German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ Tokyo)

DIJ Study Group

November 26, 2026, 6.00 pm (JST) / 10.00 am (CET)

Mapping Japan's Youth Climate Movement: First Insights from a Participatory Study

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Youth climate activism is globally significant but varies across cultures. European studies (Wahlström et al., 2019; Huttunen, 2021) highlight public protest and digital mobilization, whereas Japan shows subtler engagement (Cassegard, 2023; Higuchi, 2021), possibly rooted in cultural attitudes toward hierarchy, conformity, and harmony that encourage "quiet activism".
In our project "Mapping Japan's Youth Climate Movement: Actors, Roles, and Strategies" (05/2026 – 04/2027), we want to identify the main youth climate movements and youth-led organizations in Japan, examining their goals, organization, mobilization and communication strategies, and relationships within the wider movement. Beyond official self-descriptions, we are interested in everyday realities such as leadership, informal structures, and decision-making, and in how these groups try to influence public debate and climate policy.
I work together with Japanese scholars, youth activists, and NGOs, building on my earlier Citizen Science work with young people. Youth and non-academic partners act as co-researchers: they help shape topics, co-develop interview and focus group guides, conduct and moderate interviews and focus groups, and co-analyze findings. We do research "on eye-level" that empowers participants and gives them ownership of the results.
The project is in the middle of fieldwork (October in Kyoto, November in Tokyo). I will present its concept, first learnings from the field, and preliminary findings from two focus groups with youth-led climate organizations.

Anna Soßdorf is a communication scientist who researches youth participation, climate movements, and climate science communication using participatory and co-creative methods. In 2020/2021, she conducted participatory research with Fridays for Future activists in Düsseldorf, which inspired her current research in Japan. She completed her PhD in Düsseldorf in 2015 on youth participation and the role of the internet. She is co-founder of SCI:MOVE, a consulting agency for participatory research and science communication. She previously researched and taught at the FZI Research Center for Information Technology in Berlin (until 2024) and Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (until 2022).

About:
The DIJ Study Group is a forum for scholars from all disciplines conducting research on contemporary or modern Japan. The event is open to all. This session is organized by Sebastian Polak-Rottmann.
This is a public event. Please be aware that audio-visual recordings may be made, stored, and published during and after the event.

Hybrid Event:
On-site participation: please register via email to polak-rottmann@dijtokyo.org until November 25, 2026.
Online participation: please register via our webpage.

Venue:
Online and DIJ Tokyo: https://www.dijtokyo.org/access/