



Big Data

Big Data and the Future of Knowledge Production

Everybody is talking about data as the strategic resource of the digital age. Many consider data to be the new oil: the raw material an economy cannot do without. The large platform companies – GAF A in the USA and BATX in China¹ – own the “oil wells”. The stream of data is created by their core business and they can afford to hire the best programmers to generate knowledge and thus more profit, power and influence. The implications for our economic, political and societal systems can hardly be imagined.

The fundamental questions raised by big data and artificial intelligence do not only concern the regulation of data usage. At the core, it is about the future of knowledge production. Where and how will the knowledge, which is relevant for the development of our society, be produced in the future? In this context, the future role of the humanities and social sciences (HSS) as producers of knowledge is also being questioned. To what extent can HSS contribute to a better understanding and governance of the digital transformation? To what extent can HSS benefit from big data and algorithms? How important will HSS theories be in the future for interpreting social relations and social change? These questions were discussed during a two-day workshop at the DIJ in September 2019 jointly organized with the Nippon Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) and the German Research and Innovation Forum (DWIH) Tokyo.²

The use of big data and artificial intelligence in HSS requires close cooperation with programmers, which is not always an easy task due to different conceptual frameworks and research interests. The risk that HSS will become dominated by *data scientists* appears to be low. Concepts, models and theories of HSS will need to be adjusted, but they will remain relevant. A new “vertical” division of labor between HSS scholars that work theoretically and conceptually and experts that specialize on gathering and processing data could be a possible, more promising future scenario.



The current expansion of publicly accessible research data infrastructures (RDI) points in this direction. With the National Institute of Informatics, Japan has a central institution that serves as a hub for nationwide collected research data. In Germany, the support of national RDI, which recently gained momentum, seems to rather take the form of a network of decentralized data archives.

In the end, “vertical specialization” could solve the dilemma of the increasing horizontal division of labor across and within HSS disciplines as pointed out by Friedrich A. Hayek. Like other productive activities, research in HSS underlies tendencies of differentiation and specialization. However, this hardly does justice to the complexity of socio-economic interdependencies and the dynamics of economic and societal change. A vertical division of labor would allow for broader, trans-disciplinary research. — H.K. & F.W.

¹ GAF A stands for Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon. BATX stands for Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent and Xiaomi.
² <https://dij.tokyo/digital-transformation-workshop>. The workshop was followed by a conference on citizen science in the HSS: <https://dij.tokyo/citizen-science-conference>.



Participants at the international conference *Studying Japan in July 2019* at Freie Universität Berlin

Studying Japan Methods in times of transnationalization and technological innovation

In July 2019, an interdisciplinary group of Japan scholars gathered at the international conference *Studying Japan: The impact of transnationalization and technological innovation on methods, fieldwork and research ethics* at the Freie Universität Berlin in order to discuss how to make methods in Japanese studies more accessible and transparent. Their findings? When doing research, be reliable, flexible, and pragmatic!

Cornelia Reiher (FU Berlin) and Nora Kottmann (DIJ) had organized two exciting days filled with five panels that encompassed the whole research process from finding a research topic to presenting the results. The 27 speakers from Europe, Australia, the USA, Japan, and Singapore comprised academics from graduate students to well-established experts who discussed methodological opportunities and challenges in social science research on Japan against the backdrop of transnational entanglements, new technological developments, and new ethical challenges. Here, special focus was put on key issues like positionality, reflexivity, res-

possibility, language, and ethics: How to conduct research in a transparent and ethical manner in order to produce reliable and comparable research results.

In the diverse panel discussions, several key issues were emphasized repeatedly, revealing their great importance for the field, such as the need for flexibility to deal with unexpected changes of plans during the research process. Also, the mutual dependence between researchers and their interview partners came up in multiple discussions, highlighting how related vulnerabilities are a crucial point to consider. Lastly, especially in research on Japan, giving back to interview partners who are unable to read the publication, as well as language barriers in general are noteworthy challenges.

Surprisingly, the importance of being open about one's own struggles in order to become and stay relatable for the reader was stressed by established scholars on multiple occasions. Another topic was the impact of new technologies on researchers' lives: How, for example, do you deal with "the field site coming to your home"?

The insights of the international conference will be worked into the methods handbook *Studying Japan* which Nora Kottmann and Cornelia Reiher are currently editing. Stay tuned! — I.S. & M.U.

ICAS Conference in Leiden (No) Sex in the City?

Mainstream media claims a growing disinterest in sexuality in contemporary Japan. A panel at the ICAS conference in Leiden in July 2019 questioned that. Research concludes: There is no need to panic!

In a new cooperative project between Meiji University and the DIJ, sociologists Maki Hirayama, Barbara Holthus, Nora Kottmann, and Alice Pacher work on issues of sexuality and social change in Japan. They employ a variety of empirical data: content analysis of discourses in women's magazines, qualitative interviews on sexual spaces and "sexless marriages", and secondary analysis of interviews and quantitative survey data.

Western mainstream media tend to exoticize Japan, often mixing stories of sexlessness with "perverted" sexuality. On the other hand, Japanese media reporting is situated in the broader discourse on demographic change and fertility decline, igniting a national panic.

Overall, sexuality in media discourse remains extraordinarily limited and trapped between an assumed sex/non-sex dichotomy. Yet the project findings point to significant variations in definitions, meaning of, stories on, and emotions about sexuality. There are some, but not drastic changes regarding sexual relationships. The team argues: Japan, with its cultural specifics, fits into a general, global trend. — B.H. & N.K.



Alice Pacher, Nora Kottmann, Barbara Holthus and Maki Hirayama at the ICAS conference in Leiden

New Cultural Studies Project

Theater and Society in the Japanese Regions

A new cultural studies project at the DIJ analyzes how pressing issues of Japanese society are represented and negotiated in regional theatre productions.

Socially and politically engaged art is not a new phenomenon in Japan. Especially in the aftermath of the Fukushima triple disaster, many artists claimed that the catastrophe has given renewed purpose to their work. The Japanese regions as sites for innovative cultural production are gaining attention. The pronounced focus on the capital's cultural scene is about to change.

In the project "Theater and Society in the Japanese Regions" Barbara Geilhorn analyzes how pressing issues of Japanese society are represented and negotiated in regional theatre productions. Her research is based on recent concepts of theater and performance as a space for social debate. What topics and issues are addressed and how are they realized? What can the arts do to help coping with social issues? And what about their role for the revitalization of regional areas?

In 2014 Oriza Hirata founded the Kinosaki International Arts Center. The lea-

ding figure in the Japanese culture world chose this remote hot spring town to realize his visions for theater and to develop the place into a Mecca for theater enthusiasts. His troupe Seinendan announced that it would relocate from Tokyo to Kinosaki in 2020. Hirata wants to cooperate with local people, create works addressing central issues of contemporary Japan, and trigger public debate. The Kinosaki International Arts Center illustrates the potentials of the arts to enhance the attractiveness of peripheral areas.

In Okayama Prefecture, Naoki Sugawara employs methods of improvisational theater to facilitate communication between caregivers and people living with dementia. Recent concepts of elderly care stress the importance of this relationship. The actor and trained caregiver travels nationwide to give workshops. The growing number of media reports reflects the considerable public interest in his work.

On July 27, a one-day workshop at the DIJ discussed recent themes and issues in contemporary Japanese theater and dance. DIJ researcher Barbara Geilhorn invited international scholars to reconsider regional theater, theater and community, the role of the avantgarde and contemporary challenges. The event was the first to focus on today's vibrant theater scene. To provide a platform to further develop this underexplored field of research was a central objective of the workshop.

Barbara Geilhorn

← is a Senior Research Fellow at the DIJ, researching Japanese Cultural Studies and Theater and Performance Studies.
✉ geilhorn@dijtokyo.org

Autism and ADHD

On the Other Side of Diagnosis

I have held interviews with 25 persons on the autism spectrum and visited several companies to study their disability work programs for my PhD research.

For intellectually disabled persons, either one of the big companies hires you straight from school into their subsidiary, or you end up in a disability workshop. The tasks are always similar: data input, cleaning, gardening, and the like. Companies and workshops receive heavy public subsidies and have little interest in making a profit with their disability work programs; it is all part of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

For people on the autism spectrum without intellectual disability, this kind of work does not challenge them enough. If they can, many choose to work without disclosing their autism or ADHD, often until burnout. Recovery periods of one or two years speckle the CV of most of my interviewees – but they still prefer overworking themselves to the alternative of being forced into disability work.

"The moment they find out I am disabled, my income is going to drop to the bottom and I can forget my career", I hear in almost every interview.

People find relief by meeting peers in the vibrant self-help scene in Tokyo. Those third spaces beyond work and private life provide information exchange and encouragement for people who feel isolated from mainstream society.

Charlotte Schäfer

← is a PhD Student at the DIJ. Her research is focused on Autism in Japanese Employment.
✉ schaefer@dijtokyo.org

Publications

German Institute for Japanese Studies



Contemporary Japan 31(2)

Taylor & Francis, 2019
ISSN: 1869-2729

Kamesaka, Akiko; Waldenberger, Franz (eds.)



Governance, Risk and
Financial Impact of Mega
Disasters

Springer, 2019
ISBN: 978-981-13-9005-0

Info

The DIJ Newsletter is published both in German and in English and is also available for download as a full-text version from our website.

For a printed copy, please contact:
✉ dinkel@dijtokyo.org

Visit us online:

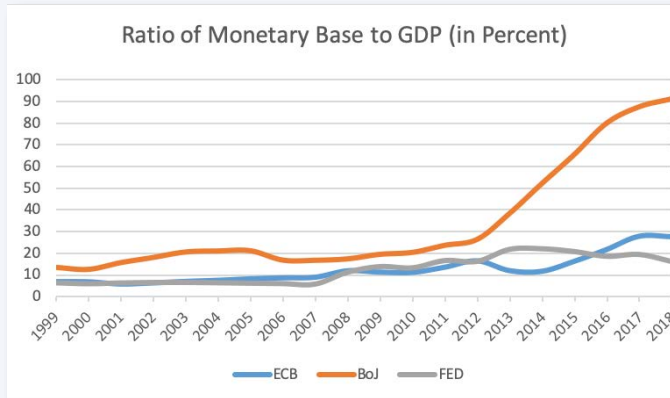


www.dijtokyo.org

[@dij_tokyo](https://twitter.com/dij_tokyo)

Statistic

Global Liquidity Glut – The Development of the Monetary Base in Europe, Japan and the US



The money creation by the Bank of Japan (BoJ) triples and quadruples the efforts of the European Central Bank (ECB) and the US Federal Reserve (FED). Most of the money was used to buy Japanese Government Bonds held by commercial banks. However, due to lack of credit demand, Japanese banks were not able to pass the money on to the private sector. Instead, they put it into their deposit accounts at the BoJ. — F.W., M.H., R.L.

Catchword - はちまるごまる問題

The 8-0-5-0-problem

Since the turn of the century Japan is facing the problem of *hikikomori* – young people who have withdrawn from society. Causes were investigated, countermeasures devised. In addition, the situation has been regularly documented in surveys conducted by the cabinet office. In 2018 the age limit for respondents was raised for the first time from 39 to 64 years. It shows: The number of *hikikomori* is not only increasing, *hikikomori* and their parents are ageing and still isolated! *Hikikomori* around 50, who live together with their parents around 80, are now being called “8-0-5-0-problem”. — N.K.

Staff News



Steffen Heinrich was working as Senior Research Fellow at the DIJ from September 2014 until August 2019. As a political scientist, his research was focused on the politics of minimum wages, the political implications of employment diversification, and the role of regulation in social policy in comparative perspective. Since September 2019 Steffen Heinrich is working at the FU Berlin.

✉ heinrich.s@fu-berlin.de



Sven Eichelberg was working as librarian from December 2015 until November 2019 at the DIJ. In addition to his responsibilities at the library he was also part of the IT department and in charge of the relaunch and maintenance of the institute's website as well as for the DIJ's social media channels.

✉ eichelberg@dijtokyo.org

Picture Credits: Page 1 {Big Data Graphic} German Institute for Japanese Studies. Page 2 {Participants of the conference *Studying Japan*} German Institute for Japanese Studies, {ICAS Conference in Leiden} Barbara Holthus. Seite 4 {Steffen Heinrich} Steffen Heinrich {Sven Eichelberg} Sven Eichelberg.

Author Key: B.H. - Barbara Holthus; F.W. - Franz Waldenberger; H.K. - Harald Kümmerle; I.S. - Isabell Schreiber; M.U. - Marie Ulrich; M.H. - Markus Heckel; N.K. - Nora Kottmann; R.L. - Raphael Lambertz

Publisher: Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien (DIJ).
Person responsible according to the German Press Law: Franz Waldenberger.
Editor: Sven Eichelberg (CvD).
Address: DIJ Tokyo, Jochi Kioizaka Bldg. 2F, 7-1 Kioicho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0094, Japan
Tel.: +81 (0)3 3222-5077 – Fax: +81 (0)3 3222-5420