

Interdisciplinary Japanese Studies On Site

Symposium on climate change

Climate change mitigation and regional development

Climate change mitigation is a global challenge that does not only demand national targets but also requires regional and local initiatives, as well as sustainable models and practices. Within its research focus “The Future of Local Communities in Japan. Risks and Opportunities in the Face of Multiple Challenges”, the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) investigates climate change mitigation strategies and projects at the local level.

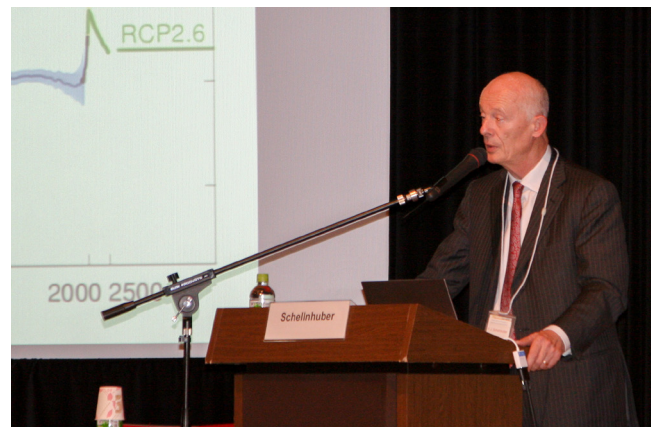
Together with the Embassy of Germany in Tokyo and the School of International Liberal Studies (SILS) at Waseda University, the DIJ hosted a German–Japanese symposium on climate change mitigation and regional development on November 2016. The event was supported by the Goethe-Institut Tokyo and the Japanese Ministry of the Environment (MoEnv).

In front of an audience of 150 attendees, representatives of national and local governments discussed the issue with entrepreneurs, scientists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Bureaucrats from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) and the Japanese MoEnv presented national policies directed at fostering local climate protection. Local representatives outlined their approaches but also called for more support from national governments.

Due to different regional and local conditions, uniform national strategies were not efficient on the local level, remarked Hiroaki Matsumoto (MoEnv). Rather, individual solutions, which take into account regional differences, had to be found. Harry Lehman of the Federal Agency of the Environment (UBA) stressed that clear goals as well as



► Participants discussing local climate protection and regional developments.



► Hans Joachim Schellnhuber (PIK) during his keynote speech.

concrete measures were substantial factors of success for local climate mitigation. When defining priorities, finding ideas as well as implementing them, civic engagement was indispensable. National governments had to provide financial resources and reliable legal frameworks.

The urgency of a global long-term climate mitigation strategy was stressed in the keynote address by Joachim Schellnhuber of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK). To avoid a climate catastrophe, innovations in all areas of life and economy over the next 50 to 100 years were necessary: from energy to mobility and daily consumption. So, for example, on a long-term basis, ending animal husbandry, reducing meat consumption, restricting the use of energy intensive resources such as concrete, steel and aluminium, as well as expanding the use of wood as the “construction material of the future” were indispensable.

The subsequent discussion underlined the realization that climate change mitigation needs locally adapted strategies. This also opens the possibility of testing and applying diverse and innovative technologies. National policies are required to guarantee long-term planning reliability.

In order to document the local implementation of climate change mitigation in Japan, and also to facilitate international exchange of information between local actors, the DIJ together with the German Embassy in Tokyo and the SILS, as well as with financial support from the Climate Fund of the Federal Government of Germany, is establishing the digital database “Local Climate Action” (LCA). Some of the data that will be gathered via an online survey will be made available to the public in three languages in the form of an interactive map.

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Intergenerational transfers



► Naohiro Ogawa (left) and Gerhard Naegele (right).

“Who pays for whom?” This was the question guiding the two presentations of the DIJ Forum on 23 February 2017. The event offered two different approaches to explaining population ageing and intergenerational solidarity in Germany and Japan, two of the fastest ageing societies in the world.

Naohiro Ogawa, professor at the University of Tokyo and one of Japan’s leading population economists, argued in his talk that the elderly in Japan today are functioning as a safety asset for the precarious members of younger generations.

Ogawa showed this by means of the National Transfer Accounts macro database, analysing resource flows between generations. Notably, due to the cost implications for health expenditure and pension, however, Ogawa especially urged Japan’s government to drastically increase the retirement age. Furthermore, he warned not to rely on the elderly too much since household finances as well as the family as a base for support appear to be weakening.

Gerhard Naegele, professor of gerontology at the TU Dortmund University, saw less signs of intergenerational support being in retreat. Conceptually, Naegele distinguished the “generational contract” between the broader one of organization through the public sector on a societal level, and the smaller one carried out inside the family. Citing micro-level data from Germany, Naegele found that despite demographic pressure both on the labour market and the welfare state, intergenerational solidarity does not seem at risk. Naegele even argued that the decrease in co-residence of different generations need not be a sign of weakening familial support. On the other hand, Naegele agreed with Ogawa that, in general, retirement ages require an increase in order to stabilize a given generational contract in an ageing society.

Following the two presentations, most questions from the audience related to the statistics presented as well as possible policy measures.

► Felix Lill

is a PhD student at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin and currently a DIJ scholarship fellow.

In his research he investigates possible determinants for conflicts between old and young people in an ageing society.

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A forum for Japanese career women

What does it mean to be a “Japanese career woman”? This was the question guiding the two presentations of the DIJ Forum on 22 March 2017. The event featured a presentation of the interview-based research results of Prof. Markus Pudelko, followed by comments from women’s leadership advocate Noelle Takahashi.

Markus Pudelko, professor of international business at the University of Tübingen and an expert on cross-cultural management, argued in his talk that career-oriented women in Japan are often confronted with a variety of obstacles and even paradoxes. While Japan has shown its readiness to innovate in various societal spheres, the country has to date remained rather traditional when it comes to gender roles. Though women in Japan perform well in university education, female representation in

management positions is low on an international level.

Drawing on his interview research, Prof. Pudelko stated that while climbing the career ladder, many Japanese women experience a lack of support from their partners at home and also a lack of trust from within the company. As a result, many women opt for a “career light” consisting of parental leave upon pregnancy, typically marking a crucial break in the career path. Prof. Pudelko concluded that considering the recent attempts by the Japanese government to foster female representation at the management level, support for career-oriented women in Japan is still scarce.

Following on this, Noelle Takahashi controversially argued that in order to support women on their way to the top, they should not be treated in the same way as men, but instead



► Noelle Takahashi (left) and Markus Pudelko (right).

Public debt – why does Germany consolidate?

On 20 February 2017, the DIJ Tokyo, in cooperation with the Japanese–German Business Association (DJW), organized a talk on “Public debt – why does Germany consolidate?” The focus of attention was on the diverging priorities that the German and Japanese governments give to balanced public budgets.

Initially, Franz Waldenberger outlined the case of Japan, which holds the highest net foreign asset position as well as the highest government debt-to-GDP ratio worldwide. One reason for this situation could be the political economy of public spending: political reforms at the end of the 1990s enabled the merging of political interests and fiscal policy. Another reason could be secular stagnation: public spending absorbed the savings glut of the private sector, thereby stabilizing aggregate demand. Importantly, high public spending in Japan appeared to have greatly relied on the expansionary monetary policy of the past years. However, such favourable lending conditions might not be of indeterminate duration and domestic investors might eventually withdraw their trust.

In contrast to Japan, Germany is consolidating its national budget. Bernhardt Schulte-Drüggelte, MdB, member of the Budget Committee of the German Federal Diet (Bundestag), outlined reasons for fiscal consolidation in Germany. Firstly, he pointed out that the policy was in accordance with the Maastricht Treaty from 1992, which determines public debt ceilings for the member countries of the euro zone. Secondly, while the German government exercised fiscal consolidation as a contribution to intergenerational fairness, the policy also reflected the general public's aversion towards

government debt. Lastly, the policy was part of an effort to increase the resilience of the German economy to possible future crises. Mr. Schulte-Drüggelte also alluded to three aims of fiscal consolidation: (1) the reduction of new indebtedness, (2) the lowering of total debt and (3) the gradual decrease of the public expenditure quota.

In order to reach these policy targets, the government committed to budgetary discipline at the federal and state levels. This commitment included the increase of tax revenues, the introduction of a debt ceiling for each federal state, the gradual taxation of pension benefits, planned efficiency gains regarding tax administration, the use of Bundesbank revenues, efforts to privatize and reform public spending, as well as labour market reforms. Nevertheless, Germany also benefitted from expansionary monetary policy. Accordingly, 25% of the fiscal consolidation could be attributed to the low interest rate. Fiscal consolidation had never been austerity policy, but a policy of stability and prevention as expenditures for social policies and investments in education, as well as internal and external security, has continued to rise.

Finally, the talk by Mr. Schulte-Drüggelte was followed by a lively, open discussion involving the presenters and members of the audience. In response to questions regarding possibilities of fiscal consolidation for the Japanese government, Mr. Schulte-Drüggelte suggested that fiscal policy was mainly affected by concerns and requests of the constituency. Ultimately, politicians would have to answer to their electorate. Unpopular policies would not go unpunished, but could result in loss of political power.



► Franz Waldenberger (left) and MdB Bernhardt Schulte-Drüggelte (right).

A forum for Japanese career women (continued)

differently. Since women tend to be shier and take criticism more to heart than men, mentors and superiors should focus on pointing out female professionals' strong points rather than their weaknesses. Takahashi also

noted how important mentors can be in supporting career paths, especially those of women. Intense discussions followed between the two presenters and the audience. *F.L.*

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**Steffen Heinrich and
Gabriele Vogt (eds.)**



Japan in der Ära Abe. Eine politikwissenschaftliche Analyse

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Students with insufficient Japanese language skills

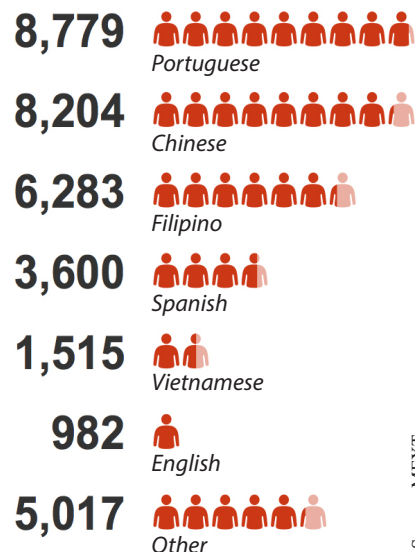
A recent survey by the Ministry of Education shows a clear increase in public schools of non-Japanese students who lack sufficient Japanese language skills.

As of May 2016, the number of students in need of tutoring reached a new all-time high of 34,335. Native Portuguese speakers are on top of the list with 8,779. Chinese are in second place with 8,204 children. The high proportion of Portuguese-speaking children can likely be explained by the eased conditions for Brazilians acquiring work visas during the labour shortage in the 1990s. Moreover, Aichi Prefecture, where many of the Brazilian immigrants worked at the time, has the highest number of children with insufficient Japanese skills today.

Public schools in Japan require at least basic Japanese skills in order to accept a student, so it is becoming an increasingly problematic situation for many non-Japanese families since there is currently no system for training teachers to teach non-Japanese native elementary school children. *S.E.*

Staff news

Dr. Hanno Jentzsch has been a senior research fellow at the DIJ since October 2016. He holds an MA in Politics of East Asia from the Ruhr-University Bochum. He was a PhD fellow in the DFG Research Training Group "Risk and East Asia", University of Duisburg-Essen. His doctoral thesis analysed the process of institutional change in the Japanese agricultural support and protection regime. He now works on the political economy of Japan's rural peripheries as part of the DIJ research project "The Future of Local Communities in Japan". *S.E.*



Source: MEXT.

Award

Florian Coulmas was awarded with the Meyer-Struckmann prize.

In November 2016, Prof. Dr. Florian Coulmas received the Meyer-Struckmann award for humanities research and social sciences at the Heinrich-Heine University in Düsseldorf.

During his time as director of the DIJ (2004–2014), challenges of the demographic change in Japan were Prof. Dr. Coulmas' main research topic. With his insights, he made valuable contributions to research on Japan on an international scale and released a great number of academic and popular books over the years. Coulmas is a senior professor of Japanese Society and Sociolinguistics at the University of Duisburg-Essen.

Every year, jury members from the Faculty of Humanities at the Heinrich-Heine University Düsseldorf and from the Meyer-Struckmann Foundation award the prize. It is endowed with 20,000 euro. *S.E.*

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