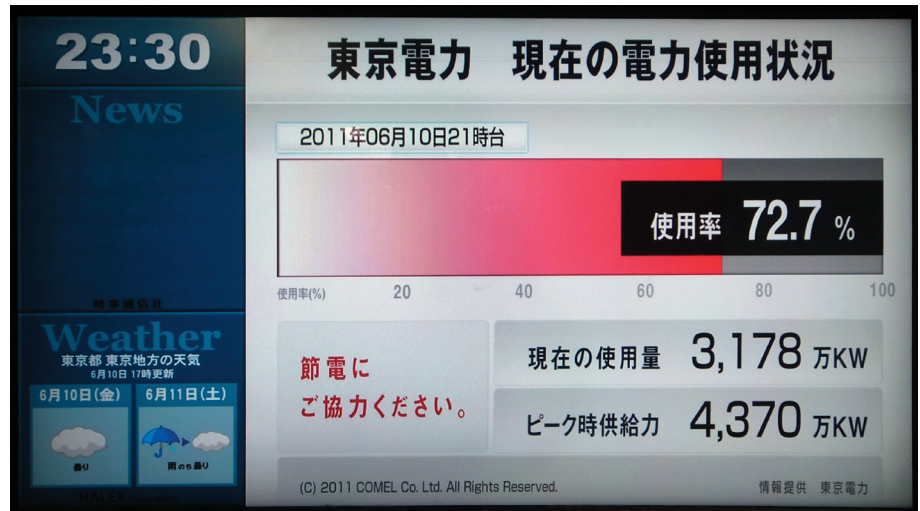


Saving energy

Since the events on March 11 saving energy has become a major topic in Japan. Cities are now slightly darker than before, air conditioning is used less and some companies have introduced summer time. As an evolution of the “cool biz” outfits, which dispensed with jackets and ties, the Ministry of Environment now promotes “super cool biz” outfits consisting of Hawaii shirts, T-shirts and jeans. And the Tokyo Metro keeps reminding people of the shortage in energy supply by communicating the current power consumption on LCD screens, which themselves also happen to use electricity. *M.G./C.W.*



Secondary lessons from March 11

Catastrophes create a huge demand for “experts” among the mass media. This was surely true after March 11, when foreign newspapers, radio and TV stations were looking for people who knew about Japan and could be expected to explain events to the uninformed audiences at home. The results reminded observers of the rules by which the media and their “experts” play the game.

One of the less surprising lessons was that (foreign) journalists tend to simplify complex situations and operate with stereotypes, which in the case of Japan seem to be sometimes farther from reality than in news coverage on other industrialized nations. “In your reply, please mention that these men working in the nuclear power plant were brought up to die for their country” was one instruction that a DIJ research fellow was given by a journalist. He did not comply and his interview was thus cut down to less than 15 seconds.

On the other hand, some Japan experts could not resist answering questions they were not really qualified to answer. Although their expertise was in the field of Japanese society, economics or history, they were either taken by surprise by the interviewer or

they apparently felt confident enough to also pass judgement on the effect that Fukushima’s nuclear disaster was having on the safety of everyday life. While some laypersons among news consumers may have been misled to believe that profound knowledge of Japan also includes expertise on pressure vessels and radioactive fallout, others were reminded that researchers too entertain personal views that may well influence and even interfere with their scientific judgement.

Watching the very different ways Japan experts presented themselves and their knowledge in the German media clearly showed that (1) it is difficult to keep total control of statements when responding to interview requests, (2) it is advisable not to deal with questions one is not qualified to answer, and (3) German media are increasingly interested in telling a story. The narrative is more important than a factual and balanced report of events. Experts on Japan are as unable to change this fact as politicians or economic leaders. This secondary lesson of March 11 should be kept in mind when consuming and contributing to newspapers, radio and TV programmes. *A.K.*

Aftermaths

We have closely followed the horrendous events that have affected Japan in the wake of the March 11 catastrophe, and take this opportunity to express our heartfelt solidarity with the victims. While uncertainty about the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant continues, the multifarious costs of the disaster are yet to be fathomed. Tokyo and the DIJ were spared from wider destruction. But even in our work we have been confronted with unexpected consequences. A polling company advised us that this is not the time for representative surveys, delaying two of our projects for several months. Another project we were planning had to be abandoned altogether. Thus, although the DIJ was closed only for a short period after the earthquake, it isn’t quite business as usual yet. The object of our research, contemporary Japan, has changed, with implications for our overarching research programmes, “Challenges of Demographic Change” and “Happiness in Japan.” On-site study of Japan is what distinguishes our work. However, at times like this, the view from close by poses challenges in its own right. *F.C.*

Communal forms of living – staying active in a rural environment



► Communal living in Nasu, Tochigi Prefecture.

Media coverage of communal forms of living has lately increased noticeably. Within the context of the NHK series “The Japan Syndrome”, which discusses Japan’s economic stagnation against the setting of demographic change, and for which the DIJ was interviewed, communal forms of living have been considered a possible solution to old people’s loneliness as well as a means of boosting the economy.

Nasu, located in the north of Tochigi Prefecture, is known for its undulating countryside, dairy farming and comparatively pleasant temperatures in summer. It is only 2.5 hours away from Tokyo, sparsely populated and the site of numerous holiday homes. Out here, in the midst of green surroundings, Community Network is building a housing estate especially for older people, but also for families with children. In a few years’ time, 73 units will have been completed, arranged in five rows of single and two-storey houses, together with common spaces including a restaurant, care facilities, a library and a music room. The first 17 residents – all couples and singles in their seventies – moved in already in autumn 2010.

Staying active and self-determined

As early as two years before moving in, potential residents took part in monthly workshops to get to know their future neighbours and to exchange views concerning their preferences and the design of the houses and apartments. Unlike conventional rented flats, especially in old people’s homes or houses for senior citizens provided by private housing companies, the future residents’ involvement in the planning procedure of the housing concept (in Japanese: *sanka-gata jutaku*) is considered crucial. In Nasu, the residents grow vegetables together and produce soap with herbal ingredients, not only for the residents’ use but also for sale. The housing estate, however, is not aimed at forming a self-sufficient enclave. Instead, it is guided by the idea of integration into the surroundings, be it in the form of cooperation

with farmers or schools in the vicinity, or through contact with people living in the neighbourhood – mostly older inhabitants who are invited for talks and who may share similar concerns about their own future in a holiday home area that does not provide adequate infrastructure.

Strong signs of solidarity

The current residents of the housing estate in Nasu come predominantly from Tokyo. They did not trust the state to take care of them in old age. Mostly in good health and in possession of financial means, they feel it is especially important for them to arrange the final chapter of their lives themselves. All residents say that their expectations have been exceeded and that they feel satisfied with their living conditions. In the aftermath of the March 11 earthquake, a strong solidarity could be observed among the residents. Although the main seismic shocks did not cause any major damage, the residents agreed on a temporary evacuation because of ongoing aftershocks: The residents all moved together to a similar facility in Kobe, but have since all returned to Nasu.

A potential solution to the “Japan syndrome”?

Could this form of living help improve Japan’s economic situation? This was the impression that NHK gave in its programme. Communal forms of living hardly lead to an increase in consumption. Once the housing estate is completed, a number of jobs for people living close-by will materialize because, according to the concept of Community Network, the restaurant – which is open not only to residents but also to the public – will be run by a workers’ collective. Meanwhile, some residents speak of a “pleasant reduction” of their lives to the essential: how they take walks in the open countryside, establish contacts with people living in the area and enjoy an ice cream now and then at the nearby dairy farm.

For additional information on communal living in Nasu, visit: <http://www.yui-nasu.net/>

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Recent research on Yumeji

Works of art and ephemera from Japan's "Roaring Twenties" have become more and more popular within the art trade recently and are increasingly sought after for museum and private collections. The German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) is supporting new research on the artist Takehisa Yumeji (1884–1934), an outstanding personality of Taishō romanticism.

Japan's Taishō period (1912–1926) featured, among other things, relative political freedom, rapid modernization and a romanticized popular culture. This atmosphere was present not only in the actual Taishō era, but was also vivid through to the 1930s with the advent of extravagant modern styles – the paradigmatic Modern Girl (*modan gāru*), for example – and a flourishing coffeehouse culture. The inherent romantic flair has also been appropriated by today's retro trends. Cafes such as the Taishō Roman Pavillon and the so-called Yumeji Cafe in Kyoto feature décor in the style of the Taishō period.

Increasing interest in early 20th century art

In the context of this revival, fine art of the period is becoming increasingly popular in Japan and beyond. Established in 2009, the private Nihon no hanga collection in Amsterdam, for example, focuses on woodblock prints of the early 20th century. Art, design and popular culture of the same period are also on the rise within the field of research on Japanese art. However, some of the artists of the day are still little known outside Japan. This applies particularly to artists engaged in design and in the then-booming field of print media, neither of which were considered "fine art" as such. Thus these artists were excluded from participation in the contemporary art world characterized by its artistic salons and an emerging academia modelled after "Western" examples. Representative of these artists is the painter, designer and litterateur Takehisa Yumeji, or Yumeji for short. Regarding his multi-genre oeuvre, Yumeji is best known for his depictions of beautiful women

(*bijin-ga*), and is thus often called the "Taishō (period) Utamaro", a reference to the Edo period woodblock print artist Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806).

Beyond depictions of woman and popular design

While Yumeji's paintings, designs and illustrations are widely appreciated in Japan, his engagement in political activities is still relatively unknown. In his early creative period, Yumeji was not only active in socialist circles, in his diaries and texts he also proved to be a sharp observer of contemporary events. Alongside popular publications, the Yumeji style (*Yumeji shiki*) was the focus of a recent doctoral thesis at the University of Kanazawa, while a forthcoming dissertation project at Harvard University testifies to the increasing overseas research interest in Yumeji. A detailed examination of the "Yumeji phenomenon" for the international recipient, however, is yet to be conducted.

Yumeji and modernism

In collaboration with several museums in Japan focusing on Yumeji, the Kanazawa Yumeji Yuwaku-kan in particular and the Amsterdam-based Nihon no hanga collection of Yumeji's works, Ph.D. research now being conducted by Sabine Schenk concentrates on locating Yumeji within modernism in Japan, and defining his concept of art. In general, Yumeji's work reflects the influence of several styles significant for diverse international art movements. While some of his works quote the organic use of forms characteristic of Art Nouveau, others show the geometrical abstraction that is typical of Russian futurism. Initial research results offer insights into the reciprocal relationships of a cosmopolitan modernism that are incorporated within Yumeji's work – an exceptional oeuvre that is now gaining proper recognition far beyond Japan.



► Standing block in Shibuya (today a shopping and nightlife district), marking one of Yumeji's domiciles.



► Yumeji's woodblock print *Hanabi* (Fireworks), featured on the cover of the August 1924 issue of *Fujin Gurafu / The Ladies' Graphic* magazine, published by Kokusai Jōhōsha in Tokyo between 1924 and 1928.

◀ **Sabine Schenk, M.A.** is a Ph.D. scholarship student at the DIJ. schenk@dijtokyo.org

Forthcoming events

DIJ Roundtable:

Aftermath: Religion in the Wake of the 1995 Aum Affair

Participants: Ian Reader, Erica Baffelli and Benjamin Dorman.
Chair: Axel Klein. (DIJ Tokyo, VIII/31/2011, 18:00–20:00).

DIJ Forum:

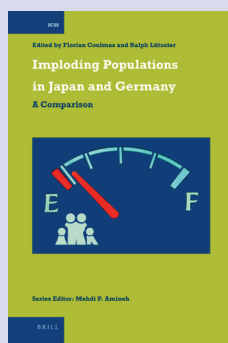
Sustainability Issues in the Super-Aged Society

Speaker: Hiroshi Komiyama, chairman of the Mitsubishi Research Institute (a leading think-tank in Japan) and former president of the University of Tokyo. (DIJ Tokyo, IX/29/2011, 18:30–20:00).

Recent publications

Florian Coulmas and Ralph Lützel (eds.):

Imploding Populations in Japan and Germany. A Comparison.
Leiden: Brill 2011, xxiv, 548 pp.
(94 figures & 56 tables).



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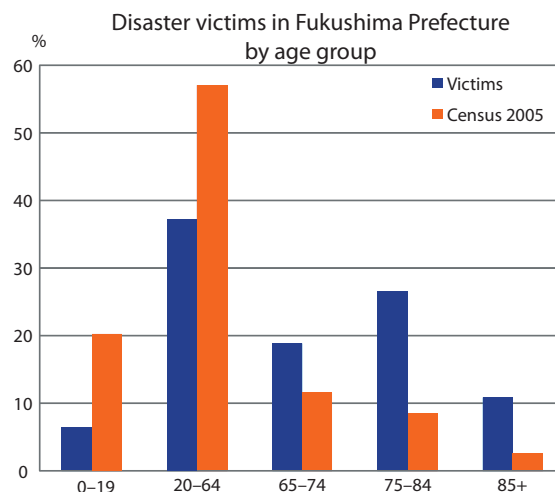
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Disaster victims mostly older people

When natural disaster strikes, the elderly are at greatest risk. The Kobe earthquake of 1995 provided much evidence for this, evidence that was corroborated by the Great East Japan Earthquake. While the median age in the coastal regions of Tōhoku is slightly above the national equivalent, the elderly are overrepresented among the victims by a much higher margin. The fact that they tend to live in old houses is likely to exacerbate their increased exposure to the risks associated with earthquakes and tsunamis.

C.W./M.G.



Source: Own calculations based on Keisatsu-chō Kinkyū Saigai Keibi Honbu (2 June 2011).

Read for you

NAKAGAWA Yoshimi (2010): *Chotto mae no Nihon no kurashi* [The simple life: Drawing on Japan's past to create a sustainable future]. Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 206 pages, 740 yen (ISBN978-4-12-150369-5).

Penned by the owner of three organic Japanese-style inns in Tokyo, Kyoto and Ayabe, the author describes how, with the introduction of convenience goods in post-war Japan, everyday life changed – not necessarily for the better, as the author thought-provokingly suggests. Nakagawa argues that forgotten values such as austerity, self-sufficiency, sense of community and consideration for the environment need to be re-emphasized to achieve a better quality of life. She makes a range of suggestions on how to integrate elements of bygone living while adapting them to contemporary circumstances. Although the book was published in November 2010, it appears to resonate with more people after the Great East Japan Earthquake. *S.K.*

Catchword

災害弱者 (*saigai jakusha*)

Although not entirely new, this term, which refers to those disadvantaged in the event and aftermath of a disaster, has become significantly more widespread since March 11. *Sagai jakusha* are those who are unable to sense or appropriately react to the immediate danger posed by natural disasters such as earthquakes or tsunamis. This group includes primarily the elderly and young children, as well as the mentally and/or physically impaired.

To better protect this group, the government has been compiling lists of people and their whereabouts so that their immediate needs may be met more quickly. By March 2010, such lists existed in two-thirds of local municipalities. How effective they were in the case at hand is yet to be determined. *C.W./M.G.*

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Publisher: Deutsches Institut für Japanstudien Tokyo (DIJ).

Person responsible according to the German Press Law: Florian Coulmas.

Editors: Maren Godzik (editor in chief), Chris Winkler.

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