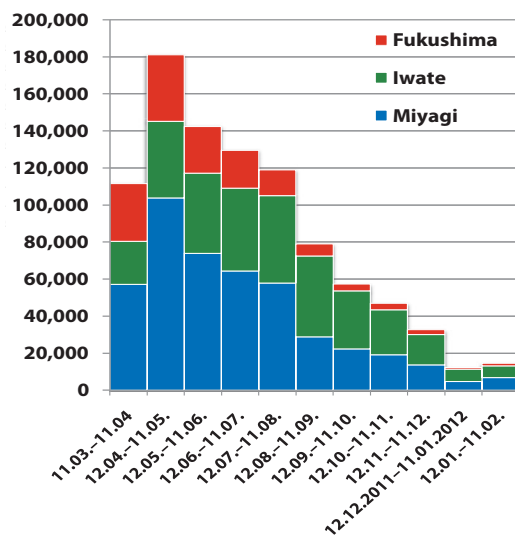
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## The number of volunteers

Within one month of the March 11 catastrophe, 115,500 volunteer helpers had been registered at local volunteer centres in Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi. In the following month, the number of helpers peaked at 181,000, but since then a steady decline has been observed. Between December 12, 2011 and January 11, 2012, only 12,300 volunteers signed up. Notably, the number of volunteers in Fukushima was less than in the other two prefectures, and the number had declined relatively quickly by the end of August. Although the disaster is still covered widely in the media, it remains to be seen whether the number of volunteers will rise again with the first anniversary in March this year. *T.T.*



Source: Japan National Council of Social Welfare  
(data as of February 28, 2012).  
[www.saigaivc.com/](http://www.saigaivc.com/) ボランティア活動者数の推移

## Read for you

**TASAKA Hiroshi (2012): *Kantei kara mita genpatsu jiko no shinjitsu: Korekara hajimaru shin no kiki* [The truth about the nuclear plant accident as seen from the Prime Minister's Office: The real crisis begins now]. Tokyo: Kobunsha, 780 yen (ISBN 978-4-334-03661-4).**

The author is an expert in nuclear power engineering, and was appointed as a special advisor to the Cabinet immediately after the nuclear catastrophe at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant in 2011. Reflecting on his direct experiences, he argues that the management of nuclear power rests on “public acceptance”, which in turn hinges on transparency, accountability and social monitoring. Viewed from this angle, he stresses the importance of participatory democracy in deciding the future of nuclear power policy. This book is a valuable addition to the debate on nuclear energy in post-3/11 Japan. *Y.A.*

## Catchword

### カットボラ (*katto-bora*)

Among the many forms of volunteer work, *katto-bora* (short for “haircut volunteer”) stands out. Persons with professional haircutting skills offer free haircuts to victims from the disaster areas – a service that has met with exceptional popularity. A 20-year-old student at Tōhoku University in Sendai, who has volunteered more than 100 times since March 11, 2011, conceded that volunteering as a stylist’s assistant was one of the greatest emotional challenges he had faced. While having their hair cut, many victims relaxed to such an extent that they narrated their tragic fate to the volunteer, such as having lost a member of their family or having had their entire house washed away. According to the student, haircut volunteers cannot “escape” these stories. Given the considerable mental stress to which volunteers are exposed under these circumstances, psychological counselling before and after volunteering is desirable. *S.K.*

**Picture credits:** Page 1: {photo albums} Susanne Klien. Page 2: {demonstration} Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt. Page 4: {cleaning of photographs} Susanne Klien. Page 6: {xlf gg installation} Maren Godzik, {messages from visitors} and {show cases} Susanne Klien. Page 7: {Philosophy Café sign} Maren Godzik, {Philosophy Café} and {Hachinohe harbour} Susanne Klien. Page 8: {statistic} Tim Tiefenbach.  
**Author key:** *Y.A.* – Yuki Abe; *H.E.O.* – Hachinohe; *E.Q.W.* – E. Q. W.; *K.I.-W.* – Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt; *S.K.* – Susanne Klien; *T.T.* – Tim Tiefenbach.

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