

Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

DIJ international conference report

Mothers as political agents

The important role of mothers in social movements and as political activists in Japan was reflected at a one-day international conference on “Mothers and Social Movements in Postwar Japan” (July 29, 2016) organized and hosted by the DIJ in cooperation with the University of Vienna.

Motherhood is seen as an important factor for mobilization – for people in Japan and elsewhere – to join social movements, protest activities and other forms of political engagement. This is particularly true for activism in relation to environmental pollution, consumer issues and food safety. With the triple disaster of March 11, 2011 having triggered a resurgence of civic activism in Japan, it is again mothers who make up a large share within these movements. The one-day interdisciplinary conference entitled “Mothers and Social Movements in Postwar Japan”, organized by Phoebe Holdgrün (DIJ) and Barbara Holthus (University of Vienna), brought together ten scholars from various universities throughout Japan, along with the University of Vienna and the DIJ.

The conference provided a platform for in-depth discussions on motherhood as a distinct category (and cause) in shaping activism in contemporary Japan and an opportunity for networking among the participating scholars. Different perspectives and disciplines for the study of motherhood in Japan were presented, including historical aspects of mothers’ participation in movements during the 20th century. The phenomenon of motherhood and activism was reassessed and contextualized in light of the most recent post-3/11 developments. The discussion revolved around issues such as motivations, strategies of action, framing and organization of mother’s groups, as well as their political efficacy.

After an introduction by Phoebe Holdgrün on mothers as a particular category of activism, the first panel consisted of three talks that focused on theoretical, historical and quantitative approaches. Mikiko Eto (Hosei University) presented a typology of women’s movements in Japan, assessing the role of mothers within them and highlighting that mothers play a particular role within non-feminist movements. Ulrike Wöhr (Hiroshima City University) examined discourses on motherhood with regards to feminism, ecology and ecological movements, as well as nuclear power in the 1980s. By re-examining the results of a larger survey on post-3/11 activism, Keiichi Satoh (Hitotsubashi University) emphasized that the groups consisting particularly of mothers have proven to be most active in comparison to other organizations.

Assessing motherhood and activism, particularly in the aftermath of 3/11, was the objective of the afternoon session in which particular case studies on motherhood as a performative frame were discussed. Barbara Holthus explored

DIJ International Conference

Mothers and Social Movements in Postwar Japan

Phoebe Stella Holdgrün
German Institute for Japanese Studies

July 29th 2016, 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

Barbara Holthus
University of Vienna

German Institute for Japanese Studies
Jochi Kiozaka Bldg. 2F
7-1 Kiozaka
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094



Conference Speakers

Haruka Danzuka
Tokyo University

Mikiko Eto
Hosei University

Wolfram Manzenreiter
University of Vienna

Eiji Oguma
Keio University

Keiichi Satoh
Hitotsubashi University

David Slater
Sophia University

Satsuki Uno
Tokyo University

Ulrike Wöhr
Hiroshima City University

the correlations of life satisfaction, social movement participation and awareness of risks in a case study of the “National Network to Protect Children from Radiation” and found subjective well-being to be higher the more engaged mothers are, unrelated to the groups’ political efficacy. The presentation by Haruka Danzuka (The University of Tokyo), which examined a case study of mothers in a social movement group in Iwaki regarding their participation strategies, was contrasted by Satsuki Uno (The University of Tokyo), who focused on a more or less militant women’s group that exhibits a significantly different understanding of women and motherhood. Last but not least, David Slater (Sophia University) presented yet a third type of women’s groups, namely the recently founded group of “Mothers against War”. Eiji Oguma (Keio University) and Wolfram Manzenreiter (University of Vienna) rounded off the conference in their role as discussants. A publication of the presented papers is scheduled for release in 2017. *P.H.*

<https://www.dijtokyo.org/project/parents-against-radiation-a-case-study/>

<https://www.dijtokyo.org/event/mothers-and-social-movements-in-postwar-japan/>

Growing diversity in Japan: Forum and workshop



► Glenda Roberts (left), Ilse Lenz (right).

In context of the DIJ research project “Japan’s Growing Diversity: New Risks and Opportunities for Whom?” the DIJ hosted two events with invited visiting scholar Ilse Lenz.

Lenz, sociologist and a professor emeritus at Ruhr-Universität Bochum (RUB), first gave a presentation on “Changing Gender Orders and Diversity in Comparative Perspective: Growing Flexibility of Work and Life Strategies” at the DIJ Forum on October 13, 2016. Her thoughts on types of modern gender orders and transitions to more flexible gender orders in postindustrial societies were commented by Glenda Roberts, a professor at Waseda University, who raised the question of how gender inequalities can be analysed.

This DIJ Forum was followed by a DIJ workshop held on October 18, during which all individual research projects pertaining to the larger DIJ research focus on diversity were presented by DIJ senior research fellows and thoroughly discussed by the audience under the lead of Ilse Lenz, who also gave a theoretical introduction at the beginning. The projects examine processes

of diversification in social realms, such as work and the workplace, by considering dimensions of differentiations such as gender and age, with a particular view on the fields of politics, economics and science. Susanne Brucksch (political science) reflects the methodological approach of gendered innovation in regard to her research on Japan. The question of how gender stereotypes limit career aspirations of Japanese university students is studied by Tobias Söldner (psychology). Steffen Heinrich (political science) focuses on the diversification of employment and its implications for Japan’s welfare politics. Diversity discourses in relation to the employment sector are explored by Ronald Saladin (media studies, literature). Phoebe Holdgrün (political science), who also organized both events, examines layers of gender equality and diversity policies and their impact on employment and participation.

<https://www.dijtokyo.org/project/japans-growing-diversity-new-risks-and-opportunities-for-whom/>

► **Dr. Phoebe Stella Holdgrün**, political scientist and deputy director of the DIJ, coordinates the DIJ research focus “Japan’s Growing Diversity: New Risks and Opportunities for Whom?”. holdgruen@dijtokyo.org

Website relaunch

Since mid-September, the DIJ website has presented itself in a more modern, complete redesign. Alongside a fresh look, the institute’s online presence also features numerous functional improvements, such as an overhauled internal search engine to deliver results in a quicker and neater looking manner. The calendar system for announcing institutional events has also been modernized and the displaying of news on the start page can now be filtered by category.

Since the website’s original launch nearly 20 years ago, the layout of the whole site is now responsive for the first time. As a result, usability via mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets has been increased drastically, making the entire content available on-the-go without compromises. *S.E.*

► **Sven Eichelberg**, library staff member and PR person at DIJ, in charge of the institute’s web presence. eichelberg@dijtokyo.org



Veranstaltungen und Aktivitäten

ZEIGE ALLES EVENTS
PUBLIKATIONEN ANDERE



Japan's productivity gap – Employment system re-examined

Japan's GDP per hours worked only amounts to just above 60 per cent of the level in the US. In a rapidly ageing society, such a situation is no longer tenable. When the employment to population ratio declines, productivity needs to increase in order to preserve the level of welfare.

Compared to other nations, Japan's adult population is highly educated. Investment in research and development is also among the highest and corporations have access to an abundant amount of financial capital. The low level of productivity can therefore not be explained by lack of skills, technology or capital. Rather, the available resources are simply not employed in the best possible way.

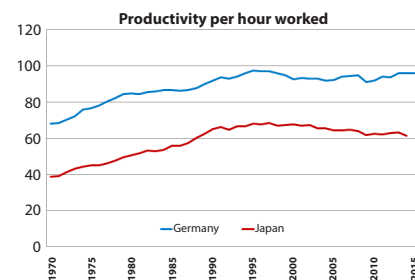
The deficiencies are being acknowledged by the Japanese government, which is pushing for a "productivity revolution". Besides the classic approach of promoting new technologies and the recent support for start-ups also undertaken in other countries, the emphasis is on corporate governance reform, more flexible labour markets and a change in working practices (*hataraki-kata kaikaku*, 働き方改革).

Despite near full employment, Japan's employment system is rightly under criticism: working hours stretching the limits of physical capacity, absence of work-life-balance, lack of diversity at higher corporate ranks and top positions being almost exclusively staffed by company grown managers. The causes are structural: The Japanese system still works on the assumption of in-house careers. Employees need to enter at the bottom of the hierarchy to

make it to the top. Changing one's employer continues to be associated with losses in terms of career opportunities and income.

The model functioned extremely well during the period of economic catch-up that lasted until the early 1970s, when a huge growth and learning potential was exploited. Now that Japan has taken the lead in many fields of technology and domestic markets are saturated or even shrinking, the disadvantages are coming to light. The long-term in-house competition for promotion requires employees to constantly prove their commitment to the company, which is detrimental to productivity. The absence of exit options in case of disagreement increases the cost of conflict making homogeneity more desirable than diversity. Not only women but also workers employed abroad are disadvantaged. Japanese companies are loosing the "battle for global talent" by not offering foreign employees adequate international career opportunities. Managers become more risk averse when the future of their career depends on the survival of their company. Moreover, company-based careers preclude that the best managers move to the companies with the highest growth potential.

Regulations and moral suasion will not be able to trigger much change. The development of external markets for managerial labour requires time. The drivers of this process are globalization, adjustment pressures stemming from demographic change and successful new companies trying out new forms of employment.



► Development in Japan and Germany in comparison with the US, the US value being normalized to 100. (Source: http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=PDB_LV).

◀ **Prof. Dr. Franz Waldenberger**, Director of the DIJ, also studies changes in the Japanese employment system in his research on the Japanese economy. waldenberger@dijtokyo.org

<https://www.dijtokyo.org/>

Recent publications

Contemporary Japan 28(2)

Issue editors: Steffen Heinrich und Tobias Söldner.



Content:

Isabel Fassbender:
"Enhancing autonomy in reproductive decisions? Education about family planning and fertility as a countermeasure against the low birthrate"

Ikuho Amano:
"In praise of iron grandeur: the sensibility of *kōjō moe* and the reinvention of urban technoscape"

Anne-Lise Mithout:
"Children with disabilities in the Japanese school system: a path toward social integration?"

Florence Lahournat:
"Reviving tradition in disaster-affected communities: adaptation and continuity in the *kagura* of Ogatsu, Miyagi Prefecture"

David Rear:
"Reforming Japanese-style management: destabilizing hegemony through discourse intervention"

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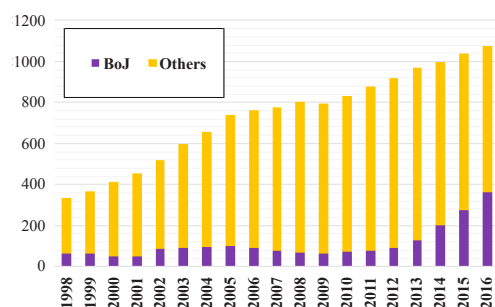
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Central bank balance sheet

A look at the amount and ownership structure of Japanese government bonds and treasury bills over time shows that the Bank of Japan (BoJ) has brought a large proportion of government bonds into their possession since the start of the expansionary monetary policy of Abenomics. At the end of March 2016, the BoJ held 364.4 trillion yen of government bonds (including treasury bills), which corresponds to approximately 68% of GDP. Apart from the acquisition of newly issued government bonds, the BoJ also acquires already issued bonds, which leads to a substantial redistribution of sovereign debt from private and public creditors to the BoJ. *T.T.*



Source: Based on data from BoJ (*Flows of Funds*).
<https://www.boj.or.jp/en/statistics/sj/index.htm>

Catchword

「同一労働同一賃金」
(*dōitsu rōdō dōitsu chingin*)

Equal pay for equal work

Prime Minister Abe has long agreed that the Japanese labour market puts non-regular employees at a disadvantage with regard to social security and pay. Yet, his announcement to implement a binding equal pay clause, which would force employers to pay the same wages for the same jobs, came as a surprise to many.

Formally, the proposal signals an end to the politics of labour market deregulation long pursued by LDP governments. However, it is more likely connected to Abenomics as real wages have been on the decline for years, despite the government's efforts to encourage wage growth. Substantial pay rises for non-regular workers – who make up almost 40% of employees – could therefore be meaningful for countering the trend.

Experts are sceptical, however, on how the principle can be implemented in practice. Since regular work contracts in Japan usually do not specify work duties and as pay scales are to a large extent seniority-based, establishing comparability between regular and non-regular jobs could prove difficult. Unions even fear that a legal obligation for equal pay may result in lower wages for regular workers. *S.H.*

Staff news

Dr. Ronald Saladin took his position as a senior research fellow at the DIJ in August 2016. He holds a doctorate degree from Trier University where he studied Japanese Studies, Sociology and German Literature. He was granted scholarships from the Japanese government and the DAAD, which enabled him to study at Japanese universities, too, including four years of enrolment in the PhD program at Musashi University in Tokyo. Before coming to Tokyo, he worked at the universities of Trier and Cologne.

Since June 2016, **Dr. Susanne Brucksch** has been working as senior researcher at the DIJ Tokyo and is co-organizer of the Social Science Study Group. Her current research focuses on "Technical Innovation and Research Cluster in Japan: The Biomedical Engineering Sector". Previously, she was senior research fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin and visiting scholar at Waseda University. Moreover, she holds the position of leader of the Science & Technology Studies section at the German Association for Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF). *S.E.*

Picture credits: Page 1 {poster} Sven Eichelberg. Page 2 {Glenda Roberts & Ilse Lenz} Sven Eichelberg. Pages 2&3 {screenshots} Sven Eichelberg. Page 3 {chart} Franz Waldenberger. Page 4 {chart} Tim Tiefenbach. **Author key:** *S.E.* – Sven Eichelberg; *S.H.* – Steffen Heinrich; *P.H.* – Phoebe Holdgrün; *T.T.* – Tim Tiefenbach.

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