

Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

Tokyo 2020

“This is the happiest day of my life!” Foil fencer Yuki Ota shed tears of joy over Tokyo being elected to host the Olympics in 2020. “Tokyo reborn” read the headline of the Japanese economic newspaper *Nikkei* the next day. According to polls conducted earlier, the Games – vehemently promoted with the slogan of “hopes and dreams” by Prime Minister Shinzō Abe – are welcomed by the majority of the Japanese people. While some have expressed hopes for an economic and moral recovery, others have criticized the risk of radioactivity and are concerned about the potential neglect of the disaster area. *A.B./A.Br.*



The potential of lifelong (self-)employment

Whereas studies in gerontology reveal that lifelong (self-)employment leads to greater quality of life in old age, economic research tends to be more concerned with the problems associated with the increasing number of senior citizens in Japan.

The new DIJ research project “Entrepreneurship and employment in demographically ageing societies” integrates the findings of these two areas of research and examines how (self-)employment beyond the current age of retirement (positively) influences those employees and the economy as a whole.

The population of Japan has aged to such an extent that Japan is demographically now the “oldest” society in the world. Gerontological studies reveal (1) that rising life expectancy goes hand in hand with an improvement in physical and intellectual competence, and (2) that continuous employment at older ages and the level of fitness and quality of life correlate positively. Economists, however, mostly interpret this demographic change pessimistically – especially in relation to economic development. Consequently, economic research points to a significant decline in economic growth in Japan as the labour force shrinks over the coming decades.

The question therefore arises: To what extent can longer or even lifelong (self-)employment be thought of as a solution for the challenges of demographic change with potentially positive outcomes? Could lifelong employment even be accompanied by greater health and life satisfaction? Gerontological studies point to a holistic fulfilment of physical, mental, psychological and social needs as conditions for longevity and health. Meanwhile, some economists have started to consider social, emotional and spiritual components besides simply income as factors influencing life satisfaction. But how do these factors affect the working environment, and how do the people involved perceive them? To what extent does Japan fit with the model of wealth creation by lifelong working in an ageing society? This research project integrates gerontological research into longevity and health with discussions on the economic consequences of demographic change.

This project presents case studies and analyses of statistical data. As a theoretical framework, the Schumpeterian theory of economic development and other evolutionary economic theories are used to understand economic development processes and innovative personalities.

Moving on

Two of the DIJ Senior Research Fellows have recently moved on to new assignments. Susanne Klien, an expert in cultural anthropology, started her new job as associate professor at Hokkaido University on September 1. Her projects during the time at the DIJ since 2009 were “Traditions in contemporary rural Japan: Pursuit of happiness?” and “Disaster volunteers in Tōhoku”. As of October 1, Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt is associate professor for modern Japanese literature at Nagoya University. Since 2008, she had been the expert in literature and media studies at the DIJ. She specialized in representations of Japan’s “unequal society” in popular culture and cultural representations of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. *P.H.*

◀ **Dr. Kazue Haga**, economist, heads the project “Entrepreneurship and employment in demographically ageing societies”. haga@dijtokyo.org

Civil society, political participation and happiness



- Poster announcing the symposium.
[http://www.dijtokyo.org/
events/civil_society_political_
participation_happiness&lang=en](http://www.dijtokyo.org/events/civil_society_political_participation_happiness&lang=en)

On May 23–25, 2013, the DIJ hosted an international symposium on “Civil Society, Political Participation and Happiness” at the conference centre of the Werner Reimers Foundation in Bad Homburg, Germany.

The symposium at the Villa Reimers gathered twenty scholars working in different fields of research from around the globe. For two and a half days they engaged in interdisciplinary discourse on the three key themes of “civil society and social well-being”, “conditions and consequences of political participation” and “social movements”.

The kick-off event of the symposium was a debate between Christopher Pleister and Florian Coulmas about “social

projects. Bernard Enjolras (Oslo) gave a presentation on changing patterns in voluntary activities in Norway; Paul Dekker (Tilburg) showed international evidence on the macro level for the relationships between happiness and social as well as political participation. Furthermore, the well-known happiness economist Alois Stutzer (Basel) presented his research on the positive influence of democratic and federal institutions on subjective life satisfaction. While the first part of the conference focused on the socio-economic macro level, the second part presented individual case studies on political movements in Italy (Robin LeBlanc, Lexington) and Japan (Patricia Steinhoff, Honolulu; Millie Creighton, Vancouver).



- Participants at the symposium in Bad Homburg. From left to right: Tim Tiefenbach, Paul Dekker, Florian Coulmas, Koichi Hasegawa, Robin LeBlanc, Carola Hommerich, Patricia Steinhoff, Barbara Holthus, Matthew S. Winters, Millie Creighton, Phoebe Holdgrün, Bernard Enjolras.

commitment, market principles and happiness”. Christopher Pleister, chairman of the FSMA (Management Committee of the Federal Agency for Financial Market Stabilisation) and former president of the BVR (National Association of German Cooperative Banks), argued that the economic concept of utility can be understood as a contribution to a “good life”. For this purpose, free markets are beneficial as long as they – and the transactions made within them – are guided by ethical rules. However, Florian Coulmas, director of the DIJ and organizer of the conference, warned that the increasing commercialization of the academic system endangers the freedom of science and the related search for truth.

After this inaugural event, which triggered animated discussions among the audience, the researchers presented their

Overall, the symposium led to an intensification and deeper connection of interdisciplinary research at the DIJ, and to the conclusion that happiness and political participation are correlated in most cultures, albeit in different ways. Thus, the meeting may be understood as a continuation of the mission of the Werner Reimers Foundation, whose founder’s aim was to promote a better cross-cultural understanding of the people, especially of their behaviour and institutions.

The symposium “Civil Society, Political Participation and Happiness” was part of a series of conferences celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Werner Reimers Foundation and the 125th birthday of its founder. The DIJ is looking forward to future opportunities to organize events in the hospitable environment of the Villa Reimers.



- Villa Reimers (conference venue).
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- **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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Three “DIJ25” Anniversary Scholarships awarded

The DIJ was overwhelmed by the great interest in its announcement of “DIJ25” Anniversary Scholarships to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the institute.

Out of more than 60 applicants, three students majoring in different disciplines were invited to spend two months at the DIJ in Tokyo to pursue a project of their own choosing.

Since late August 2013, Eduard Stengler (French studies and ethics at Philipps University of Marburg) has been exploring school life in Japan. His project examines how disciplinary offenses are dealt with in the Japanese educational system. During his stay in Japan, he observes classes at Seikei Gakuen high school in Tokyo.

In spring 2014, Felicitas Heßelmann (sociology and art history at the University of Mannheim) will join the institute for two months as the second anniversary scholarship recipient to explore the “Iconography of March 11” in Japan. She is particularly interested in portrayals of the triple disaster of 2011 in Japanese media and Japanese popular culture.

A third anniversary scholarship was awarded to Eva Maria Reichert (Modern German literature at Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich). In Germany, she took part in a theatre project on the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. During her stay at the DIJ, she intends to analyse how “Fukushima” is treated as a topic in Japanese theatre. *T.W.*

New research on consumption and lifestyle in Japan

“Happiness through Consumption in Japan – An Exploration of Japanese Consumer Worlds and Lifestyle Scenarios” is the title of a Ph.D. project supported by the DIJ.

Although wealth and purchasing power in developed countries are rising, people have not become happier. The quest for satisfaction or happiness (*kōfuku sagashi*) is a global phenomenon and has become a collective life purpose and lifestyle. Various forms of identity crises have been described for Japan that can be interpreted as symptomatic of capitalist societies marked by patterns of postmodern mass consumption.

Consumer culture can be understood as a commercial system of contemporary images, words and objects used by different market stakeholders to convey messages, as well as construct and offer meanings and identities – phenomena that deserve closer examination as possible reflections of social desires. Analyses of the diversification of consumers after the oil crisis in 1973 to the economic boom of the 1980s in Japan have revealed a new trend towards individualization. Satisfaction and happiness were no longer only found in a modern electrified lifestyle, but in products and services able to transmit corresponding emotional and personality-mediated attributes. Many compa-

nies responded to these developments with a *refresh* boom, diversifying their shops with new lifestyle products and service environments. One prominent example is the retail company and “lifestyle” department store Mujirushi Ryōhin (Muji). Originally, it wanted to be understood as an “antithesis” to consumption practices; but, in fact, its branding perfectly captured the contemporary zeitgeist of meaningful consumption. From a cultural studies perspective, this Ph.D. project by Christiane Rühle deals with developments, forms and constitutions of consumer-based quests for a good quality of life in urban Japan, focusing on product and corporate advertising.

While the project’s theoretical approach draws on Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), an interdisciplinary research tradition that includes all those approaches which deal with markets, consumer actions and their inherent cultural meanings, the analysis is based on a qualitative study of advertising campaigns and additional interviews with consumer experts and producers. The project thereby seeks to clarify how and to what extent companies have contributed to the socio-cultural generation of consumer needs and to the transmission of (various kinds of) lifestyle prototypes.



► “Found Muji” shop in Aoyama, Tokyo.

◀ **Christiane Rühle, M.A.** (Japanese studies & political science), is a Ph.D. candidate at the Japanese Studies Department of the Goethe University of Frankfurt. Her research is on Japanese consumer culture and popular culture (“Cool Japan” campaign).
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Forthcoming events

International workshop: Well-being in Ageing Societies: Perspectives from China, Germany and Japan

(Beijing, X/23–25/2013).

Organizers: German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) Tokyo, Japan; German Centre of Gerontology (DZA), Germany; Institute of Population and Labor Economics (IPLE), Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), China. Supported by Stiftung Mercator.

Recent publications

Florian Coulmas:

Sociolinguistics. The Study of Speakers' Choices (2nd edition). New York: Cambridge University Press (ISBN 978-1-107-67556-8).

Christian W. Spang:

Karl Haushofer und Japan. Die Rezeption seiner geopolitischen Theorien in der deutschen und japanischen Politik (DIJ Monographs; 52). Munich: Iudicium (ISBN 978-3-86205-040-6).

Marie-Luise Legeland:

Onsen. Thermalquellen als Reiseziel (DIJ Monographs; 53). Munich: Iudicium (ISBN 978-3-86205-041-3).

Gabriele Vogt and Phoebe Holdgrün (eds):

Modernisierungsprozesse in Japan (Miscellanea 18). Tokyo: Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien / Max Weber Stiftung D.G.I.A. (ISSN 0941-1321).

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<http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/cj> (full-text open access).

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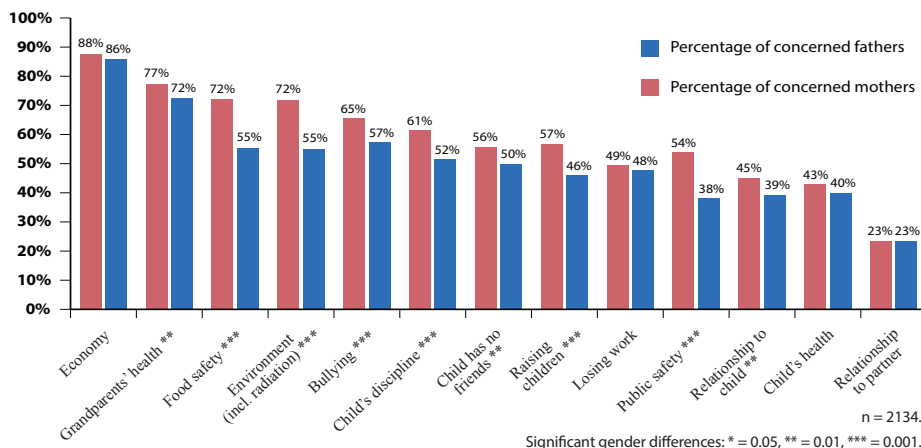
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Parental fears and concerns post 3/11

This graph is based on data from the DIJ survey on parental well-being (<http://www.dijtokyo.org/pws>). The findings about concerns relating to en-

vironmental (including radiation) and food safety also form the basis of the DIJ project "Parents against radiation. A case study" (Holdgrün, Holthus). B.H.



Read for you

UENO Chizuko (2011): *Kea no shakai gaku. Tōjisha shuken no fukushi shakai e.* [Care sociology: Towards a new sovereign welfare society]. Ōta Shuppan, 497 pages, 2,993 yen (ISBN 978-4-7783-1241-1).

The importance of care is often underestimated. In this book, Chizuko Ueno introduces her concept of "good care" (*yoi kea*). Following Mary Daly's definition, care denotes actions and relations designed to meet needs that are embedded within an emotional, economic and social framework. Ideally, care not only satisfies physical but also the emotional needs of children and dependent adults. The third chapter lays out the increasing importance of cooperative care facilities in the postindustrial Japanese welfare society. Ueno ends with an outlook on possible future care scenarios that do not put wives and daughters-in-law exclusively in charge of caring for family members, but instead shifts responsibilities to society as a whole. The study makes an important contribution towards an analysis of new welfare mixtures and the "socialization of care" (*kaigo no shakaika*) in Japan. S.H.

Catchword

今でしょ! (*ima desho!*)

Osamu Hayashi is living proof that a teacher of Japanese literature can become a national celebrity. That students sometimes need to be reminded to study is nothing new, but Hayashi made the theme his trademark at Toshin High School with a video clip on the prep school's homepage. *Itsu yaru ka* [When are you going to do it?], he asks in front of the blackboard, supplying the answer himself: *Ima desho!* [Now!]. Tired of endless litanies about "two lost decades", many Japanese seem to relate to the appeal for urgency. The catchphrase caught on to such an extent that it is now one that everyone knows. In June, Toyota produced a TV commercial with Osamu Hayashi who, again in front of the blackboard, rouses viewers: *Ima desho!* This time, however, the answer is prompted by the question *Itsu kau ka* [When are you going to buy it?]. This was when *ima desho!* really took off. A sense of urgency thus finds expression, the significance of which extends far beyond students' penchant for procrastination. F.C.

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