

Annette Schad-Seifert and Shingo Shimada (Eds.)

**Demographic Change in
Japan and the EU:
Comparative Perspectives**

**Selected Papers from the
VSJF Annual Conference 2008**

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ANNETTE SCHAD-SEIFERT AND SHINGO SHIMADA

Introduction

In 2008 the annual conference of the German Association for Social Science Research on Japan (Vereinigung für sozialwissenschaftliche Japanforschung e.V. (VSJF)) addressed the issue of demographic change in Japan in comparison to the social developments of ageing in Germany and other member states of the European Union. The conference, which was organized by Annette Schad-Seifert and Shingo Shimada (both at Heinrich Heine University of Duesseldorf), was held in Kaiserswerth, an old part of the city of Duesseldorf. Thirteen speakers from Germany, England, Japan and the Netherlands presented their papers in four sessions on the topics “Demographic Trends and Social Analysis”, “Family and Welfare Policies”, “Ageing Society and the Organization of Households” and “Demographic Change and the Economy”. More than 120 participants from different countries attended the conference.

Not all papers presented at the conference are included in this volume. Some authors decided to publish their papers in different publications or have had their papers already published by the time they presented them at the conference. As far as possible we refer in this publication to the topic that was presented at the conference.

The first session “Demographic Trends and Social Analysis – Observations from Japan and the EU” was opened by Uta Meier-Gräwe (University of Giessen, Sociology and Household Economics). She dealt with the question of how to cope with the low fertility in Germany and focused on issues of family policy. She maintained that although the concept of having a family and children is valued very much, young families tend to stay childless and the share of families with more than two children in Germany remains very low. According to Meier-Gräwe this gives evidence to the fact that family and professional career are still difficult to combine and that attitudes and expectations on family and partnership diverge greatly between young women and men. While young women seem to aspire a gender-equal division of labour within the family, young men still tend to see themselves as the breadwinners. Due to this divergence, families stay childless. In her paper Meier-Gräwe tried to answer the question on how policy measures can positively influence families’ decision to have children. She pointed out that a major factor for taking up familial responsibilities is the possibility for both partners to continue a professional career. Furthermore, the so-called “rush hour of life” – that is the accumulation of familial and occupational tasks and responsibilities in a very short period of an individual’s lifetime – has to be decompressed in order to influence birth rates positively. Meier-Gräwe concluded that family policy should focus on the reorganization of family and work by providing gender-equality in career-interruptions and childcare leave.¹

¹ Please refer to the German-language article by Uta Meier-Gräwe (2009): Was ist Familie? Warum es einer begrifflichen Neujustierung bedarf [What is family? Why do we need a new paradigm?].

As the second speaker in the session Sawako Shirahase (University of Tokyo, Sociology) presented on socioeconomic inequality and changes in the demographic structure. Focusing on ageing and income inequalities in different countries, she showed that the socioeconomic situation of people older than 65 years is strongly connected to the household structure in which they are living. The demographic change did not only bring changes in the population structure, but also in household structures, which have started to show a pluralized structure. Societies where the elderly live in various types of households tend to show a larger extent of income inequality. Therefore the socioeconomic situation of old people differs depending on their type of household. Particularly, one-person households run by elderly women face the most serious problems when it comes to economic well-being. Shirahase points out that Japan is no longer an exceptionally equal society and now shows many social problems such as high poverty among the elderly.²

The first session was concluded by keynote speaker Florian Coulmas, director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo. He presented on the ageing of societies and changes in family structures with regard to happiness and individual possibilities to realize a happy life. According to Coulmas the pursuit of happiness discussed in the public dialogue in Japan is a sign for drastic social changes, which result in demographic change. The increasing share of older people and the decreasing potential for young people to find jobs with stable incomes directly influences personal attitudes and individual expectations on prosperity, meaning of life and sense of happiness.

² Please refer to the Japanese-language publication by Sawako Shirahase (2009): *Nihon no fubyōdō o kangaeru. Shōshi kōrei shakai no kokusai hikaku* [Thinking about inequality in Japan. A comparative study of ageing societies].

After being involved in a long term project on demographic change and Japan's ageing society for the last years, the German Institute for Japanese Studies is currently also conducting a project on the changing attitudes towards happiness in rapidly ageing societies and the media-constructed discourse of how to achieve a happy life.³

In the second session "Family and Welfare Policies in Japan and the EU" Christian Tagsold (University of Duesseldorf, Modern Japanese Studies) held a presentation on long-term care insurances in Germany and Japan. The introduction of the long-term care insurance in Japan has lead to controversial debates in regional areas. On the one hand the system was supported as a step towards more independence in regional policy. On the other hand some of the reforms were rejected. Politicians who aimed at ending the controversy tried to improve their understanding of the new system by collecting more expert knowledge on the German system, which has influenced the design of the long-term care insurance in Japan. Tagsold's paper illustrates how the German insurance system was implemented in Japan and identifies this process as an endeavour of contextual translation.

Axel Klein (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Political Science) focused on the question of political responses to low birth rates in Japan. Since 1990, the problem of the declining birth rate is on Japan's political agenda and so far quite a number of countermeasures have been enacted to bring about an effective turn-around in the birth rate development, but to this day they have continued to decrease. Klein tried to answer the question why – despite of the failure of previous countermeasures – political actors have not enacted different, more effective responses to low birth rates. He came to the conclusion

³ Please refer to http://www.dijtokyo.org/research/happiness_in_japan.

that low fertility has had a low political market value and that other policy fields have easily concealed political responses to low birth rates.⁴

Aya Ezawa (Leiden University, Sociology of Modern Japan) ended the second session with a presentation on public assistance programs and single mothers. Public assistance programs in Japan have been subject to significant restructuring in the recent years. Faced with increasing numbers of families in need, policy makers have introduced major reforms in form of welfare-to-work policies which aim to reduce reliance on public assistance by promoting higher levels of employment, particularly among single mothers. Yet, as studies conducted in conjunction with the implementation of these programs have shown, finding employment is not just a matter of will and effort. The majority of single mothers who are receiving public assistance have few qualifications and resources, making it difficult to find full-time employment with a living wage. In her paper, Ezawa explored the challenges single mothers face in finding employment and becoming ‘independent’ from state assistance as envisioned by policy makers. Based on an examination of the life trajectories of single mothers, who have received public assistance in past and present, as well as surveys and data provided by welfare offices, she examined the potential impact of social origins, formal and informal resources, as well as everyday strategies of single mothers’ life trajectories and ability to move beyond public assistance.⁵

⁴ A German-language article by Axel Klein is forthcoming in the VSJF’s yearbook: *Niedrige Fertilität als politische Herausforderung. Eine neue Perspektive auf den Kampf mit der Überalterung Japans* [Low fertility as a political challenge. A new perspective on the engagement with the ageing Japan].

⁵ Please refer to Aya Ezawa (2006): *How Japanese single mothers work*.

The third session dealt with the “Ageing Society and the Organization of Households”. Maren Godzik (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Social Sciences) opened the session with a paper on alternative forms of living. The demographic change and the pluralisation of living arrangements lead to a breakdown of the three-generation household and to the establishment of the nuclear family. Therefore, the ageing of the Japanese population raises the question of care for the elderly. Apart from numerous innovations in the mainstream welfare and housing policies which have already been introduced, including the implementation of the public long-term care insurance and sheltered housing or assisted living schemes, private initiatives have started to organize alternative forms of housing. Although their number is limited, some became widely known and serve as examples not only for similar projects but also for public and commercial housing projects giving them a greater importance than the number of alternative projects might suggest. Godzik’s paper introduces alternative housing forms in Japan and categorized different types of alternative housing with regard to their concepts and their target groups. On the basis of some examples, which have been explored by Godzik partly by means of qualitative interviews with organizers of collective houses and co-housing forms of living (*gurūpu ribingu*), she discusses the question whether these forms of living can be a solution for a broader segment of Japan’s ageing society.

Richard Ronald (University of Amsterdam, Geography, Planning and International Development Studies) has examined the role of the housing system in the emerging divide between younger and older generations in Japan. While the extreme nature and impact of demographic change in Japan, with increasing longevity, declining birth rates and a fundamental shift in the ratio between the retired and

working populations has been well documented, the role of housing markets and the property sector, although having significant consequences in the structure of life courses, has not been as central to debates. The contention of Ronald's paper is that, in combination with restructuring in employment conditions and the pension and welfare sector in particular, the housing system in Japan is shaping the demographic change and may be considered a driving force in the decline of family formation and birth rates and a major feature in socioeconomic inequality between younger and older cohorts.

The session was concluded by Akiko Oda (University of Surrey, Sociology) who held a presentation on care dynamics among elderly couples in Japan. Due to the changes and pluralisation of living arrangements, elderly people increasingly have to rely on their own means to take care of each other's needs. This has placed an increased strain on elderly women. In particular on those who have to take care of a disabled partner and are traditionally subjugated by power dynamics where the older Japanese male maintains the dominant household head (*daikoku bashira*) status. In order to ease the care burden, the Japanese Government introduced the Long Term Care Insurance (LTCI) scheme in 2000. However, as Oda discusses in her study, the elderly couples have been reluctant to accept this help and are relying on their own means instead. They are also put off invoking external care by a number of complex factors that relate to socio-economic issues, pragmatism, social stigma, class, and gendered norms.

In the fourth session "Demographic Change and the Economy" Florian Kohlbacher (German Institute for Japanese Studies, Business and Economics) presented on the ageing workforce. According to Kohlbacher, Japan is the country most severely affected by the demo-

graphic shift as its population is not only ageing but also shrinking, which results in a decrease of the country's productive labour force. In this regard, the so-called "year 2007 problem", the year when the Japanese baby-boomer generation entered retirement age, holds particularly severe consequences for the labour market, since the loss of expert knowledge and labour shortage will have a far reaching effect on Japan's economy and business sector. Kohlbacher's presentation provided an overview and evaluation of the "year 2007 problem" and the challenge of an ageing workforce and discussed the implications for businesses in Japan.⁶

Atsuhiko Yamada (Keio University, Economy of labour) discussed the effectiveness of new job security measures for the older employees in Japan. His paper examines the amended Law for the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons (LSEOP) that was enforced in 2006. The LSEOP requires enterprises to take one of three job security measures for their employees in line with the upward revision of the pensionable age: a) any increase in the mandatory retirement age that exceeds the current pensionable age; b) the introduction of continuing employment systems; or c) the complete abolition of mandatory retirement systems. Yamada's results suggest that a wage reduction after the mandatory retirement age is a key determinant of continued employment in an enterprise. Because the LSEOP does not regulate wage reductions, the effect of it is limited. However, his results also implied that this would be appropriate to avoid the distortion of labour demand, particularly the increase of young recruits.

⁶ Please refer to Florian Kohlbacher together with Wolfgang H. Güttel, Stefan Konlechner and Beate Haltmeyer (2009): Strategies against competency obsolescence. The case of R&D-intensive organizations.

Cosima Wagner's paper (University of Frankfurt, Japanese Studies) discusses the question whether the use of "social robots" could be a means to overcome the hardships of the ageing society, especially the decreasing number of Japan's workforce population. A field of special interest is the "elderly care"-sector where an increasing number of elderly people will need support in accomplishing their daily tasks and to get care in the near future. As numerous studies suggest, very soon the "robotic nurse" or robot technology based care will not only be a solution for the shortage of caregivers but will also become an important business in the future silver market. Based on her dissertation project on Japan's robot culture (to be published soon) Wagner's paper delineates the expectations and measures regarding the use of robot technology in the elderly care sector in Japan.

Cornelia Storz (University of Frankfurt, Business and Economic) presented on the creation of markets using the example of Japan's silver market. Storz concentrated on conditions under which markets are created. She pointed out that processes of market creation are complex and go beyond the simple assumption that markets simply "emerge".⁷

The final discussion brought about that the demographic change of societies is not only a problem in regards to the changing population structure. Rather the growing differentiation and diversification of households, living arrangements and ways of employment are considered to pose a challenge to the future sustainability of societies. Today's industrialized societies are facing a growing polarization of incomes, living conditions and career options that divide people not

⁷ Please refer to Storz, Cornelia and Werner Pascha (2008): How are markets created? The case of Japan's silver market.

only economically. In his book “Race for the Exits” the political scientist Leonard Schoppa has differentiated between “voice” and “exit” as options for individuals, who are dissatisfied with their life options, either to raise their voice (“voice”) or to leave the society (“exit”). The increasing share of individuals who decide for the second option (“exit”) – either by leaving the country or by staying away from family, employment and wealth – is considered problematic. Central to all studies on demographic change is the question of how societies can be reconstructed and be made adaptive to these changes in order to survive as solidarity communities.

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FLORIAN COULMAS

The Bitter Fruits of Success

Abstract

Japan's economic and social development since the end of the Pacific War is a story of growth and success. Life improved continuously for the vast majority of all Japanese. Yet, the level of life satisfaction in Japan, measured along the scales of the World Database of Happiness, is low by international comparison. The Japanese are rich, healthy and long-lived, but not as happy as indicators of material wellbeing would predict. While their life-expectancy rose, their readiness to reproduce declined. Over the past half century Japan's total fertility rate (TFR) fell to less than one third of what it was in mid twentieth century. What do these two trends imply about happiness? What does Japan's experience of demographic change teach us about the effects of birth-rate and family size on happiness? Can TFR be used for measuring the "livability of nations"?

Keywords: happiness, low fertility, social change

Introduction

Conventional wisdom says that children are a source of happiness. Economic wisdom says that children are both a cost factor and a basis of social security. These interpretations are not necessarily mutually

exclusive. This paper pursues the question of how they can be combined to explain Japan's low fertility rate. It argues that the TFR decline is a response to and indication of a number of inconsistencies that the ageing society itself has produced. Using data of the Asia-Barometer Survey and Cabinet Office surveys on life-style preferences, it examines the happiness-promoting effects of the family in general and children in particular. It also discusses the question of the general validity of these parameters across cultures. If there are culture-specific routes to happiness, how much do children contribute to happiness in Japan and other industrialized countries?

Success

Japan is a happy country. What better measure to support this claim is there than Japan's population, which in the course of the past 160 years quadrupled from about 33 million in 1850 to 127 million in 2008. Population growth is a clear sign of achievement. As Livi Bacci put it: "Per tutta la storia dell'umanità, popolazione è stato sinonimo di prosperità, stabilità e sicurezza."¹ Surely, prosperity, stability and security are good candidates for composite factors that make for a good life in a happy country. Undeniable progress has been made in various fields. Most impressive, perhaps, is the spectacular reduction in infant mortality in the twentieth century. The Japanese no longer die during the first precarious months after birth. Already low at the time, the infant mortality rate dropped from 60 per 1,000 live births at the end of the Pacific War to 0.32 in 2000. Only Sweden and Singa-

¹ Livi Bacci, Massimo (1998): *Storia minima della popolazione del mondo* [A concise history of world population], 9.

pore have a similarly low rate.² Today, the Japanese don't start dying until they are well into their sixties.

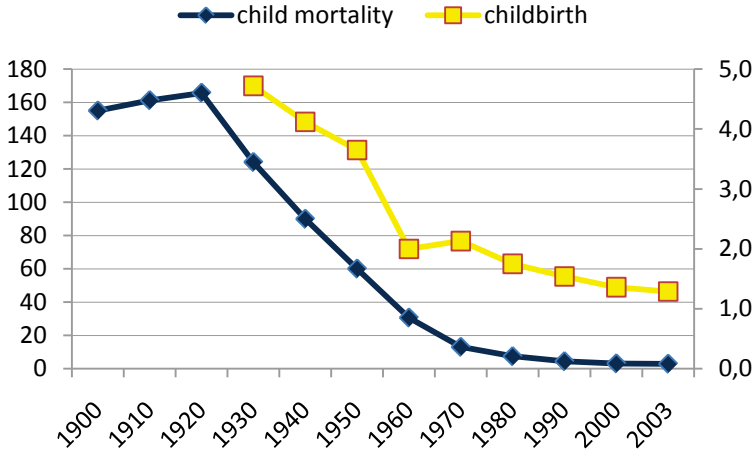


Figure 1: Infant mortality and TFR

Source: Danjo kyōdō sankaku hakusho (2005): *Danjo kyōdō sankaku hakusho* [Whitepaper on equal participation of men and women]. http://www.gender.go.jp/whitepaper/h17/danjyo_hp/danjyo/html/zuhyo/fig01_00_12.html (accessed 10 July 2010).

As a result of these mortality reductions the Japanese population has grown. It doubled from 1912 to 1967, when it reached 100 million. And Japan has over the past half century experienced unprecedented life expectancy gains. At the beginning of the twentieth century, life expectancy at birth was 44.0 years for males and 44.8 years for females, far below levels in Western countries. At the end of the century,

² Cf. UNDP – United Nations Development Program (2000) (Ed.): *Human Development Report 2000*. http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2000_EN.pdf (accessed 13 July 2010) and Statistics Bureau (2009): *Statistical handbook of Japan*. <http://www.stat.go.jp/English/data/handbook/c02cont.htm> (accessed 13 July 2010).

the Japanese topped the world list of life expectancy at 82.3 years on average (85.6 for women and 78.5 for men, in 2005). Around the middle of the last century, reaching the age of one hundred was a sensation.³

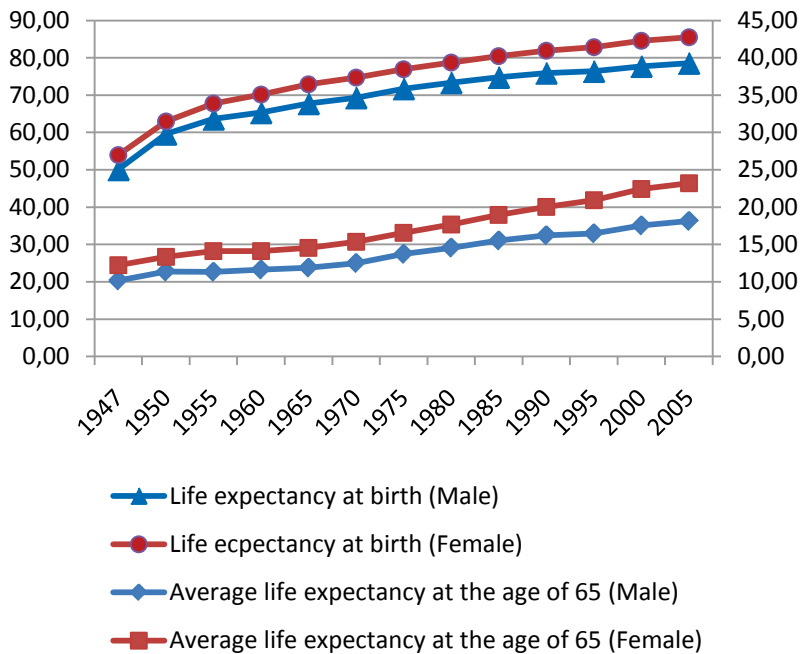


Figure 2: Average life expectancy: 1947–2005

Source: Statistics Bureau (2009): *Statistical handbook of Japan*. <http://www.stat.go.jp/English/data/handbook/c02cont.htm> (accessed 13 July 2010).

³ Cf. Yanagishita, Machiko and Jack M. Guralnik (1988): Changing mortality patterns that led life expectancy in Japan to surpass Sweden's: 1972–1982.

The centenarians counted just a few hundred. In half a century's time their numbers have multiplied a hundredfold. To quote another figure that is indicative of Japan's rapid population development, in 1950 the median age was 22 years, one of the youngest in the world. According to current projections, it will have risen by more 120 per cent to 57 years a century later.⁴ The massive gain in life expectancy is irrefutable evidence of a highly successful society, and a successful state allowing its citizens to flourish. Longevity has traditionally been regarded as an indication of happiness. If this still holds true Japan must be a happier country now by a large measure than it was a century ago.

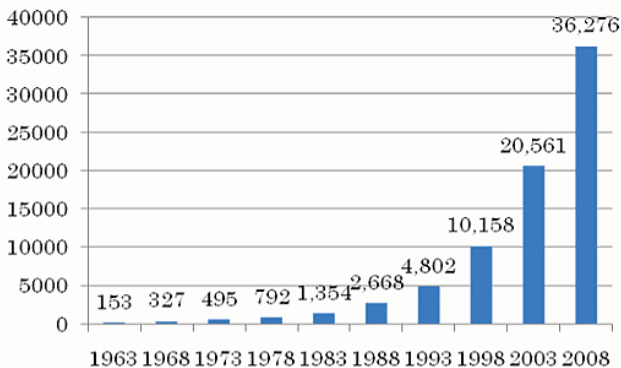


Figure 3: Centenarians 1963–2008

Source: ILC – International Longevity Center Japan (2010): http://longevity.ilc-japan.org/t_stories/index.html (accessed 20 June 2010).

⁴ Cf. Atoh, Makoto (2008): Japan's population growth during the past 100 years.

Japan is also more prosperous today than it ever has been before. In 1945 Japan's GDP per capita was less than that of the Philippines or Mexico, but was in the top range of all economic indexes by the end of the century. Politically they are living in a peaceful, stable and open environment largely free of coercion. Progress in education has been phenomenal. The Japanese have access to all the information they could possibly want being able to make use of it from an earlier age and up to a higher age than previous generations.

Since the 1980s, Japan has consistently ranked among the top ten countries of all three categories of the United Nations Human Development Index, i.e., health, education and standard of living.⁵ A prosperous, highly educated, healthy population living in a peaceful land without any obvious external threat – that is Japan in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Wouldn't that be sufficient reason to call this a happy country, if countries can properly be called happy or unhappy? And if we want to sidestep the question of happiness, surely, Japan's story of the twentieth century is one of great success.

Table 1: Population change in comparison

Country	Rate of population 65 and over			Number of years
	7%	10%	14%	
				7 – 14%
France	1864	1943	1979	115
Sweden	1887	1948	1972	85
USA	1942	1972	2014	72
Switzerland	1931	1960	1982	51
England	1929	1946	1976	47
Germany	1932	2942	1972	40
Japan	1970	1985	1994	25

⁵ In 2006, Japan ranked 7th of 177 countries on the Human Development Index.

Of course, population growth, economic development and advance in education are achievements not specific to Japan, but Japan underwent a number of developments much faster than other countries. Most noticeably, the velocity of social ageing was much higher in Japan than elsewhere. For example, whereas France took 115 years to double from 7 per cent to 14 per cent the population aged 65 and older, Japan needed just 25 years (see table 1, p. 18).

In sum, Japan's modern history since the Meiji era and especially the second half of the twentieth century is a success story, if success is understood in terms of population growth and national and human development. A deliberate and hardworking labour force, an industrial policy orchestrated by the Japanese government, a strong economy, high educational achievement and a good health care system combined to create a society affording its members a very high level of economic and social wellbeing.

Bitter fruits

Can this success story go on? Was the so-called "lost decade" of the 1990s recession only a cyclical downturn that will soon be forgotten? There are certain indications that this might be too optimistic a view. A very general reason for this is that catching up is easier than staying ahead of the pack. New problems arise that have no precedent calling for original solutions. That is so because Japan's development has fundamentally changed the population structure. Its socioeconomic success has turned it into a hyper-aged society defined as one where the population aged 65 and over exceeds 21 per cent and this hyper-aged society shrinks. In 2005, the number of death exceeded that of live births by a few thousand, marking the onset of population decline. Long-term projections vary by more than ten million. The "high" pro-

jection by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research puts Japan's total population in 2050 at 102 million, while the "low" projection anticipates just 90 million.⁶ However, there is general agreement that Japan's population will decrease for decades.

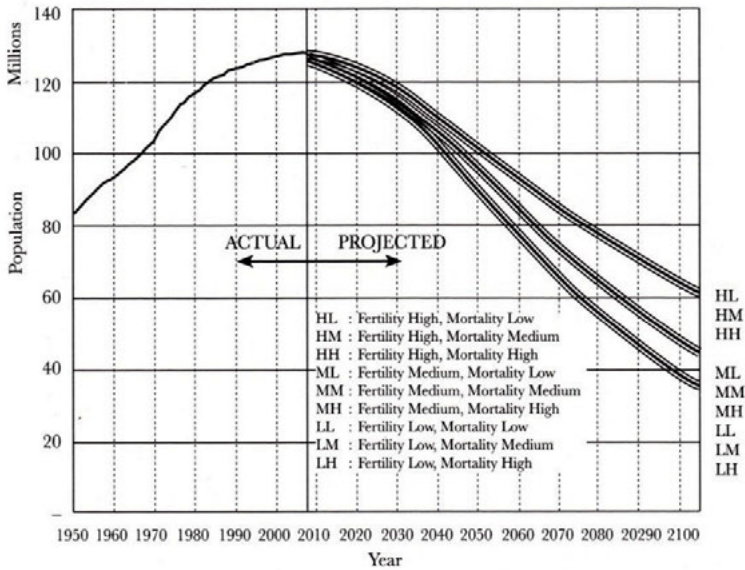


Figure 4: Total population and projections 1950–2100

Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2008): Population Statistics of 2008. <http://www.ipss.go.jp/p-info/e/psj2008/PSJ2008.pdf> (accessed 28 July 2010).

Population decline

Is population decline a problem? This question has often been answered in the affirmative for two reasons. (1) Fewer Japanese mean less industrial output and less consumption and hence a shrinking

⁶ Cf. Kaneko, Ryuichi (2008): Statistical foundations of population projections, 50.

economy which no one can desire. (2) Fewer people and more elderly people mean a rising dependency ratio, which again is a burden on the economy threatening national wealth.

I do not think that these are compelling arguments, because over the past several decades Japan’s economy has witnessed continuous gains in productivity which have not only offset negative economic developments such as rising labour costs and a rising yen, but produced real economic growth. There is no reason to doubt that further productivity gains are possible. As for the second point, the dependency ratio is certainly a concern, but it is not as dramatic as sometimes assumed, because as the number of dependent elderly has risen, that of dependent minors has fallen. Furthermore, the good health of the population 60 years and older makes it possible and for many desirable to raise the retirement age, thereby softening the impact of the higher dependency ratio.

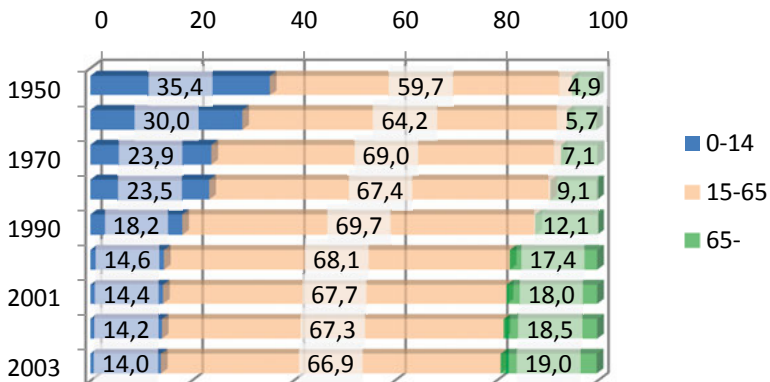


Figure 5: Changing population structure
 Source: Statistics Bureau (2009).

What is more, it can be argued with some justification that population decline has positive consequences, such as, less congestion in urban centres, more living space, cheaper housing, less environmental degrading, specialized high-quality education for fewer students and in general a higher quality of life. These positive aspects may be real. Population developments are complex happenings that are never only good or only bad.

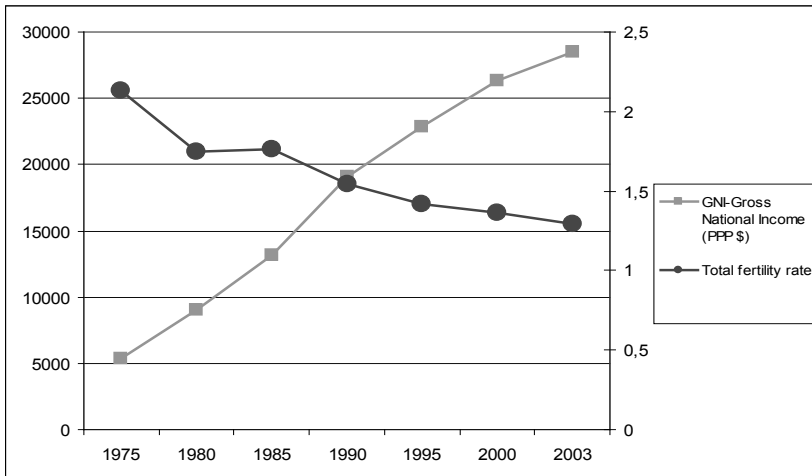


Figure 6: Gross National Income and Total fertility rate

However, population decline is a problem for different reasons. Two related trends come to mind. One is that for decades the actual number of children per family has been lower than the number deemed ideal for a family by women in childbearing age. For example, Ogawa shows that since the mid 1970s the total fertility rate has been consistently lower than the ideal family size.⁷ This means that many

⁷ Cf. Ogawa, Naohiro (2003): Japan's changing fertility mechanisms and its policy responses, 90.

Japanese do not satisfy a fundamental desire. While children are certainly not the only source of satisfaction with one's life, they do occupy a central position in this regard. The demographic paradox is that as the Japanese became richer they grew ever less prone to reproduce. A society that does not satisfy a basic need is suffering.

Related to this is the trend in lifetime singles rates. From 1950 to 2000, the ratio of unmarried men at the age of 50 rose by a factor of 10, that of women by a factor of 5. And the trend continues. Since in Japan there is virtually no childbirth outside wedlock, this trend contributes quite directly to fertility decline, as does the tendency to postpone marriage. In 1950, women were 23 when they first married, men 25.9. By 2006, age at first marriage had risen to 28.2 and 30 years, respectively (see table 2, figure 8 and figure 9 p. 25–26).⁸ There is a clear correlation between marriage postponement and the falling birth rate.

While acceptance of marriage continues to be high in Japan, the attitude towards marriage is changing. The percentage of women who do not intend to marry ever is steadily growing, and the purpose of marriage is shifting, as the traditionally strong connection between married life and children is eroding. In 1998, 47 per cent of the respondents of a nation-wide survey denied that children were necessary for a happy family life, an increase of seven per cent since five years earlier.⁹ Two trends in the results of this survey were particularly noteworthy: (1) Older respondents rated the importance of children higher than younger ones, and (2) men higher than women. Fully 70 per cent of women aged between 16 and 35 did not regard children important for married life. In Japan (as in Italy) women's increased

⁸ Cf. Statistics Bureau (2009).

⁹ Cf. Ölschleger, Hans Dieter (2004): *Family*, 375.

economic independence is apparently working as a disincentive to marriage.¹⁰ The number of women who say that they do not want to have children ever surpasses that of men. 30 per cent of Japanese women aged between 25 and 34 say that they “do not feel it necessary to marry”, and another 29 per cent say they “do not want to lose their freedom and care-freeness” (by marrying).¹¹ Great care must be taken in interpreting these findings, but they would seem to suggest that the proportion of women who will never have children and hence the proportion of childless couples is bound to grow.

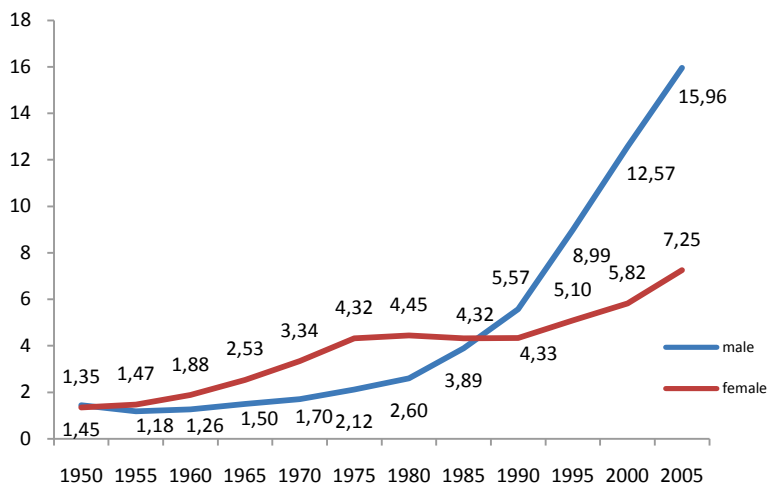


Figure 7: Lifetime single rates

Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2008).

¹⁰ Cf. Raymo, James M. and Miho Iwasawa (2008): Changing family life cycle and partnership transition. Gender roles and marriage patterns.

¹¹ Cf. MHWL – Ministry of Health and Welfare (1997): *Annual report on health and welfare 1995–1996. Families and social security*, 31.

Table 2: Age of first marriage / first child
 Source: Statistics Bureau (2009).

Age of first marriage (years)		
	1950	2005
male	25.9	29.8
female	23.0	28.0
Age at first child birth		
	25.6	29.1

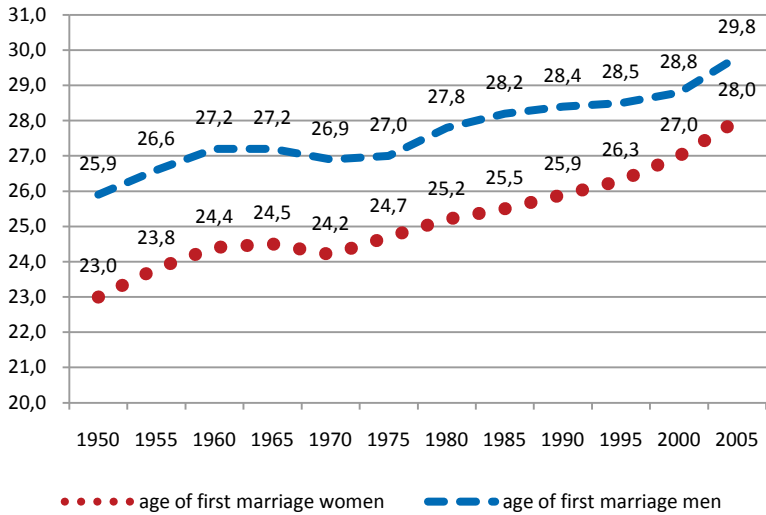


Figure 8: Late marriage
 Source: Statistics Bureau (2009).

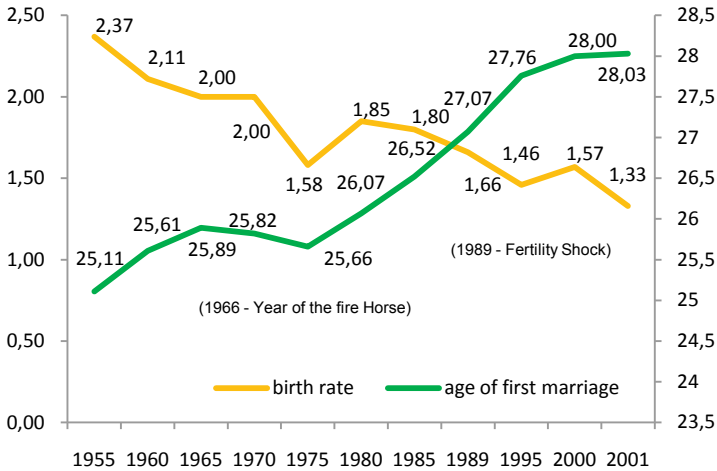


Figure 9: Birth rate and age at first marriage 1955–2001
 Source: Statistics Bureau (2009).

Reduced commitment to the future

There is a growing population who never marry and remain childless. During the past fifty years, the total fertility rate fell while the marital fertility rate remained nearly constant.¹² This is indicative of a preference for more than one child for couples who have children. Ogawa has calculated for a female cohort in the year 2000 that 15.9 per cent have one child, 36.0 per cent have two children, 14.5 per cent have three children and 2.8 per cent have four or more children, while 19.3 per cent never marry and 11.5 per cent marry but remain childless. This implies a massive increase of the childless population as compared to previous generations.¹³

¹² Cf. Lützel, Ralph (2002): The “second fertility transition” in comparative perspective. The impact of female employment, care services, and familism, 57.

¹³ Cf. Ogawa (2003), 91.

Table 3: Desired and actual number of children

Source: Kōseisho Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūsho (1977): *Dainanaji shussanryoku chōsa hōkoku* [Report on the seventh survey of the baby-boomer generation]; Statistics Bureau (2009).

Desired number of children		Actual number of children	
	ideal	TFR	Difference
1977	2.61	1.80	.81
2005	2.48	1.29	1.19

On the other hand, there has been for many years a persistent discrepancy between the number of children couples consider desirable and the number of children actually born. This discrepancy has been observed ever since statistics on the desired number of children have been collected, in 1977. In recent years, it has grown, suggesting that the discrepancy not only reflects a difference between an ideal norm and the reality, but that an increasing number of couples feel they cannot fulfil their desire for children fully. In 2005, the desired number of children (2.48) was almost double the fertility rate (1.26).

How should these findings be interpreted? Parents' attitude towards the future differs from that of non-parents. That is common-sense knowledge. A growing percentage of the population, both married and never married, without children have no vested interest in the future of society, with hitherto unknown consequences for its self-image and sense of purpose. Lest this sounds as an overly conservative argument, let me borrow a notion proposed in this connection by Bertrand Russell. He speaks of the "stream of life".

To be happy in this world, especially when youth is past, it is necessary to feel oneself not merely an isolated individual whose day will soon be over, but part of the stream of life flowing on from the first germ to the remote and unknown future. [...] Those who have allowed their procreative impulses to become atrophied have separated themselves from the stream of life.¹⁴

¹⁴ Russell, Bertrand (1930): *The conquest of happiness*, 138.

Russell wrote at a different time, but for a population the notion of the stream of life is still relevant. It must be noted, of course, that not all of those who remain childless in Japan today do so because they “have allowed their procreative impulses to become atrophied.” Many are hard pressed economically as neoliberal policies are taking their toll on a new underclass of unemployed, part-timers and working poor. And many perceive caring for parents and caring for children as an alternative. The fact remains, however, that by virtue of a declining fertility rate and an increasing rate of the population never married and childless, Japanese society is less future-oriented today than it was in the past.

Culturally the growing segment of childless individuals and couples is indicative of an enormous value shift, for until recently family succession and the perpetuation of the “house” (*ie*) were cultural core values. Leaving descendants was a matter of passionate concern which among other things implied that Japan used to be a “universal marriage society”. It no longer is.

Discontents of the hyper-aged society

The hyper-aged society has its specific discontents. Not all of them can be attributed to ageing, but they co-occur with ageing and characterize present-day Japan.

1. The hyper-aged society is a society with a growing population of isolated individuals. From 1975 to 2001 the percentage of one-person households more than doubled from 8.6 per cent to 19.4 per cent and so has the number of households consisting of husband and wife only (rising from 13.1 per cent to 27.8 per cent). Many older persons aged 65 and over are living alone and dying alone.

According to the Tokyo Metropolitan Medical Examiner's Office, the number of people who die alone increased from 3,858 in 2002 to 4,729 in 2005.¹⁵

2. An increasing number of people in the hyper-aged society are in need of help. To mention only one group, patients suffering from senile dementia were estimated at about 1.7 million in 2000. Their numbers will increase as the total population declines to twice that number in the near future. According to the Psychogeriatric Society of Japan, there will be 3 million dementia patients in 2035, while the Nihon University Population Research Institute predicts an increase to 4 million as soon as 2025. More accurate figures are hard to come by because projections of this sort are subject to many variables and different definitions. However, the increasing incidence of dementia clearly is emerging as a major social challenge.
3. Another worrisome characteristic of Japanese society in the 21st century is the growing incidence of clinical depression. According to an estimate by the Ministry of Health and Labour, clinical depression will rise from fourth rank in 2000 to second rank in 2020 of all diseases and thus become a major health care issue. This is of particular concern because depression is a major trigger of suicide. Suicide has many causes, social, economic and medical. No unified explanatory theory exists, and none will be attempted here. For present purposes suffice it to note that the hyper-aged society as it presents itself at present is one with a high incidence of suicide.

¹⁵ Tokyo Metropolitan Medical Examiner's Office (2009): Heisei 21 nenhan jigyou gaiyo [Half year working paper of 2009], 50. <http://www.fukushihoken.metro.tokyo.jp/kansatsu/21jigyogaiyou/files/21-55.pdf> (accessed 31 July 2010).

Table 4: Incidence of suicide 2006

Source: Keisatsuchō (2007): Heisei 19 nen ni okeru jisatsu no gaiyō shiryō [2006 Outline of suicide records]. http://www.npa.go.jp/toukei/chiiki10/h19_zisa_tsu.pdf (accessed 20 July 2010).

Suicides 2006:	32.155
male:	71 %
over 60:	35 %
without occupation:	48 %

Conclusion

Why life-expectancy gains and fertility decline occur simultaneously is not at all clear. The former is a sign of success, but it also generates its own specific problems. The latter, especially when viewed against the unfulfilled desire for children, but also from a theoretical point of view concerning expanding and contracting populations, is a sign of failure. Success often engenders failure. In economics this seeming paradox is a commonplace that has given rise to a huge literature. If population developments can be understood in a similar vein, it is not just the economy, but also the social and cultural conditions and a changed outlook on life that have to be taken into account. From such a perspective Japan appears rich, old, but not altogether content. Of its discontents the low birth rate (1.34 in 2007) is the strongest indicator. To what extent the social ills that population ageing brings in its wake have contributed to the birth-rate decline and continue to do so is a question that needs further study.

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MAREN GODZIK

Elderly Housing in Contemporary Japan: Exploring Alternative Forms of Housing

Abstract

Shelter is one of the existential needs. How housing is organized and designed, however, is closely tied to the circumstances in a society, its culture and history. The recent demographic development in Japan, the growing number of elderly people and changing family structures and functions, the diversification of lifestyles and increasing differences in income, will likely lead to more diversity in housing and living arrangements. Apart from numerous innovations in national welfare and housing policies, privately organized alternative forms of housing have emerged. Although their number is limited, some have achieved some popularity through media attention and serve as models not only for similar projects, but also for public and commercial housing projects, which gives them a greater importance than the number of alternative projects might suggest. As the alternative housing projects are strongly influenced by their initiators and do not follow any regulations concerning their size or their organizational structure, they are extremely diverse, meeting ideals, preferences and needs of different groups of people.

The purpose of this paper is to trace back the development of alternative housing forms in Japan and to categorize different types with

regard to their concepts and target groups. On the basis of three examples, which have been examined more closely, I try to answer the question whether these forms of housing could be considered a future option for a broader segment of the population of Japan's ageing society.

Introduction

In 2007, about one fifth of Japan's population that consists of 27 million people living in 16 million households was 65 years and older.¹ The ever growing number of elderly people as reflected through the increasing imbalance in the outlay of the population pyramid – along with a transformation of family structures and lifestyles – had significant consequences for Japanese households and the housing arrangements of elderly people. An increasing number of them, mostly couples, but also a growing number of singles, live in “all 65 and older” households.²

This development led to serious problems, for example, an increase of the average age in rural areas and certain urban neighbourhoods, with an elderly person's death sometimes remaining undetected for a long time (*kodokushi*) and high suicide rates among the aged.³ To cope with the growing number of elderly people, especially with those in need of care or support, several welfare policy measures have been

¹ Cf. Kokuritsu Shakai Hoshō Jinkō Mondai Kenkyūjo (2006): *Nihon no shōrai suikei jinkō. Population projections for Japan*.

² Cf. Kōsei Rōdōshō (2006): *Kokumin seikatsu kiso chōsa* [Comprehensive survey of living conditions of the people on health and welfare], and Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku (2006): *Heisei 15 jūtaku tochi tōkei chōsa hōkoku* [Housing and land census 2003].

³ Cf. Nakazawa, Takumi et al. (2008): *Danchi to kodokushi* [“Lonely death” in housing complexes], 90, and Popp, Julius and Johannes H. Wilhelm (2009): *Altern und Suizidalität im heutigen Japan* [Ageing and suicidal tendency in present Japan], 73–93.

introduced over the last few years ranging from the compulsory public long-term care insurance to assisted living facilities.⁴ At the same time, private individuals and NPOs (non-profit-organisation) have taken action to create their own housing forms, which I will refer to as “alternative forms of housing for the elderly”.

Gerontologist Carol Schreter wrote that shared housing in the United States, which can be categorized as a specific alternative form of housing, is a way of citizen’s self-help.⁵ It can be assumed that the development of new forms of housing is a reaction to an insufficient choice of housing in Japan, too: The housing market is partly trying to adapt to the new situation, but mostly in the upper price segments and still fails to provide adequate diversity. Older citizens are not welcome in the regular rental market, house owners often reject elderly people out of fear that they could cause a fire, not pay their rent or die unnoticed.⁶ The public housing units, which have been attainable to single elderly people, too, since 1980,⁷ or other policies to improve the barrier-free infrastructure of neighbourhoods and houses do not meet the

⁴ Cf. Campbell, John C. (2003): How policies differ. Long-term care insurance in Japan and Germany, and Imai, Kazuo (2010): *Shinia kyojū no keifu to sono mirai* [The development of senior housing and its future], 59–80.

⁵ Cf. Schreter, Carol (1986): Advantages and disadvantages of shared housing, 136.

⁶ That is why the government decided on a policy of implementing a registration system for private rental housing, whose owners agreed not to reject elderly persons. Refer to the website of the Foundation for Senior Citizens Housing (Koseisha jūtaku kaidan) at <http://www.sumai-info.jp/header/21/index.html> (accessed 16 January 2009) for the current registration state of “recommended private rental houses” (yūryō minkan chintai jūtaku).

⁷ Some measures were taken in the public housing field already as early as in the middle of the 1960s (Ōumi, Kazuo (2002): *Kōkyō jūtaku no saisei to atarashii yakuwari* [The revitalization of public housing and its new role], 167).

current preferences and needs sufficiently.⁸ Alternative housing is not only a surrogate for political deficits however. It is also an expression of broader social changes and new lifestyles, which deserve further attention.

The questions I want to answer in this paper are: Why have alternative forms of housing emerged in Japan? What are the motives of persons who have chosen to live in alternative housing? And can alternative forms of housing be an option for a larger number of elderly people in the population? I will approach these questions based on the results of my fieldwork conducted in Tokyo between 2006 and 2008.

This paper begins with my definition of alternative housing for elderly people. Then some information will be given about the development of different forms of alternative housing. Three examples will be presented followed by a characterization of three types of alternative housing. Next, I will try to shed some light on what people expect from the types of alternative housing depicted. Consequently we may gain some insight into what kind of persons may be potentially interested in alternative housing. I conclude with remarks on the chances for these forms of housing to become more popular.

What is alternative housing for the elderly?

Definition of alternative housing for elderly people

The definition of alternative forms of housing for elderly persons used here consists of four elements. Alternative forms of housing for elderly people are (1) “alternatives to institutionalization, that is nursing

⁸ Cf. Kamemoto, Kazuhiko (2004): *Kōreisha to kyojū mondai* [Elderly people and the housing problem], and Mine, Manabu (2008): *Kōreisha no sumai to kea – Zen-shakai-teki fukushi no naka no kaigo fukushi to kyojū fukushi* [Care and housing welfare within the social welfare system], 46, 71–73.

homes” and, (2) “exceptions to the more common traditional housing arrangements”,⁹ (3) forms of housing that are based on certain common concepts and social interaction (in contrast to people who live in the same place coincidentally) and (4) housing forms especially designed for elderly people or multigenerational housing aiming at elderly people.

Whereas the first and second criteria refer to a more general differentiation of the forms of housing (not institutional, not conventional family housing), the third one focuses on how life is organized. The first three aspects of this definition correspond to the definition used by the German non-profit organization Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V.¹⁰, an umbrella organization for organizations and individuals that are involved or want to promote multi-generational and collaborative housing projects enabling a “self determined and independent life on a communal basis”. The fourth aspect is self-explanatory in the context of housing of elderly people.

Terminology used for alternative housing in Japan

How is alternative housing referred to in the Japanese language? Commonly used expressions are *kyōsei jūtaku*, *kyōsei-gata sumai*, *sanka-gata jūtaku*, *kyōdō kyojū* and *komyuniti-gata jūtaku*.¹¹ These

⁹ That is households consisting predominantly of nuclear families or other close relatives, e.g. three-generation households (Eckert, J. Kevin and M.I. Murrey (1984): *Alternative modes of living for the elderly*, 96).

¹⁰ Cf. Forum Gemeinschaftliches Wohnen e.V. official website: <http://www.fgw-ev.de> (accessed 23 April 2009).

¹¹ Cf. Harada, Yoko (1998): *Korekutibu haujingu. Nihon ni okeru kyōdō kyojū no kanōsei ni tsuite* [Collective housing. About the possibilities of collective housing in Japan], 165–166; Honma, Hirobumi (2006): *Kōporatibu hōshiki de no sumai-zukuri* [Building homes according to the cooperative housing system], 37; Koyabe, Ikuko (2006): *Korekutibu haujingu* [Collective housing], 84–100 and Okamoto, Kenjirō (2008): *Kōreisha no kyōsei jūtaku, sono genjitsu to kadai* [Communal houses for the

terms are not used systematically for specific ways of housing. The same holds true for more specific names for alternative housing forms like *kōporatibu haujingu* (cooperative housing), *gurūpu ribingu* (group living) and *korekutibu haujingu*¹² (collective housing). At least in the academic field some efforts can be observed to establish definitions and to use them more consistently.¹³

Development of alternative forms of living in Japan

A small number of alternative forms of housing for elderly people first emerged as a welfare measure in snowy and remote regions of Japan in the 1970s, where an unfavourable demographic development led to uncommon measures by the local authorities. The next important impulse was the Kōbe Earthquake in 1995, after which alternative housing became a means to accommodate elderly people in differently organized social housing schemes in Kōbe and in the prefecture of Hyōgo after they lost their houses. Research on elderly people in provisional housing revealed that houses with larger common space in

elderly, current state and problems], 271–291. See also Jūtaku Netto Sōdan Shitsu official website: <http://www.so-dan.net> (accessed 23 April 2009).

¹² There is some confusion about the word “collective housing” in Japan. It is used for the public housing schemes established especially for elderly people as it can be found in Kōbe which are also referred to as *koreisha-muke kōei korekutibu* or *shinsai fukkō kōei korekutibu* (collectives for the elderly in social housing schemes or social housing collectives as earthquake rebuilding) on the one hand, and for (usually) multi-generational, self-organized housing described below on the other hand (Koyabe, Ikuko (2004): *Korekutibu haujingu de kurasō. Seijuku shakai no raifusutairu to sumai no sentaku* [Let’s live in a collective house. Lifestyle and housing choice in a mature society], iii).

¹³ Cf. Mine (2008), 44–45; Ōe, Moriyuki (2005): *Kōreisha gurūpu ribingu no kanōsei to kadai* [Chances and problems of “group living”], 7–10; Koyabe, Ikuko (2004): *Korekutibu haujingu de kurasō. Seijuku shakai no raifusutairu to sumai no sentaku* [Let’s live in a collective house. Lifestyle and housing choice in a mature society], iii–iv, and Koyabe, Ikuko (2008): *Dai san no jūtaku no taipu. Tēma: Korekutibu haujing* [The third housing type: collective housing], 582.

central parts of the building led to more interaction of the residents and eventually to better health conditions compared to houses without considerable common space.¹⁴ As they were not self-organized by the residents or in cooperation with the residents, it could be argued that it is inappropriate to call them “alternative”.¹⁵ Within the context of new forms of housing Japanese researchers categorize these forms of housing mentioned above as pioneer types.¹⁶

The housing concept for the social housing follows the model of Scandinavian communal forms of elderly housing, which were widely discussed in Japan in the 1990s.¹⁷ A significantly increasing number of alternative forms of living offering a choice to elderly people can be detected after the NPO law came into effect in 1998. Of similar importance was the public long-term care insurance system introduced in 2000.¹⁸ Many alternative forms of housing are therefore organized with the help of or by NPOs and, in the case of care being eventually needed, with care provided at home within the system of the long-term care insurance.

¹⁴ Cf. Ishitō, Naoko and Korekutibu Ōendan (2000): *Korekutibu haujingu tadaima funtōchū* [Efforts now: collective housing], 18–23; Koyabe (2006), 92–93, and Satō, Yumi (1998): *Kōreisha setai nado no aratana kyōdō seikatsu no keisei – korekutibu haujingu ni tsuite* [New forms of communal living for elderly households – collective housing], 113.

¹⁵ Apart from the housing schemes mentioned very few examples of privately or even commercially organized forms of alternative housing have been established since the middle of the 1980s. They were usually built to meet specific needs (Sasaki, Shinko (2004): *Kōreiki gurūpu ribingu no kōteki kōkyū ni kansuru kenkyū*. [Study on the public supply of group living projects for the elderly], 7).

¹⁶ Cf. Sasaki, Shinko (2004): *Kōreiki gurūpu ribingu no kōteki kōkyū ni kansuru kenkyū*. [Study on the public supply of group living projects for the elderly].

¹⁷ Cf. Sasaki (2004), 13–14. For an overview see e.g. Koyabe, Ikuko (1997): *Korekutibu haujingu no susume* [Encouragement for collective housing].

¹⁸ Cf. Sasaki (2004), 7–12.

Three case studies

To get an idea of what alternative forms of housing can look like three different types are presented in the following sections. It should be taken into account, however, that there is no common form for alternative housing. Although some common features can surely be found, they are organized with regards to the ideas of the organizers and needs of the residents.

Example A: CoCo Shōnandai

Probably the most well-known and well-documented example of an alternative form of housing exclusively for elderly people is the CoCo Shōnandai in Fujisawa. It was founded in 1999 by Saijō Setsuko (aged 80), who is one of the residents herself.¹⁹ At the time the planning process began, the NPO law and the long-term care insurance were not yet introduced and Saijō, who was politically active on the municipal level, designed a concept of housing allowing her to grow old together with others in familiar surroundings. The result was a house of barrier free design for 10 persons aged 65 or older. Each of the residents has a 25 square meters room of themselves, complete with kitchen and sanitary facilities. A large room on each of the two floors serve as common space.²⁰ The motto of CoCo Shōnandai is *jiritsu to kyōsei* (independence and living together or “symbiosis”)²¹; Saijō her-

¹⁹ The information that is given in this section is – if not otherwise stated – based on a visit to CoCo Shōnandai on 18 April 2008, where I had the opportunity to talk with two representatives of the NPO, and, though briefly, with Saijō Setsuko.

²⁰ Currently the common space on the basement floor is mainly used as an office by the NPO.

²¹ Cf. Saijō, Setsuko (2000): *10 nin 10 shoku no niji machi. Kōreisha gurūpu ribingu “CoCo shōnandai”* [The rainbow march of 10 very different people. Group living for elderly people “CoCo Shōnandai”], 15, and Saijō, Setsuko (2007): *Suminareta machi de ie de owaritai. Zaitaku taminaru kea no aru kurashi. Zoku Kōreisha gurūpu ribingu*

self, for example, is still busy giving speeches and writing books. Many people living at CoCo Shōnandai are active (the average age being a little over 80), while others are in need of care. Rules concerning their daily life are made by the residents themselves. They describe their group as a family (*kazoku*) with conflicts occurring but also being solved on their own. CoCo Shōnandai is supported by an NPO (CoCo Shōnan, with Saijō-san being the chairwomen of the NPO), which organizes help when needed and which tries to promote integration into the neighbourhood. The later being one of the important aims as Saijō states in her writing.²² Apart from the core task of supporting the residents²³ the NPO is also involved in giving advice to elderly people in the neighbourhood and a project has been started to search for similar forms of housing in Japan and to provide information if new projects are to be launched.²⁴

Talking to the organizers, CoCo Shōnandai gave the impression of balancing the private and communal life well. The residents pursue their own lives and help each other when needed. CoCo Shōnandai, therefore, differs from a regular household as well as from a home for the elderly. What reminded me of conventional old people's homes, however, were two features: The dinner is prepared by another NPO, lunch can be ordered from a mobile service, and only breakfast is to be prepared by the individual residents. Consequently, the residents simply have to sit down to eat, which is an arrangement that has often

“CoCo Shōnandai” [The wish to end in the town and house one is used to live in. Terminal care at home and its living conditions. Group living for elderly people “CoCo Shōnandai”], 12–14.

²² Cf. Saijō (2007), 13.

²³ Additionally to CoCo Shōnandai, the NPO organized and is supporting two more group houses, which opened their doors in 2003 and 2006 respectively.

²⁴ Cf. Saijō (2007), 216–222.

been criticised by gerontologists, if residents are still capable of performing the task themselves. Concerning this matter, Saijō gave me a rather convincing answer, saying that most of the residents, the majority of them female, had prepared meals for themselves and their families all their lives before coming to CoCo Shōnandai and were now relieved of this burden and therefore able to use their time in a more meaningful way. Organizers of exclusive retirement homes with hotel-like dinner services can argue similar. The other feature that makes CoCo Shōnandai resemble institutional housing is the architectural design. Although the building seen from the outside, particularly the arrangement of the entrance and the common rooms, resemble a one family house, the long corridors on each floor with their individual rooms adjoining each other are typical for institutions. Although the floor materials and wall decoration made or chosen by some of the residents moderate this impression.²⁵ The two further houses the NPO has built are roughly of the same size. One of them has the common rooms located in the centre of the house, which makes it more home-like. Asked, which design was more suitable for the lives of the residents, the NPO staff answered that the common room in the centre made it impossible to leave one's own room unwatched by the other residents and by potential visitors, a fact that seems to interfere with some residents' wishes for privacy.

In contrast to many private old people's homes, which require that people move to nursing homes or hospitals in the case they need nursing care, CoCo Shōnandai aims at providing a living environment for its residents that enables them to stay in the house until the end of their lives. Currently, some residents receive help from the benefits of

²⁵ Cf. Robinson, Julia W. (2006): *Institution and home. Architecture as a cultural medium*, 114, 120.

the long-term care insurance. Saijō and her fellow residents as well as care staff that are involved describe the case of a resident who eventually died of cancer, and what it had meant to her fellow residents, in great detail.²⁶ According to Saijō, terminal care in the group house and caring for one's fellow residents is one of the ideals that should be lived even though it cannot always be accomplished.

Example B: Collective House Kankan Mori

The so-called Collective House Kankan Mori²⁷ in Nippori was planned and organized by an NPO and followed the model of the Swedish concept of collective housing,²⁸ which is based on “togetherness” and “rational life”²⁹. In 2003 people were able to move in. It has as much as 28 rental flats between the size of 25 to 60 square meters, one very large dining-kitchen of over 120 square metres and various other common rooms (working space, laundry room etc.). At present about 30 persons are living in the house. It is multigenerational with the residents aged between 0 and 82 years. The group of residents include a few families, mostly with small children, a single mother with her teen-aged daughter, an elderly couple in their eighties and a number of singles of various age, most of them in their thirties and early forties. The NPO was involved in the planning process and is still involved in choosing new residents, but daily life is organized by

²⁶ Cf. Saijō (2007), 19–54, and Saijō, Setsuko (2004): *Chi'iki ni ikite suminareta ie de owaritai. Zaitaku taminaru kea no kiroku* [The wish to live in the neighbourhood and to die in the familiar home. A record of terminal care at home].

²⁷ If not stated otherwise, the following account of the collective house is based on observations made upon visits by the author and on statements made during interviews with NPO staff.

²⁸ Cf. Koyabe (2004), ii–iii.

²⁹ Cf. Vestbro, Dick U. (1992): From central *kitchen* to community cooperation. Development of collective housing in Sweden, 30–38.

an elected residents' committee. Three times a week a common dinner is arranged. There is no obligation to take part and meal times can be chosen individually. The preparation of meals, however, is one of the residents' duties with them taking turns. According to my observation, the common room was used by the residents as pleased: people sat in groups as well as alone (reading or working). A mother went away saying, "I'll be back in an hour. Could you just keep an eye on my son?" (who was about 5 years old).

As the building was not originally designed to serve the purpose of an alternative form of housing, the architectural aspects will not be discussed in this paper. The interior design of the common dining-kitchen, however, helps creating a comfortable atmosphere in spite of the hall-like size of the room.³⁰

At present, the elderly couple living in the collective house is still able to live independently. If care is eventually needed, a mobile care service can be made use of as would be the case in conventional housing arrangements. Since there are few elderly persons common duties could if necessary be taken over by younger residents, which should not pose a problem with about 30 persons sharing the tasks. However, should there be more elderly persons at some point in the future new concepts would have to be worked out. In comparison to CoCo Shōnandai, Kankan Mori is not explicitly oriented to the lives and needs of elderly people, especially those requiring help. But this may just make Kankan Mori more attractive to younger residents in particular, but also to middle-aged and younger elderly people. Although the fluctuation of residents is high (it is a rental form of housing after all)

³⁰ In May 2009, a new, but slightly smaller house by the same NPO is planned to be opened in the western part of Tokyo. Wishes and preferences of the residents, who are involved in the planning process, have likely been taken into consideration.

and most of the new residents are of a younger age, it might become necessary to think about concepts of how to cope with elderly persons in need of help and care, if this form of housing aims to be an option for elderly people.

Example C: Ryūgasaki Shinia Mura

The third example is Ryūgasaki Shinia Mura³¹ (Ryūgasaki Senior Village), which was completed in 2007 and is a project organized by a building cooperative. That means the house was planned by a group of people who intended to live in it themselves. In contrast to housing cooperatives in other countries residents in Japan usually own their flats within the cooperative houses.³² In Ryūgasaki Shinia Mura it was basically one couple that took a leading position throughout the planning process. The other residents joined in later or after the completion of the house. The house is located in a rural region in Ibaraki Prefecture, roughly one and a half hours by train from Tokyo. It has 29 flats for single persons and couples (between 50 and 70 square metres each). It has a strong resemblance to an ordinary apartment house, but is built barrier-free and oriented to the needs elderly people may have: A restaurant (also open to the public), which relieves the residents of the tasks of preparing their own meals and functions as a place of communal gathering, too. A day care centre for elderly people and a

³¹ Information for this section was obtained at a presentation by the founder of Ryūgasaki Shinia Mura, Imami Toshitaka at the NPO Toshi Jūtaku to Machizukuri Kenkyūkai on 5 April 2007. See also Katō, Hitoshi (2008): *Teinen-go no 8man jikan ni idomu* [80,000 hours – a challenge after retirement], 96–101. Images of the cooperative house could be seen online at <http://shinia-mura.com/pc/> (accessed 15 November 2008), but the homepage has since been changed and gives information on the new project, Ryūgasaki Shinia Mura II, now (accessed 20 May 2009).

³² Cf. Honma (2006), 36–39, and Kobayashi, Hideki (2006): *Sekai no kōpu jūtaku* [Housing cooperatives in the world], 22–24.

clinic on the ground floor of the building contribute to the integration into the neighbourhood.

Unlike in the collective house Kankan Mori collaboration of the residents is not explicitly part of the concept, which also shows in the floor plan. Common space for the residents (except for the long hallways) is identical to those places also opened to the public. Shared experience during the planning process of the house, however, seems to have led to a relatively close interaction among the residents. Emphasising “security, peace of mind and comfort” (*anzen, anshin, kaiteki*) in its web representation the Ryūgasaki Shinia Mura is similar to advertisings of profit-orientated old people’s homes.

Why do people opt for alternative forms of housing and living?

The examples discussed here are certainly deeply influenced by their organisers and residents and therefore highly individual, as show the significant differences in their philosophies. Nevertheless, they were chosen to represent three different types of alternative housing available to Japan’s elderly people. Their organization and architecture, the allocation of private and common space, vary widely but adjust to the diverse needs and preferences of the residents. All of three types require various degrees of commitment to the housing project, often even years before the house is built. Some of them demand the cooperation of the residents in their daily life. Sometimes there is a strong focus on the idea of communal life; other times it is regarded as optional. After summing up the most important characteristics of the three types, potential motives for choosing these kinds of housing are presented.

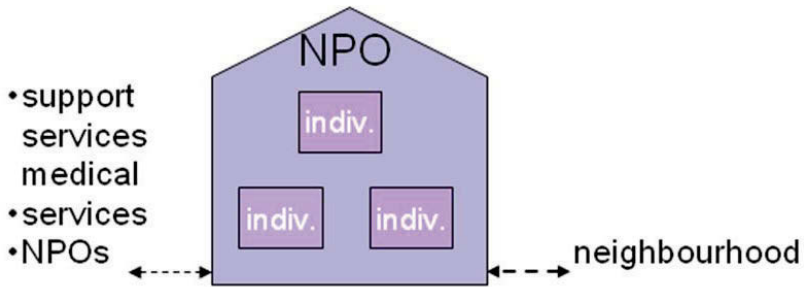


Figure 1: Housing type “group living” of communal living.

Source: Partly adopted from Ōhashi (2002): *Kakudai suru kazoku* [The enlarging family], 107, 120.

Example A is a housing type called *gurūpu ribingu* or *gurūpu hausu* (group living, group house) in Japan. It was established with the explicit intention to provide a housing option for elderly persons and is hence only for elderly persons. The usual number of residents is three to fifteen persons. The residents are usually still able to take care of themselves when moving in. Nevertheless, this housing type has certain features and potential services with regard to the ageing of its residents. In many cases the houses are strongly assisted by NPOs, but individual persons can be the main organizers, too.³³ A network of volunteers and professionals particularly organized to help with these needs can often be found offering support and assistance. In contrast to residential homes for the elderly, group houses are organized to give support and care only if individual needs arise and not as a general prerequisite. Some projects see terminal care as one of their tasks, but are usually not prepared (concerning trained staff and architectural features) to handle for example severe cases of dementia. The resi-

³³ Cf. Kondō, Takayo and Moriyuki Ōe (2002): *Kōreisha gurūpu ribingu ni kansuru kiso-teki kenkyū* [A study on the group-living for the Aged], 345–346, and Ōe (2005), 31–42.

dents mostly organize their lives themselves, but sometimes they become recipients of care very similar to traditional residential care facilities. Group houses aim at combining privacy and communal elements, therefore focusing on mutual help and communal activities. Most of the residents live in single rooms, though there are couples among the residents of this kind of housing as well, who have to rent two separate rooms because rooms for two persons or more are not provided in most of the “group houses” (Figure 1). One particular problem with this kind of housing is that people are roughly of the same age when moving in and it is likely that a lot of them will require a higher level of care at almost the same time.

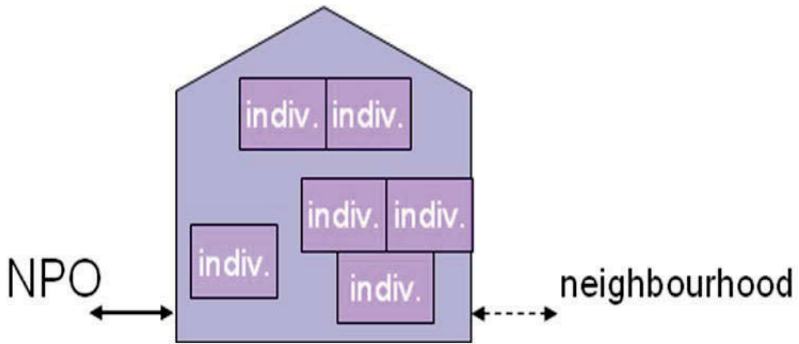


Figure 2: Housing type “collective living” of communal living.
Source: Partly adopted from Ōhashi (2002), 107, 120.

Example B is a so-called “collective house” following the Scandinavian example.³⁴ This type does not centre on a certain age group. It focuses on a concept of living that tries to balance the need for indi-

³⁴ Cf. Vestbro (1992), 30–38.

vidual independence with comparatively strong social involvement. It often aims at creating a “neighbourly togetherness”. A willingness to contribute to the daily requirements of the group (e.g. preparing meals) is expected. Unlike “intentional communities” that follow a certain ideology (an ecological form of living or political and religious orientation, for example) is not an underlying principle. To secure continuity for this rental type of housing, a relatively large number of residents ranging between twenty to forty residents are preferred. As shown in figure 2 is the basic unit an individual person although they may live together as ordinary families within the house.

Example C is a “cooperative house”³⁵. It is usually planned by the residents themselves. It is based less on individuals but rather on traditional forms of households as basic units not unlike conventional multi-family houses. Shared rooms and facilities often exist, but are not a prerequisite. In contrast to the first two forms of housing the residential property is owner-occupied. It combines ordinary private homes, planned by the residents, with active social interaction among the neighbours. The number of households involved differs widely; most of them are composed of ten to twenty households. They are mostly family-orientated, but some include elderly people or consist of elderly-person-households only (Figure 3).

What are the features that attract elderly people? Which preferences and needs do these alternative forms satisfy that more traditional ways of housing and living arrangements do not? The examples of alternative housing projects mentioned above suggest the following:

³⁵ Information on cooperative houses in general and on a number of projects can be obtained on the website of the NPO Coop Jūtaku Suishin Kyōgikai: <http://www.coop.kyo.gr.jp/index.html> (accessed 15 November 2008).

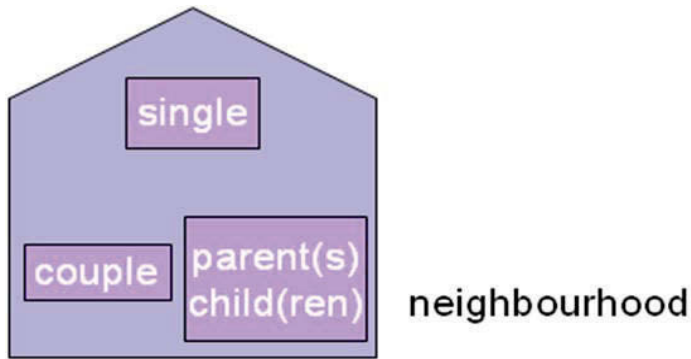


Figure 3: Housing type “cooperative housing” of communal living.
 Source: Partly adopted from Ōhashi (2002), 107, 120.

- lack of public solutions in the field of elderly housing apart from institutional elderly care (insufficient choice) → group house
- growing reluctance to use institutional care (change of elderly perception, generational change) → group house
- new demands caused by changes in family structures and family roles (surrogate family, *ketsuen no nai kazoku* [family without blood relation]) → group house, collective house
- new demands caused by an increasing diversification of approaches to life (new lifestyles, insufficiency of choice) → group house, collective house, cooperative house
- insufficiency of affordable commercial housing supply (economic reasons) → group house, collective house
- mutual support and neighbourly help available while keeping independence, autonomy and privacy (*jiritsu to kyōsei* [independence and living together or “symbiosis”]) → group house, collective house (cooperative house)
- active interaction among neighbours, generations (*nagaya no tsu-*

- kiai*³⁶) → group house, collective house, cooperative house
- sense of security and safety (*anshin, anzen*) → group houses (collective house, cooperative house)
 - integration into the community (*chiiki o ikiru, komyunity zukuri*) → group houses, collective house (cooperative house)

Conclusion: Is alternative housing a solution?

Alternative housing can satisfy a number of needs, but some characteristics of this form of housing may also pose problems. The residents of alternative housing are usually self-determined and very flexible in the way they lead their lives. They do not depend on care institutions or their families. However, they have to be very proactive. Living closely together with others certainly does prevent isolation, but social skills and conformity with basic agreements is necessary. Decision making on aspects concerning their fellow residents or the house as a whole can be very time-consuming. Whether an elderly person will choose an alternative form of housing may depend on his or her – objective and subjective – health condition as well as on lifestyle decisions and, at least for some projects, on financial means.

Compared to Northern Europe, the Netherlands and also Germany, collaborative housing in Japan is still in an experimental stage. Nevertheless, it is on the rise. Given future demographic developments, dissatisfaction with existing forms of services for the elderly and feelings of insecurity especially felt by people living in single-person households as well as the expectation to live a life according to one's

³⁶ *Nagaya* are urban tenement houses associated with neighbourly cooperation of the past, especially those of the prewar area. For the concept of *nagaya* in relation to communal living see e.g. Hayakawa, Yūko and GL Netto (2000): *Rōgo wa nakama to kurashitai. Gurūpu ribingu no susume* [To live with one's friends in old age. A recommendation of group living], 10–13.

own preferences might lead to an increase in alternative forms of housing. Alternative forms of housing could become one of those “micro trends” that, according to Mark J. Penn, are “small forces” “behind tomorrow’s big changes”³⁷ and therefore deserve further examination.

³⁷ Cf. Penn, Mark J. (2007) *Microtrends. The small forces behind tomorrow’s big changes*.

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RICHARD RONALD

The Housing System and Generational Divides: Housing Pathways and Life-courses in Japan

Abstract

While the impact of demographic change in Japan, with increasing longevity, declining fertility and a fundamental shift in the ratio between the retired and working populations has been well documented, the role of housing markets and the property sector, although having significant consequences in the structure of life-courses, has not been so central to debates. The objective of this chapter is to examine the role of the housing system in the emerging divide between younger and older generations in Japan. A central contention is that, in combination with restructuring in employment conditions and welfare sectors, the housing system in Japan is shaping demographic changes and may be considered a driver of both declining family formation and socioeconomic inequality between younger and older cohorts.

Introduction

In the early post-war period, housing production and consumption played a central role in driving economic growth and in the formation of Japanese middle-class mainstream society. The growth of home ownership and the movement of households up a housing ladder rein-

forced patterns of family formation and progression through the life-course orientated around middle-class social identities and a “standard breadwinner family model”.¹ However, in recent decades, the housing system has destabilized with households and movement up the housing ladder becoming increasingly fragmented. Clear gaps have emerged between different generations of household in Japan. On the one hand, significant differences in housing conditions and housing wealth have developed between different cohorts of homeowners based on time of entry and length of tenure. On the other, housing chances in terms of opportunities to enter independent family housing and accrue housing equity in the owner-occupied housing market have fundamentally diminished for younger people. This has been accompanied by a decline in “standard” family households and considerable growth in single only households renting in the private sector or staying on in the family home.² Many of these changes are related to recent socioeconomic restructuring which undermined employment and welfare practices in Japan and drove both a collapse in the housing market and a retrenchment in housing policy. These changes also unfolded as the social, political and economic pressures of an aging population and low fertility became more intense.³

This chapter examines how socioeconomic restructuring has interacted with the housing system in restructuring Japanese life courses and social inequalities. A central concern is emerging divides between

¹ Cf. Hinokidani, Mieko (2007): *Housing, family and gender*; Hirayama, Yosuke and Richard Ronald (2007): *Housing and social transition in Japan*, and Waswo, Anne (2002): *Housing in postwar Japan. A social history*.

² Cf. Ronald, Richard and Yosuke Hirayama (2009): *Home alone. The individualization of young, urban Japanese singles*.

³ See Coulmas, Florian *et al.* (2008): *The demographic challenge. A handbook about Japan*.

different generations structured around differentiated movement up the housing ladder or, as in the case of many young people, failure to do so. The chapter begins by considering the significance of housing systems in life courses, how they influence welfare practices as well as shape socioeconomic transformations. The discussion then turns to the Japanese post-war housing system. While the housing system once helped drive post-war economic growth and stability, the housing market now structures differences in economic security between younger and older households who are experiencing very different housing and economic conditions. This has essentially exacerbated the pressures imposed by the changing demographic balance between young and old, with increasing pressures on working generations to support the income and welfare requirements of older retired, or retiring generations. Essentially, changes in housing conditions have aligned with shifts in employment and policy practices which have further destabilized the security and integrity of “standard” households and disrupted life-course trajectories.

Households and housing systems

How housing is organized in each country impacts the social system at various levels. Tenure systems in particular, have been associated with specific approaches to welfare provision and the role of households in the welfare mix. In understanding differences between countries along the lines of welfare regimes, societies with high home ownership rates are often associated with systems in which the family plays an important role in the welfare mix.⁴ Home ownership provides a basis for

⁴ Cf. Castles, Francis G. (1998): The really big trade-off. Home ownership and the welfare state in the new world and the old.

intergenerational co-habitation and exchanges of care as well as for economic transfers between generations. In many developed countries in Europe and East Asia where institutions beyond the state have taken responsibility for welfare provision, owner-occupied housing has been promoted by governments as a means to provide families with financial security in the form of housing assets that have accrued in value, as well as to direct obligations for welfare provision onto the household itself.⁵

Characteristic of housing systems geared towards owner-occupation is a particular pattern of spending, saving and consumption over the life-course.⁶ Where home ownership is embedded as the primary tenure, and rental tenure stigmatized, young households are pressured to save a considerable deposit and subsequently take on a sizeable mortgage debt in order to buy a home. Housing costs are highest in the early years of occupation, but diminish over time as the mortgage is paid off and relative income increases. By retirement age most households have repaid their loan which improves the standard of living (with minimal housing costs) that can be achieved on a pension income. Owners additionally have an investment which increases in value, and offsets reliance on other types of saving. People who buy their own homes both consume its services over time and also build up their wealth.⁷ Research in Europe and Japan has demonstrated that households treat home ownership as a form of saving as

⁵ Cf. Groves, Richard *et al.* (2007): *Housing and the new welfare state. Examples from East Asia and Europe*, and Ronald, Richard (2008a): *The ideology of home ownership. Homeowner societies and the role of housing*.

⁶ Cf. Kemeny, Jim (2005): "The really big trade-off" between home ownership and welfare. Castles' evaluation of the 1980 thesis, and reformulation 25 years on.

⁷ Cf. Doling, John (2008): *Housing and demographic change, ENHR Working Group Conference, Building on home ownership. Housing policies and social strategies*, 5.

well as an asset on which they can fall back upon in old age.⁸ For most households, their home constitutes their largest investment and significantly impacts other types of saving and how much is available to consume on non-housing goods. It also becomes critical for maintaining living standards in later life as owner-occupied homes tend to be of a higher standard than those affordable if a household were to rent in old age. Housing property assets are also central wealth transfers that are often the focus of family welfare care exchanges and co-habitation arrangements.

Since World War Two, the Japanese housing system became strongly orientated around facilitating the mass expansion of home ownership, as is examined in the following sections. This facilitated a considerable accumulation of housing assets among older people that provided a basis for economic and welfare security. The orientation of public policy towards family self-reliance and residential property ownership become more apparent in the late 1970s as LDP governments began to stress the necessity of “Japanese-style welfare society” in welfare policy restructuring.⁹ The formation of Japanese-style welfare society involved a particular state-society relationship in which the state does not support individual social security directly but rather the family overall as a framework of welfare security provision. More specifically, family self-reliance has been mediated through state assisted home ownership, which sought to reinforce social stability.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Cattle, Pietro *et al.* (2004): *Housing markets, wealth and the business cycle*, and Ronald, Richard (2008b): Between investment, assets and use consumption. The meaning of home ownership in Japan.

⁹ Cf. Shinkawa, Toshimitsu (1993): *Nihongata no fukushi seiji-keizaigaku* [Political economy of Japanese-style social welfare].

¹⁰ Cf. Harada, Sumitaka (1988): *Nihongata fukushi shakai no kazoku zō* [The image of the family in the Japanese-style welfare society].

However, in recent decades socioeconomic transformations and realignment in the housing system have created a growing divide between housing-asset-rich and income-poor older generations and younger asset-poor and income-insecure ones. This is proving a challenge to the sustainability of the welfare system as life courses and routes into economic security are, arguably, no longer being adequately reproduced from one generation to the next. There is a fundamental reorientation in life courses and housing career trajectories characterized by a growing inability of younger households to get on the housing ladder or even access housing deemed adequate to raising a family.

The post-war Japanese housing system

During the rapid pre-war urbanization of Japan, the majority of city workers had been accommodated in low quality rental housing.¹¹ The housing situation was then compounded by the wholesale destruction of urban residences during war time bombing, which culminated in a massive housing shortfall of 4.2 million units (around one fifth of dwellings at the time). Post-war governments became proactive in housing policy and sought to promote home ownership as the primary tenure. At first this involved undermining the management basis of the rental sector through rent control and tax levies. In the 1950s new pillars of housing policy were introduced that redirected resources toward establishing a housing ladder up which families could move, accumulating housing wealth. The “three pillars” of housing policy included the Government Housing Loan Corporation Act, (GHLC 1950), the Public Housing Act (PHA 1951), and the Japan Housing Corporation Act (JHC 1950).

¹¹ See Sorensen, André (2002): *The making of urban Japan*.

Of the pillars of housing policy, the government emphasized the promotion of home-ownership through GHLC loans, which became central to housing finance and government market intervention measures. GHLC loans facilitated a rapid increase in home-ownership rates (from less than 30 per cent urban home ownership before 1940 to 64 per cent by 1965). Of the more than 50 million housing units built between 1945 and 1995, 28.9 per cent were GHLC financed, with 45.7 per cent built from public funds overall.¹² During the economic growth period the government increasingly improved lending conditions through the GHLC to promote housing purchases and stimulate consumption and economic growth. The proportion of houses constructed using GHLC loans increased from 63 per cent in 1971 to 79.5 per cent by 1980.¹³ The provision of public rental housing, alternatively, was reduced over time. The GHLC provided government funds for long-term, low-interest mortgages for middle-income households. Through the PHA a limited amount of subsidized public housing was provided at below market rents for low-income families. Singles were excluded from public housing as the target was younger families saving to enter the private market. The JHC was founded to develop multi-family housing estates for middle-income households in large cities.

The commercial sector may also be counted as a pillar of post-war housing¹⁴ and strongly influenced the expansion of the owner-occupied housing market. Firstly, the large and politically influential construction sector drove a considerable increase in residential hous-

¹² Cf. BCJ – Building Centre of Japan (1998): *A quick look at housing in Japan*.

¹³ Cf. MC – Ministry of Construction (1995): *Minkan jūtaku kensetsu shikin jittai chōsa* [Survey on the financial situation in private home construction].

¹⁴ Cf. Waswo (2002).

ing output from the 1950s onward. Post-war housing output in Japan has averaged 10 to 14 new units per year per thousand people compared to 3 to 6 in Western Europe and North America. Secondly, government support for home ownership has been supplemented by the company system. The “enterprise society” model rewarded company loyalty with lifelong-employment security and age-based wage increases, but also a raft of welfare goods and services including housing subsidies.¹⁵ Cheap company rental housing provided a means for new family households to save up housing deposits, constituting a steppingstone to home ownership. Companies also provided subsidized housing loans for employees, which supplemented the portfolio of borrowing necessary to get into owner-occupation.

The social mainstream and “standard” households

The post-war housing boom was associated with economic growth, which encouraged the government to sustain pro-home ownership policies.¹⁶ The expansion of a home owning middleclass was regarded as important in stabilizing socio-economic conditions and supported the capacity of family self-reliance.¹⁷ The objective of establishing a very broad “social mainstream” of middleclass households also connected housing policy with ideological discourses regarding both social homogeneity and modern society. Hirayama¹⁸ argues that the housing system established a “social-flow” of rental tenants on the

¹⁵ Cf. Sato, Iwao (2007): Welfare regime theories and the Japanese housing system.

¹⁶ Cf. Miyake, Jun (1980): *Genzai mochi-ie shikō ni tsuite* [Current trends of home ownership].

¹⁷ Cf. Hirayama, Ronald (2007).

¹⁸ Cf. Hirayama, Yosuke (2003): Housing policy and social inequality in Japan, and Hirayama 2007): Reshaping the housing system. Home ownership as a catalyst for social transformation.

outside of mainstream society into the inside via the owner-occupied housing-ladder. The housing-ladder system embedded a life-course pattern orientated around the ideal of *mai hōmu* (becoming a homeowner) with households moving from renting an apartment through to condominium purchase, working their way up eventually to a detached family house. Essentially, the emergent housing-ladder system had a strong hegemonic impact, defining social inclusion and a way of life for those aspiring to form modern middleclass families. By 1955, around 52 per cent of families aspired to buying their own-home, rising to 74 per cent in 1966 and 90 per cent in 1969.¹⁹

Following the nuclearization of households, the “standard-family-model” formed the basis of housing provision, social policies and employment practices. It comprised a breadwinning husband, a homemaking wife and two children. There were subsequent spatial impacts in the organization of residential neighbourhoods with a proliferation of multi-family apartment-block estates in the 1950s and 1960s, associated with modern families and ways of living.²⁰ There was also continued growth in suburban developments and advances in prefabricated and two-by-four construction techniques with the increasing number of families seeking better single-family housing. Demand for owner-occupation also drove house price inflation and, subsequently, the augmentation of property-assets. Buying a home not only seemed to provide security for the current household, it also promised security for future generations who would inherit, with a

¹⁹ Cf. Tamaki, S. (1974): *Mochi-ie shikō to shakuya shikō* [Tendency to owner-occupied housing and rental housing].

²⁰ Cf. Waswo (2002).

build-up of family wealth over time.²¹ Price increases also fuelled a myth that housing and land were special types of commodity that increase perpetually in value.²²

The generation that bought their own homes in the 1950s and 60s thus experienced a sense of growing wealth during the era of rapid economic expansion. This maintained restrained government provision of public welfare in favour of a system of welfare supported by employment security and corporate-based welfare provision complemented by regulatory and tax incentive measures. The oil crisis of 1973 upset this pattern and also interrupted house price inflation. The state looked to the housing system as a means to stimulate growth and housing policy became more aggressive. In the following years the GHLC improved lending conditions and launched a series of programmes to extend home ownership. These included the Step Repayment System (1979), the Two-Generation Mortgage (1980) and the Supplementary Loan system (1985). These initiatives contributed to housing demand, but were also accompanied by increasing investment in land, considered a “safe” investment and used to secure other borrowing, by banks and corporations.²³ A speculative bubble began to form in which the improvement of lending conditions encouraged house acquisition, expanding demand for owner-occupied housing, boosting housing prices, and driving the further improvement of lending conditions.²⁴

²¹ Cf. Hirayama, Yosuke and Kazuo Hayakawa (1995): Home ownership and family wealth in Japan.

²² Cf. Mizuoka, Fujio (2004): Japan. The economic consequences of the fetish of space.

²³ Cf. Kanemoto, Yoshitsugu (1997): The housing question in Japan.

²⁴ Cf. Oizumi, Eiji (2007): Transformations in housing construction and finance, and Hirayama (2003).

The disproportionately large cohort born in Japan between 1945 and 1950, when fertility rates reached 4.3 children per woman, began to enter the housing market in the late 1970s and early 80s, which further pressured the market. The 1980s saw the most substantial rises in the prices of properties, especially in metropolitan areas. 1987 and 1988 saw increases in average condominium prices in Tokyo by 22 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. Nationally, the rate was 8 per cent and 25 per cent.²⁵ There was effectively a scramble to get on the housing ladder which appeared to promise opportunities for considerable capital gains. Nonetheless, conditions for those buying in the 1980s were considerably tighter. The demand on incomes was much higher than it had been for Japan's first post-war generations of urban homeowners and required considerably more indebtedness. The government further expanded credit conditions with the amount of outstanding housing loans swelling from 48,229 billion yen in 1980 to 191,203 billion yen in 2000 constituting an escalation in the ratio of outstanding housing loans against GDP from 19.4 per cent to 37.3 per cent.

Housing and the “lost decade”

The following decade, known as the “lost decade”, saw the disintegration of the housing-ladder and the integrity of the housing system. In 1989, driven by over-investment in, and the over-inflation of, share and land values, the economic bubble famously burst throwing the economic system briefly into turmoil followed by a prolonged period of downturn lasting until 2002. The 1990s began with a collapse in share values followed by a long-standing decline in the nominal val-

²⁵ Cf. MC (1995).

ues of housing properties. The stock market shed around 80 per cent of its value between 1989 and 2003, while urban property values dropped by 40 to 50 per cent. Owner-occupiers experienced major capital losses on what was typically their primary asset. For example, the drop in price of an average new-build condominium bought in Tokyo in 1991 generated a capital loss of around 25 million yen, or almost 50 per cent, by 2000.

The economic downturn and collapse of housing values revealed systematic problems, which had been disguised by the prolonged improvement in property values. System flaws exacerbated the economic insecurity of home-ownership and generated fractures between different types of property ownership and cohorts of households. Firstly, despite improvements in building technologies, the construction sector had continued to promote “scrap and build” techniques where housing is rebuilt every 30 to 40 years.²⁶ Research on housing consumption in Japan has demonstrated that housing units are perceived as relatively ephemeral objects, and there are strong prejudices against older units which stimulate rapid devaluation and periodic replacement.²⁷ Furthermore, in order to encourage construction, the GHLC also promoted the purchase of newer properties by excluding loans on dwellings more than 25 years old and providing longer repayment periods for buyers of new-builds. Consequently, housing units dropped rapidly in value once they were erected. Property prices before 1990 had been effectively maintained by increases in land values. However, after 1990, marked fragmentations appeared in the housing market between new-build and existing properties and between condominiums and

²⁶ See Oizumi (2007).

²⁷ Cf. Ronald (2008b).

detached family houses. Older properties devalued rapidly as did condominiums where land (and rebuilding) rights were more restricted.²⁸

Secondly, as the government considered residential construction an economic pump-primer, when the economy failed in the early 1990s it sought to stimulate the sector by improving lending and promoting policies to stimulate construction. However, despite early post-war shortages, a housing surplus had been achieved by the end of the 1960s with vacancy rates advancing to 7.6 per cent by 1978 and 9.8 per cent by 1993 (around 14 per cent by 2003). There was thus considerable housing market over-supply, which reinforced the erosion of property values.²⁹

Housing and generational divides

In recent decades the number of people following the traditional housing ladder has been in decline, undermining the stable formation of new family households, especially “standard” ones. As the economy entered downturn and owner-occupied housing began generating capital losses, the number of homeowners trapped in negative equity ballooned along with increases in mortgage defaults. While younger homeowners found themselves in expensive properties with little expectation of capital gains, young renters faced greater economic adversity in saving to buy a home and greater insecurity in the housing market. In 1978 over a quarter of those aged 25–29, and nearly half of those aged between 30 and 34, were homeowners. By 1998 this had dropped to one in eight for the former group and around one in five for the latter, whilst the overall level of home ownership (which was

²⁸ Cf. Ronald, Richard and Yosuke Hirayama (2006): Housing commodities, context and meaning. Transformations in Japan’s urban condominium sector.

²⁹ Cf. Ronald and Hirayama (2006).

expected to expand) stayed about the same (Figure 1). The number of single-only and married-couple-only households respectively increased from 23.1 per cent and 15.5 per cent in 1990 to 29.5 per cent and 19.6 per cent by 2005. Although 46.1 per cent of households were nuclear families in 1975, they accounted for only 29.9 per cent by 2005 (Figure 2, p.15).

Essentially, two major household trends since the 1980s have been declining homeownership entry and the diversification of households including greater fragmentation into couples without children and singles. It seems the housing-ladder system and home ownership aspirations, once central to social mainstream homogeneity, are in retreat. The generation born in the 1970s, who entered adulthood in the 1990s, constitutes a particular generation whose chances to form family

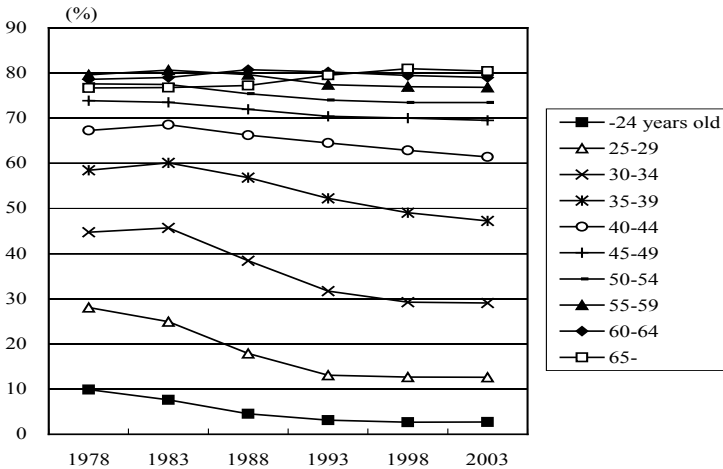


Figure 1: Home ownership rates by age.

Note: Cited from Hirayama 2007, 29.

Source: Housing Survey of Japan and Housing and Land Survey of Japan (various years).

households and move up the housing ladder, or even into independent households, contrasts to the baby boomer and baby busters who came before them. The housing conditions of this generation, named the “lost generation” in public discourses, have been further undermined by changes in employment and government policy changes in the 1990s and 2000s.

Employment and security

Other factors that have reinforced the divide between younger and older generations include the restructuring of the labour market and employment practices, and social policy structures. Family formation and “standard life-courses” before the 1990s integrated both the housing ladder and the employment system. In the Japanese breadwinner

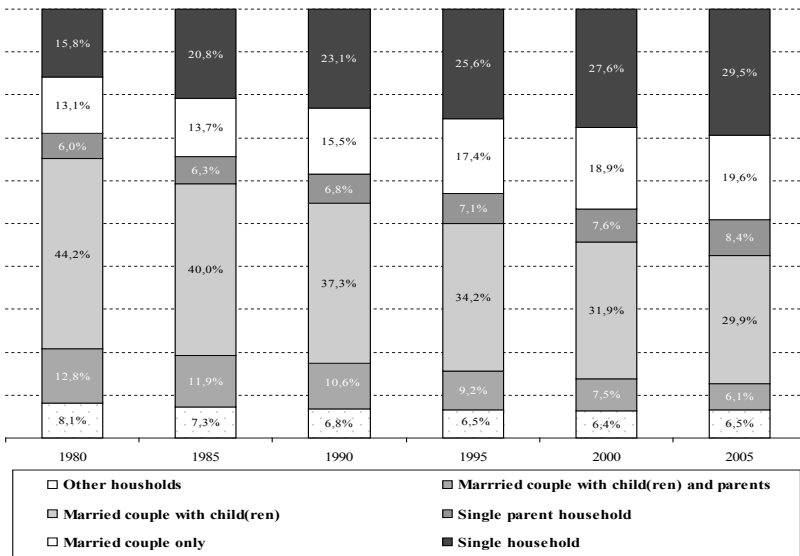


Figure 2: Proportion of households by household type.
Source: Population census (various years).

household model, which formed the basis of company and state policy, it was assumed that male heads of household would enter company employment and move up an income ladder which would reliably advance with age. However after the 1990s economic downturn, companies began retrenching “enterprise society” practices, including those that assisted home purchase.³⁰ A particular break was made between older employees and younger ones. For Genda³¹, corporate restructuring eroded conditions and opportunities for new company recruits. Companies have tended to cut down on job security, pay and training of younger employees, but have maintained the high salaries of older employees.

A particular shift in employment practices has been the amendment of the Dispatched Labour Law in 1999, which regulates employment conditions for temporary staff. This has reinforced labour market differences between non-regular and regular workers, while the share of the former, whether casual, part time or despatched, has increased from 20 per cent in 1994 to 34 per cent in 2007.³² Moreover, non-regular employees that often perform the same work average considerably less income per hour. Part time workers, who account for three-quarters of non-regular workers, typically earn 40 per cent of their regular counterparts. The population of non-regular workers is particularly concentrated among younger people. Between 1982 and 2006, while the average increase was from 16 per cent to 33 per cent, the

³⁰ Cf. Sato (2007).

³¹ Cf. Genda, Yuji (2001): *Shigoto no naka no aimai na fuan* [The vague uneasiness of work].

³² Cf. MIAC – Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (2008): *Statistical handbook of Japan*.

rate of non-regular employees aged 20–24 increased from 11 per cent to 41 per cent.

A particular issue is that increasing amounts of younger people are being cut off from employment ladders that facilitate movement through the traditional life-course and housing ladder. The system of Japanese employment has very rigid windows of opportunity for recruitment into regular employment, and those who fail to move through at the right time are often permanently cut off from regular employment conditions.³³ Indeed, the growing number of NEET (not in employment, education or training) and *furīta* (non-regular workers aged 15–34) reflect the growing divide in society between those on the inside and outside of mainstream society. Government figures suggest that there were around 2.7 million NEETs and *furīta* in 2005.³⁴ Failure to get into secure employment may fundamentally inhibit the ability for many young people to form their own family households. There has been a clear correlation between the unmarried rate and economic status. In 2002 the ratio of unmarried men aged 30 to 34 in regular employment was 41 per cent compared to 70 per cent among non-regular workers.³⁵ Attitude surveys have also demonstrated the significance of this relationship. Among singles in full time employment the desire to, and the perceived merits of marriage are much higher for regular workers than among non-regular employees, at 70 per cent compared to 40–50 per cent.³⁶

³³ Cf. Matthews, Gordon (2004): Seeking a career, finding a job. How young people enter and resist the Japanese world of work.

³⁴ Cf. MHLW – Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (2006): *Chingin kōzō kihan tōkei chōsa* [Basic statistical survey on wage structure in Japan].

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Cf. IPSSR – Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2008): <http://www.ipss.go.jp/index-e.html> (accessed 19 January 2008).

In many developed societies government policies and welfare structures provide alternative networks of support and security which facilitate continued family formation among those on low or irregular incomes. In Japan however, welfare policies are orientated around the “male breadwinner model” making it difficult for individuals to receive government support until after they have established an independent family household.³⁷ Women in particular, who are disadvantaged in the labour market (for example, non-regular work accounts for 53.4 per cent of female employment compared to 18.3 per cent for men), have relied on marriage to achieve economic security and get on the housing ladder.³⁸ Government housing assistance has been provided mostly for family households and channelled primarily through subsidies for housing loans that support those already economically secure enough to get on the property ladder. There is no provision of rent subsidies at all. Before 1981 the GHLC did not provide loans to one-person households and until 1988 only to those aged over 40. The restriction was reduced to 35 and then removed in 1993. In 2007 GHLC loan provision was withdrawn. Public spending on the construction for private rental housing has been limited, while public subsidy for social rental housing, which constitutes less than 7 per cent of total housing, has been continuously residualised. Furthermore, subsidised housing is not available to young single people. The prospects for singles in irregular employment of forming an independent household are neither improved by housing nor social policies. Even the situation of family households with regular employment has been

³⁷ Cf. Yokoyama, Fumino (2002): *Sengo Nihon no josei seisaku* [Public policy for women in post war Japan].

³⁸ Cf. Hirayama, Yosuke and Misa Izuhara (2008): *Women and housing assets in the context of Japan’s home-owning democracy*.

undermined as public and company housing assistance has been re-trenched.

New housing directions

The combination of changing housing and employment conditions has made it increasingly difficult for young households to get a foothold on the housing ladder. Indeed, it has become a challenge for many younger people to even get out of the parental home. Arguably, the very basis of middle-class formation and the reproduction of family households are under threat from the insecurity that now surrounds transition through the different stages of the life-course involving home-leaving, partnership and family formation, and moving up a housing ladder to more adequate and secure housing. The growth of people under 40 staying on as a “parasite” in the parental home has been the source of considerable debate in recent years. Indeed, between 1980 and 2005 the rate of 25 to 29 year olds staying on in the family home increased from 24 per cent to 43 per cent and from 8 per cent to 24 per cent for those aged 30 to 34.³⁹ Although this development was initially considered the outcome of a feckless Japanese youth, attention has turned increasingly to the economic rationality of young people in the current employment climate and the propensity and ability of baby boomer and baby buster parents, who usually have greater economic security and spacious owner-occupied homes, to protect their children.⁴⁰ There is a strong relationship between em-

³⁹ Cf. Ronald, Richard and Yosuke Hirayama (2009): Home alone. The individualization of young, urban Japanese singles.

⁴⁰ Cf. Kitamura, Akiko (2001): *Seijin mikonsha no rika to oyako kankei* [Unmarried adults, home leaving and parent-child relations], and Yamada, Masahiro (1999): *Parasaito shinguru no jidai* [The age of the parasite singles].

ployment status and “parasite singlehood”, with 60 per cent of *furūta* living with their parents.⁴¹ Indeed, most non-regular workers have net annual incomes of less than 3 million yen, making living independently, let alone forming an independent family household, very difficult without parental assistance.

Of those individuals who do leave the family home, the common trajectory has been small compact rental apartment units. Between 1983 and 2003 the ratio of independent households aged 25–29 renting in the private sector increased from 53 per cent to 71 per cent and from 34 per cent to 55 per cent for those aged 30–35. This sector is dominated by 1K and 1DK units of less than 29m² which are normally inadequate to meeting the needs of starting a family or even married life. Again, for those in non-regular employment, rent payments can only be maintained by very frugal living (often with extra financial assistance from family) and chances of moving to better accommodation, either alone or with a partner, is low. Even for younger people who do find regular employment and establish a level of financial security, moving from rental housing to owner-occupied housing is still challenging. Despite declines in house prices, housing affordability is still an issue and the average price-to-income ratio in Tokyo, for example, is 5.2 for a condominium and 5.7 for a family house⁴², well above comparative averages and beyond many ordinary young households. For non-regular workers it is next to impossible to get a housing loan or service repayments, especially as deflation or low inflation no longer erode the real cost of repayments.

⁴¹ Cf. Freeter Kenkyūkai (2001): *Furūta ga wakaruru hon* [A book for understanding temporary workers].

⁴² Cf. MLIT – Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (2005): *Survey of housing market tendency*.

The housing market and economic situations faced by younger people now are radically different from those faced by preceding generations. The sympathetic alignment of the housing system, family formation and regular life-courses appears to have become disconnected. Government policy has not been conducive in this regard and in many ways has exacerbated disalignment. Deregulation and marketization have become the focus of housing and urban reforms since the 2000, with housing as a specific target. The Housing and Urban

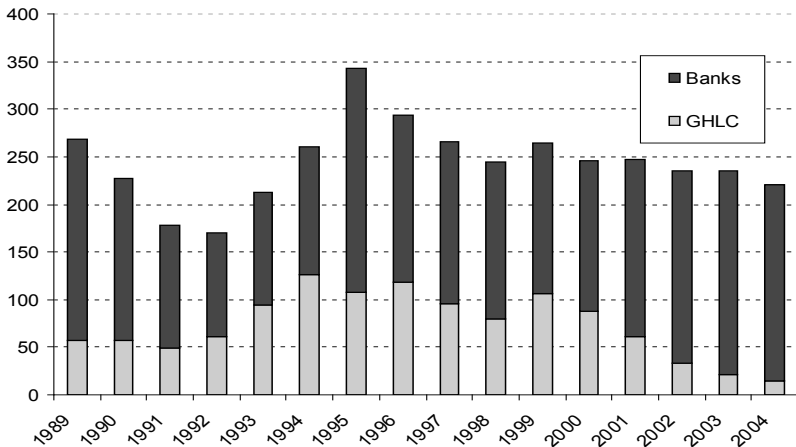


Figure 3: New housing loans (100 Billion Yen).

Note: Cited from Oizumi, 2007, 56.

Source: Government Housing Loan Corporation.

Development Corporation (the JHC until 1981) has been restructured into the Urban Renaissance Agency and no longer supports public rental housing provision, but rather services the interests of private sector development.

More significantly, the GHLC began to be phased out in the late 1990s (Figure 3) to be replaced by the Housing Finance Services Agency (HFSA) in 2007, leaving the private banking sector to fill the

gap in the primary loans market. The HFSA has a similar function to Fannie Mae in the USA, regulating securities in a secondary mortgage market. It is likely that private banks will be more eager to transfer economic risks onto homeowners and will serve the needs of low-income borrowers less effectively.⁴³

Post-war generations received considerable subsidies in their movement up the owner-occupied housing ladder, which have now been withdrawn. Even rental housing has been undermined by deregulation initiatives designed to provide more efficiency in the housing market. The 2000 revision of the Tenant Protection Law introduced a fixed-term tenant contract system which effectively eroded tenure security and rent control in private rental housing. The logic of the change was that tenant protection had impeded improvement in size and quality of rental stock. The private rental sector has now become split between longer term tenants with stable contracts and new, typically younger ones on fixed contracts, often one or two years, with landlords having greater freedom to raise rents or evict. While the impact on rents has not so far been significant, the improvement in the quality and size of dwellings has not improved either.⁴⁴

Housing and family formation

Housing conditions for the young have largely become family unfriendly and arguably support a pattern of very low fertility, reinforcing the features of social ageing. Demographic research has demonstrated a relatively strong positive relationship between becoming a

⁴³ Cf. Oizumi (2007).

⁴⁴ Cf. Seko, Miki and Kazuto Sumida (2007): Japanese tenure choice and welfare implications after the revision of the tenant protection law.

homeowner, marriage and fertility.⁴⁵ However this relationship is often reversed in situations where homeownership has become a social norm (i.e. considered a requirement for starting a family), but where the owner-occupied housing market has become tight, excluding new entrants.⁴⁶ Couples may choose to postpone marriage or even partnership formation until they can find a secure and adequate home. Break-down in conduits of transition into owner-occupied housing thus impede the decision or opportunities to bear children.

In Japan, the erosion of traditional trajectories through the housing ladder brought on by housing market dysfunction, restructuring of employment and welfare relations, and intensified by housing policy liberalization, may constitute a particularly powerful formula for declining fertility rates. Moreover, social policies have tended to neglect the housing dimension in attempting to resolve social issues surrounding fertility. In many societies rental housing provides an adequate alternative for younger couples for starting a life together and bearing children. In Japan however, the rental market is dominated by private rental stock, approximately 30 per cent of all housing, which is characterized by small and poorer quality units. Rental homes are on average 46.3m² and in urban areas where as much as 41 per cent of rental housing is made up of units less than 30m² and 73 per cent less than 50m².⁴⁷ Housing policy has failed to provide either attractive, well spaced rental alternatives for couples to start families in or subsidies to help younger couples rent larger properties. Public rental hous-

⁴⁵ Cf. Mulder, Clara H. and Michael Wagner (1998): First-time home-ownership in the family life course. A West German-Dutch comparison.

⁴⁶ Cf. Mulder, Clara H. (2006): Home ownership and family formation.

⁴⁷ Cf. MLIT – Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (2003): *Housing and land survey of Japan*.

ing constitutes between 5 and 7 per cent of all housing, but is a largely stigmatised sector and qualification criteria are restrictive as public housing provision has been targeted at special needs categories of low-income households, especially the elderly.

The trend has been, consequently, for increasing numbers of twenty- and thirty-somethings to stay in the natal home, or, alternatively, rent a small single unit adequate only to the needs of one. Fewer and fewer younger people can afford to buy a home, especially on a single income. Housing situations of young people are also associated with a notable decline in coupling. A feature of contemporary Japanese society has been the tendency to delay or avoid marriage. Between 1980 and 2005, the rate of “never-marrieds” aged 30 to 34 increased from 21.5 per cent to 47.1 per cent for men and from 9.1 per cent to 32 per cent for women. The unmarried rate by the age of 50 reached 15.4 per cent for men and 6.8 per cent for women in 2005.⁴⁸ Housing system developments appear to support the disruption of established middle-class life-course movement into marriage and up a housing ladder that shaped households and family lives for previous post-war generations. Furthermore, where households do become established on the housing ladder, the cost of home purchase and maintaining a mortgage compete strongly with desires and expectations of having children. In national surveys “the cost” is the most common reason given for why married couples have fewer children. This cause is cited in 65.9 per cent of cases of married women and is as high as 83.5 per cent among women in their 20s.

⁴⁸ Cf. IPSSR (2008).

Housing wealth and the elderly

Declining family formation is essentially contributing to declining fertility rates which are in turn enhancing the imbalance between retired and working populations. Japan's transformation from an "ageing" to an "aged" society, with the share of over 65s increasing from 7 per cent to 14 per cent of the population, took only 24 years. Moreover, older people are living longer (on average 79 years for men and 86 years for women), further unbalancing the ratio between periods of economic activity and inactivity over the life cycle. By 2002 one-fifth of the population was already over 65, and this will likely expand to one-third by 2040.⁴⁹ It is expected that the ratio of workers to pensioners, which was 5.8:1 in 1990 and 3.9:1 in 2000, will increase to 2.1:1 in 2025. This will put considerable pressure on the tax and pay-as-you-go pension contributions of working populations and has already resulted in the restructuring of the pension system around a direct contributions system, since 2004, that demands higher contributions and provides fewer benefits on retirement.⁵⁰ On the other hand, demographic shifts reinforce the significance of housing conditions and wealth. Many among early post-war generations had stable jobs, enjoyed growing national affluence and could build up considerable owner-occupied property assets. This wealth, although not evenly distributed, provides a basis for security for many elderly in retirement. Indeed, housing wealth is playing significant part in shaping life course trends and social inequalities across Japanese society that may

⁴⁹ Cf. UN – United Nations (2008): *World population prospects*. <http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp> (accessed 16. July 2008).

⁵⁰ See Shinakawa, Toshimitsu (2005): The politics of pension reform in Japan. Institutional legacies, credit claiming and blame avoidance.

be repeated elsewhere as social aging increases, especially in countries strongly orientated towards home ownership.

The post-war growth of home ownership along with periods of rapid house price inflation led to a build up of, and dependency on, housing assets among older generations, especially those born before 1950 who typically bought homes before the 1980s economic bubble. The demographic developments currently underway in Japan, however, mark a particular shift in the balance of housing wealth.

Arakawa⁵¹ has identified that more than half of the nation's domestic financial assets (53 per cent according to the 2000 survey on attitudes towards saving) are contained in the housing property held by those over 60 (Figure 4). Furthermore, the home ownership rate

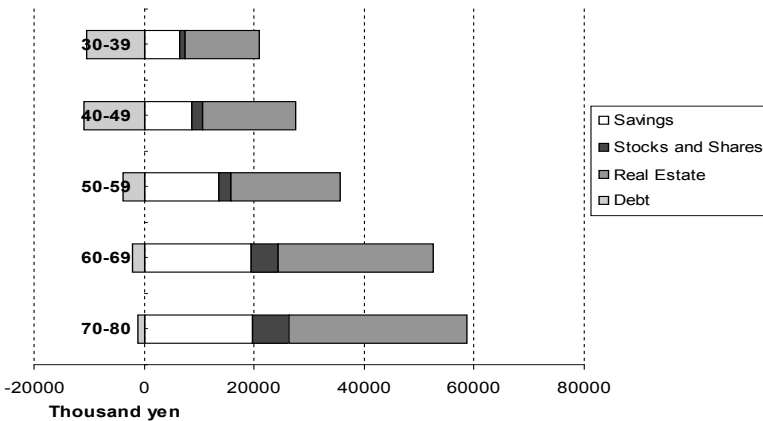


Figure 4: Asset distribution by age group.
Note: Cited from Izuhara 2007, 99.
Source: Arakawa (2003).

⁵¹ Cf. Arakawa, Tadashi (2003): *Kōreisha hoyu shisan no genjō to sōzoku* [Older people's assets and inheritance].

among this age group is 85 per cent and approximately 20 per cent of real estate assets held by older people include properties other than their own home. There are numerous consequences involving an increasing role for housing in maintaining wealth and living standards in old age.

As the economic pressures of ageing society increase, the ability of retired homeowners to live in better quality housing and pay lower housing costs is likely to become more significant to maintaining living standards over time, meaning tenure and levels of housing equity will become greater determinants of social inequality and poverty in old age. In addition, because of indigenous construction techniques and the limited longevity of Japanese built units⁵², the maintenance cost of individual homes will also become a significant factor in the performance of housing properties as a supplement to retired living costs. It is likely that urban middle-class homeowners in newer properties will enjoy the greatest benefits, while owner-occupiers in poorer or older housing, especially in rural areas where wooden housing still dominates, may even be disadvantaged by the costs of home ownership.

Although intergenerational co-residency has been in prolonged decline, proximity has become a preferred means of facilitating reciprocal care arrangements within families. Modern housing units have been designed to accommodate this. *Nisetai jūtaku* (two generation house) is a mainstay product of the house-building industry. It provides a level of self-containment and privacy for parents and children on one floor of the house, separate from the space of the grandparents on another. Intergenerational housing transfers and cohabitation are

⁵² Cf. Ronald, Hirayama (2006).

likely to increasingly feature in provisioning for old age.⁵³ This may well enhance social differences based on the tenure, quality and location of parent's housing. Moreover, this may involve intensified negotiation over residential and housing inheritance arrangements, reviving the family in the welfare mix despite the greater socialisation of public health and welfare arrangements in recent decades.

A provision for remodelling homes constitutes part of Long Term Care Insurance programme (LTCI) initiated in 2000. This scheme provides those over 64 access to health and welfare facilities (nursing homes etc.), but also home care services. In practice, the approach of LTCI has become increasingly focused on self-reliance and the family to provide care, with the use of insurance only where it is absolutely necessary. A notable feature of state subsidized services is the provision for improvements in the homes of care receivers.⁵⁴ Since 1993, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and the Ministry of Health and Labour have been assisting in the remodelling of private homes to suit mobility and care needs of the elderly, which has been incorporated into LTCI provision. The government's approach to house remodelling, which extends the self-reliance of the elderly within their own homes, relies considerably on the housing situation of elderly households who are mostly homeowners. Those with large owner-occupied homes are often better able to take advantage of state subsidies and home care, as well as family care. They also retain the wealth contained in their home, which is normally passed on to their

⁵³ Cf. Brown, Naomi (1996): *The nisetai jūtaku phenomenon. The prefabrication housing industry and changing family patterns in contemporary Japan.*

⁵⁴ Cf. Park, Byung Hyun and Han Oak Lee (2008): A comparative study of housing welfare politics for the elderly between Korea and Japan – focused on the elderly who can live independently.

children. Although LTCI constituted a universal provision (and marked state responsibility) for elderly care, it may well reproduce inequalities based on differences in housing situations in terms of tenure status and property values, with the divide between generations and economic groups becoming more pronounced over time.

Conclusions

Appreciation of housing system and property market changes has largely been absent in the consideration of demographic transformation in Japan. This paper has sought to demonstrate the role of the housing sector in post-war social economic development and how it contributed to shaping standard families and life-courses. In the post-bubble era the housing market and housing ladder were destabilized, which in combination with restructuring in employment and policy has helped further undermine household stability and contributed to the fragmentation of households and life-course trajectories. An emerging issue is the gap in housing conditions and disalignment in life-courses between different generations of Japanese that contribute to the polarization of wealth, insecurity and risk which have destabilized processes of Japanese social reproduction.

This paper has also emphasized the social impact that housing and tenure systems as well as the specific interaction with socioeconomic and demographic developments. While social and economic restructuring in Japan, which has impacted housing markets and influenced household patterns, the housing system itself is also helping to shape new patterns of household formation and movement through the life-course. It appears that the bias toward owner-occupation, which once supported fertility and family formation, is beginning to have the reverse effect. Furthermore, this tendency seems to reinforce the imbal-

ance between younger and ageing populations in terms of economic pressures and residential conditions. A situation appears to be developing in which an “asset-rich, cash-poor” older population, who often hold considerable housing assets and dwell in large homes, relies increasingly on the working population as well as their housing assets in order to maintain living standards in old age. Meanwhile, an “asset-poor, income-insecure” younger generation is emerging that is struggling to access independent housing adequate for starting a family or providing an asset reserve to supplement their own old age. Essentially, the housing system seems to be now exaggerating the effects of an ageing population as well as the significance of differences in housing conditions between households.

It appears that attitudes to family formation, life-course trajectories and housing preferences are being renegotiated among younger people. It is not yet clear how and if younger generations will ascend a housing ladder or what norms will become embedded in terms of partnership formation, childbearing and dwelling practices. It seems they face a completely new set of conditions in which many of the certainties of the post-war social order have melted away. Older people too have to cope with their old age in terms of new social contracts that require renegotiating family reciprocity and the use of their homes as containers and conduits of wealth. Those without housing assets will be particularly disadvantaged, as will their descendants.

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AKIKO ODA

Older Japanese Spouse Care in Relation to Household Structure, Gender Relations, and Political Economy

Abstract

In Japanese families, the extramarital relation is increasingly gaining prominence over the traditional parent-son stem relation as the fulcrum in many households. Patriarchy is being structurally transformed in domestic life where social changes are gradually re-shaping the family ideal in terms of care provision for older parents. At the root of this lies a change in the power balance in relations between the young and the elderly, where changes in household structures are witnessing a marked shift in which older people are increasingly maintaining couple-only households, with a recent sharp decline in the traditional multi-generational living arrangement. Consequently, older people have to rely increasingly on their own means to take care of each other's needs. This placed an increased strain on older women, in particular on those who have to take care of disabled partners. These women are traditionally subjugated by power dynamics whereas the older Japanese male maintains the dominant *daikokubashira* (head of household) status. Trying to ease the burden, the Long Term Care Insurance (LTCI) scheme was introduced by the Japanese Government in 2000. However, the elderly couples participating in my study have

shown a reluctance to ask for this kind of help. Instead they are mostly relying on their own means and are deterred from invoking external care through a number of complex factors correlating to socio-economic issues, pragmatism, social stigma, and gendered norms.

Introduction

Japan is experiencing a rapid and striking demographic development in its population of elderly people, which proportionally ranks high amongst the developed nations. The issue of who will provide for their care has come into political focus, whereas established norms of older people being cared for within the multi-generational family setting are in decline.¹ Japan's rapid change in its demographic structure is dramatic; the proportion of people over 65 was just 4.9 per cent in 1950, increased to 7.9 per cent in 1975, and 21.5 per cent in 2007 and is expected to reach 39.6 per cent by 2050.² The same trend is observed in Western Europe where those aged above 65 are estimated to reach 27 per cent and 32 per cent in the UK and Germany by 2050.³

The time period it took for the UK population aged 65 and older to double from 7 to 14 per cent of the total population was 45 years (between 1930 and 1975), while the Japanese population reached the

¹ Cf. Sumiya, Mikio (1992): *Shakai hoshō no tenkai to tenbō* [Progress and prospect of social security in Japan], 137.

² Cf. Statistics Bureau (2008): *The Statistical Handbook of Japan 2008*. <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/c02cont.htm> (accessed 24 October 2008).

³ Cf. Eurostat (2006): *International day of older persons EU25 population aged 65 and over expected to double between 1995 and 2050*, 12 September 2006 – 29 September 2006. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2006/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2006_MONTH_09/3-29092006-EN-BP.PDF (accessed 19 October 2008).

same growth in only 26 years (between 1970 and 1996).⁴ This is an important factor in discussions about health care finances and the pension system; the more rapid the ageing process, the faster the necessity for a political response. In the light of this demographic trend, Ueno⁵ argues that the “common sense” of care giving for older Japanese people has shifted dramatically from the *daikazoku* ideal (living in the 3 generational household and being looked after by the extended family⁶) to living alone. In 1980, about 70 per cent of the Japanese people who were older than 64 cohabited with their children’s family. This figure shrank to 44 per cent in 2006⁷ while the percentage of elderly couple’s households has increased rapidly in the last two decades and is predicted to grow further⁸. With that said Ueno pointed out that spouse caregiving in old age has now become a common practice in Japan.

In this paper, the care dynamics among 21 elderly couples living in the Kantō region of Eastern Honshū (the main Japanese island) where one partner requires intensive informal care to remain living in the community are analyzed. The main focus is on older spouses providing care for a husband who has a limiting disability that can range from physiological impairment to cancer. The more concealed situation of the older spouse is researched on in terms of caregiving in re-

⁴ Cf. Smith, Chris *et al.* (2005): *Focus on people and migration. The changing age structure of the UK population*. http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/fom2005/04_FOPM_AgeStructure.pdf (accessed 18 October 2008).

⁵ Cf. Ueno, Chizuko (2007): *Ohitorisama no rōgo* [Alone in later life].

⁶ Cf. Thang, Leng Leng (2001): *Generations in touch. Linking the old and young in a Tokyo neighborhood*.

⁷ Cf. Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (2008): *Heisei 20 nen kōsei hakusho* [Welfare white paper for 2008]. <http://www8.cao.go.jp/kourei/whitepaper/w-2008/zenbun/html/s1-2-1-02.html> (accessed 15 September 2008).

⁸ Cf. Statistics Bureau (2008).

gards to the difficulties encountered in performing physical labour linked to caregiving and domestic tasks. Closely related to the issue are gender power relations between husband and wife whereas the elderly man is confronted by the reality of having less control over his body because of significant medical factors and relies heavily on those providing care for him.

Power dynamics in older couple's relationships can adversely affect matters when, according to Graeber, women are compelled to handle their husband carefully in order not to cause their spouse to behave in an aggressive manner. In doing so they constantly have to perceive matters from a male point of view (imaginative identification or interpretive labour).⁹ This is not typically reciprocated by older men who are likely to disdain the converse situation, while their wives constantly have to deal with and maintain their husband's egos.¹⁰

This paper also analyzes how care provision is influenced by the type of the household (couple versus multi-generational model), and the relationship between the male care recipient and his wife. Socio-economic factors influence the types and quality of care provided which is influenced by the recipient's social class and the use of external care services that encompass inequalities of access to Japan's LTCI (Long Term Care Insurance) scheme. Elderly couple's points of view on the use of care services under the LTCI scheme are discussed in relation to traditional family ideology and gendered norms, which can be regarded as the reason for the reluctance to utilize external care

⁹ Cf. Graeber, David (2006): *Beyond power/knowledge. An exploration of the relation of power, ignorance and stupidity*. LSE Malinowski Memorial Lecture Thursday 25 May 2006. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEPublicLecturesAndEvents/pdf/20060525-Graeber.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2008).

¹⁰ Cf. Itō, Kimio (2002): *Dekinai otoko kara dekiru otoko e* [How "unable men" become "able"].

among older people, despite the need for intensive care by many of the elderly men.

Older Japanese women who have to take care of a disabled spouse face increasing tasks in their daily lives and have to sustain their roles despite rapid societal changes, among them particularly the decline of multi-generational living arrangements and difficult economic times. This paper therefore contrasts how older women from different social classes are challenged in their roles as caregivers. To widen the scope, this paper will also highlight a number of important factors that emerge in the decision making processes of elderly couples when they decide not to seek external care, whereby the dynamics are connected to socio-economic and class-based factors, social stigma, and gendered norms.

Methodology

This paper is based on data on a subset of 21 couples out of 47 interviewed who fulfil the required criteria that one partner or both among them has to have a significant health problem. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with married couples between the age of 62 and 87 years, focusing on couple dynamics on several issues relating to the level of care. The interviewees came from communities within the Kantō region of Eastern Honshū; therefore no claim for generalization can be made. However the analysis of the data revealed common themes amongst the older spouse caregivers. Data gathering was in accordance with ethical procedures laid out by the British Sociological Association¹¹.

¹¹ Cf. British Sociological Association (2004): *Statement of ethical practice*. <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/468F236C-FFD9-4791-A0BD-4DF73F10BA43/0/StatementofEthicalPractice.doc> (accessed 18 September 2008).

Sample Characteristics

There were 20 couples with one partner in need of a high level of care (17 men and 3 women) and one couple, in which both spouses showed a high level of care. The care recipient's education level, occupation, and major health problems are listed in Table 1 on page 26. In all but one case, the care for the husband was completely or almost completely provided by the wife. Among the 4 older women requiring care, 3 were cared for by their daughters or daughters in law, and only one was cared for by her husband.

Aspects correlating to a high level of dependency on care

Intimacy in care provision is particularly poignant when the recipient has developed incontinence or requires assistance with bathing and dressing, although in my research the elderly couples were reluctant to discuss such matters. This reluctance is linked to a number of issues; the most significant one being the fact that basic everyday activities such as toileting, bathing, and dressing are not verbally discussed. These activities are taboo-related and the reluctance to discuss such matters can also be described as a way of thinking. This corresponds to the psychological interpretation by regarding the importance of "non-linguistic knowledge".¹²

In terms of common frame of reference, it was pointed out on several occasions during the data collection that it was pointless to talk to me about matters outside my comprehension due to my young age and lack of appreciation. In this respect, Lave coined the term "apprentice-

¹² Cf. Bloch, Maurice (1991): *Language, anthropology and cognitive science*, 186.

ship learning”, which relies on the “assumptions that knowing, thinking and understanding are generated in practice”.¹³

For the elderly couples who refused to be interviewed separately discussing intimate matters was complicated because the spouses were reluctant to embarrass their husband by outspokenly talking about intimate aspects (e.g. incontinence) of the men’s health status. Instead, the wife was inclined to be upbeat and positive rather than focused on the negative or pessimistic aspects of caregiving, if possible. Most of the men were reluctant to discuss their declined health in any detail and tried to deflect or play down its significance on occasions.

Caregiving pressure faced by older women

Physical and psychological stress increases the burden experienced by older women who take care of their partner, who has a high level of dependency on care. Mr. Ikeda succumbed to his terminal stomach cancer several months after my interview with him. In the final stages of his life, Mrs. Ikeda and her daughter were minded to look after him and tried to keep his spirits up by maintaining a positive attitude. Despite her husband’s depression that caused great emotional hurt, as his wife and main caregiver, Mrs. Ikeda was determined to see her pastoral role through to the end. As well as carrying out physical care tasks, elderly women like Mrs. Ikeda are also giving emotional support. This aspect of hidden work is described by Kasuga as the central necessary skill for looking after older frail people.¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Lave, Jean (1990): The culture of acquisition and the practice of understanding, 310.

¹⁴ Cf. Kasuga, Kisuyo (1999): *Kazoku to iu kankei no konnan to kibō* [Difficulties and wishes concerning family].

Mrs. Ikeda revealed how stressful it was for her to suppress her inner feelings regarding her husband's depressive state, which was a sentiment that came across in many of the interviews with the women. Long mentions how the caregiver is expected to suppress the mental stress or burden as a virtue (of ideal caregiving).¹⁵ However, recently, there has been more public awareness in Japan about the mental and physical burden of caregiving imposed on spouses (mostly older women) taking care of their partners.¹⁶ Like in the case of Mrs. Yamashita, who suffered a stroke three years ago but has completely recovered now. She took over the management of their grocery store ten years ago, when her husband was confined to a wheelchair. She also supported the family by taking over a range of domestic tasks. Her stroke was attributed to the endurance of the great work load that according to Ochiai is a common cause of burden which induces illness in elderly women who provide care¹⁷.

Their ability to continue to provide care for their husbands in the future was the concern which was more frequently stated by older women in households in which only the couple lived and where there are less options to withdraw and support compared to multi-generational households. The main factors identified by the spouses were increased body limitations with age, and financial related difficulties.¹⁸

¹⁵ Cf. Long, Susan O. (1996): Nurturing and femininity. The impact of the ideal of care giving in post war Japan.

¹⁶ Cf. Kasuga, Kisuyo (2007): Kea, kanjō, jendā. Kōreisha kaigo mondai wo tōshite [Care, feelings, gender. Through the problem of geriatric care], and Kusumoto, Yuko *et al.* (2008): Zaitaku ninchishō kōreisha no kazokub kaigoshā no kōfukukan to sono riyū – Nihon to Kankoku no genjō [Family caregivers of demented elderly. Subjective well-being and attitudes toward caregiving – present situations in Japan and Korea].

¹⁷ Cf. Ochiai, Emiko (1999): *21 seiki kazoku e* [Towards the 21st century family].

¹⁸ Cf. Utsunomiya, Hiroshi (2000): *Kōreisha no kekkon seikatsu no keizokuishi to tekiō ni kansuru hattatsu-teki kenkyū. Kankeisei suteitasu no kanten kara* [A deve-

In general spouses from a lower income background were more aware of possible implications of their own bodily constitution, and how it could affect their viability to continue to provide care. In contrast, elderly couples from a more affluent background tended to display a more relaxed attitude and greater confidence in the future. This topic is more closely examined later in the paper in relation to the elderly people's opinions on the Japanese LTCI scheme, and the socio-economic factors impinging on their ability to afford care services.

Physical work connected to caregiving

Physical work requirements in this paper are defined as hands-on care that focuses on the body of the recipient and relates to hygiene aspects of taking care of someone. It carries the stigma of “dirty” work¹⁹. Mr. Nemura, Mr. Ikeda and Mr. Ono (individually interviewed), and several others mentioned difficulties with toileting but were reluctant to elaborate on this matter. The inability to be in full control of one's bodily functions can have a damaging effect on the person's self worth, since such a lack of toileting control has usually not been experienced since early childhood. Citing Miller²⁰, Twigg mentions how “the idiom of disgust evokes the sensory experience” whereas incontinence can be the most difficult of situations to deal with.²¹ Of the interviewed caregivers Mr. Hama talked most openly about his coping strategies

lopmental study on the intention of elderly persons to continue and adapt to their marital life. From the viewpoint of the relationship status] and Amada, Jōsuke (2003): *Rōfūfu shinjū ron. (1) Kōrei fūfu kaigo wo meguru aidentitī no seijigaku* [The controversy of double suicide among senior couples. (1) The political science of identity concerning the nursing of elderly couples].

¹⁹ Cf. Twigg, Julia (2000): *Bathing. The body and community care*.

²⁰ Cf. Miller, William I. (1997): *The anatomy of disgust*.

²¹ Cf. Twigg (2000).

with his wife's incontinence, and two other women described similar proceedings dealing with the incontinence of their mothers-in-law over a prolonged period of time.

Physical work can be particularly demeaning when conducted by a person of high status, and it is not unusual in such cases for distancing techniques to be applied.²² For example Mr. Hama, a senior English teacher tried to sound "matter of fact"²³ saying it was just a part of living with his wife, when talking about the difficult experience of dealing with his wife's incontinence. This type of talking is indicative of the effective "worker" characteristics of the male care giver discussed by Harris.²⁴

Gender differences in the attitudes of older people can be discovered while talking about toileting-related issues. Several women in my study pointed out that the worst case future scenario was to require toileting assistance themselves. However, none of the older men commented on the issue. It seemed as if they implicitly expected their wives to take care of their incontinence and did not feel ashamed. In this respect Namihira notes that the heightened awareness towards hygiene standards of Japanese people underwent a shift towards a desire not to mention, toilet-related matters at all.²⁵ When asked about toileting difficulties, Mrs. Hama did not disclose her previous incontinence. As it had occurred mainly in the past, she might have thought

²² Cf. Twigg, Julia (2004): *The body, gender and age. Feminist insights in social gerontology.*

²³ Cf. Rose, Hillary and Bruce Errollyn (1995): *Mutual care but differential esteem. Caring between older couples*, 127.

²⁴ Cf. Harris, Phyllis Braudy (1993): *Listening to care giving sons. Misunderstood realities.*

²⁵ Cf. Namihira, Emiko (1996): *Inochi no bunka jinruigaku* [The cultural anthropology of life], 69.

of it as no longer relevant. However, from my own deductions and Mr. Hama's comments regarding his wife's personality, I conclude that her reluctance to acknowledge it was based on the possibility that admitting to such a loss of bodily control is considered unacceptable in Japanese society. As previously stated, most of the older disabled men expect their wives to perform the physical work connected to caregiving. The only mentionable exception was Mr. Watanabe, who takes care of his own toileting matters despite the fact that he has been confined to a wheelchair for seven years. He had an operation to fit a colostomy bag and stoma (collects faeces). He is determined to stay as active as possible by driving a wheelchair adapted car operated by hand gears to improve his independence. He wishes to be a "proper member of society", fully participating and not to be compromised by age and disability.

Sharing the burden

Physical work connected to caregiving is complicated because it is not just limited to the hygiene aspects but as in the case of bathing involves nakedness and therefore intimacy. How these activities are performed and how the care recipients and caregivers connect emotionally is also important. Bathing for example reveals cultural differences. Twigg mentioned, that in the U.K. parents are reluctant to be bathed by their own children and prefer professional care provision instead.²⁶ However, in my study, a greater willingness to be bathed by one's own children or daughters-in-law was expressed. Mr. Nemura could not bath alone so his son assisted him and when Mrs. Nemura had difficulties bathing, their daughter assisted her.

²⁶ Cf. Twigg (2000).

Mrs. Nemura looks after her husband who suffers from vertigo and dementia resulting from a brain haemorrhage; however she is currently recovering from a thigh fracture and has difficulties looking after him. During the day, she performs her chores (cleaning and cooking etc.) for her son's family and their daughter in a three generational household. The couple's children provide occasional assistance such as transport. About half of the older interviewed couples mentioned that their extended family provided them with additional care support such as shopping and taxi service. Most of these couples stated that those arrangements were based on past reciprocity, and wished to make clear that their children were not "blackmailed" to provide them care support. As a matter of fact it is the household structure that often dictates the amount of available care. A multi-generational household is more likely to provide available helpers, by default.

An example of reciprocal caregiving is practiced in Mrs. Yamashita's home. Mrs. Yamashita has lived in the same area for most of her life. Her third son and brother-in-law live in the same neighbourhood, so she can call upon additional assistance from her extended family when she requires additional help to care for her wheelchair-bound husband. However, those couples interviewed who had a household to themselves could not draw upon a similar support network. In several cases that was due to separating distances to their family members, unavailability of help from their extended family, or due to childlessness. In this situation, the elderly couples have a tendency to cope on their own with a strong reluctance to impose any care assistance upon their children. In the case of Mrs. Katō, Mrs. Miyamoto, and Mr. Hama they all expressed a resolute couple-oriented mindset and the reluctance to seek care support from their extended families.

Important aspects of physical work related to caregiving are the direct effects on the caregiver's health. When the caregiver is advanced in years it can be very difficult and hard work to care for a disabled person. Mrs. Yamashita and Mrs. Miyamoto stated their concern about the possibility of being helpless if their husbands should have an accident at home. Several of the women also commented on their worsening knee pain due to the physical efforts required looking after their spouses. Mrs. Yamashita, for example, had strained her knees more than once when she crouched down to dress her wheelchair bound husband, and found it very difficult to stand due to the repetitive bending motions.

This section has discussed the pressure faced by older women who operate as caregivers and who provide care on a daily basis to their husbands. It has also looked at the physical side of their tasks and their options to share the burden. It was stated that the burden was greater where care support was not available as it is the case in households maintained by couples. In multi-generational households more support could be provided. Examples for physical work and emotional pressures connected to caregiving were given to show how a considerable strain is imposed on the caregiver and how in several cases elderly women sustained some kind of injury as a direct consequence of the burden. It was found that providing emotional support while suppressing one's own emotions was an attitude often found in older spouses in order to deal with their husband's particular situation. "Pragmatic acceptance"²⁷ of their caregiving responsibility is an important factor of the way in which these older women are able to cope and manage within a stressful environment.

²⁷ Cf. Mann, Michael (1970): The social cohesion of liberal democracy, 425.

Power dynamics

It is of importance to consider power dynamics between the caregiver and the care recipient, especially in situations where the man, despite his poor health, is unwilling to relinquish his *daikokubashira* (head of household) status, meaning that he remains the dominant partner in the couple's relationship.²⁸ Also the men's behaviour due to their inability and frustration to accept their disability, and how it undermines their personal status, has an effect on the power dynamics within the couple's relationship. It is an important issue because chronic illness and disability can have a very negative impact on the nature and quality of a couple's relationship.

Couple power dynamics

David Graeber referred to his observations of the situation comedy culture in 1950s America when he talked of the internalized forms (conscious or sub-conscious guiding principles) of structural inequality in couple's relations to each other. This is based on images subscribed to patriarchal families in which men ridicule their wives as irrational or for having their own female logic, while the wife is expected to understand her husband's.²⁹ Several elderly women in my research expressed that they have to make an effort to understand their husband's perspectives and their feelings. Graeber's observations are supported by the older men in my research who were unable or unwilling to take account of their wives perspective on various matters such as finances and health concerns etc.

²⁸ Cf. Itō (2002), Ueno, Chizuko (2003): *Ueno Chizuko ga bungaku wo shakaigaku suru* [Ueno Chizuko sociologises literature] and Ueno (2007).

²⁹ Cf. Graeber (2006).

The men in my study had a traditional body image that requires the body to be “healthy and apt” and in cases when they were unable to live up to this image, their frustration often manifested in form of emotional outbursts against their wives. Living alone with her husband, consequently put Mrs. Gotō in her husband’s line of fire. She claimed to often having to calm down her husband. The women in my study typically voiced frustration towards their husbands regarding the inequality in their relationships and their desire for a more egalitarian understanding and mutual participation in household chores. It was however assumed that it was unlikely to change as according to the women their husband’s mindset conformed to the *Shōwa hitoketa* (the single-digit Shōwa-Japanese, born between 1925 and 1934), which refers to old fashioned values and mindsets in which men regard labour as gender-segregated.³⁰ Furthermore, the women believed that at their husbands’ current stage in life and with their poor health it was too late for them to undergo a radical change of attitude. Mr. Gotō’s wife quoted her husband saying, “I feed you, so if you do not like the way I do things, leave”, which is at the least, an uncompromising statement. The use of what can be best described as “economic blackmail” to assert the husband’s authority in the marital relationship was also reported by Ueno.³¹ Regarding structural inequality, older women such as Mrs. Gotō are in a weak position in this type of relationship when according to Graeber “patriarchal families of this sort are, as generations of feminists have emphasized, most certainly forms of structural violence; their norms are indeed sanctioned by threat of

³⁰ Cf. Borovoy, Amy (2005): *The too-good wife. Alcohol, co-dependency, and the politics of nurturance in post war Japan*, 36f.

³¹ Cf. Ueno (2007).

physical harm in endless subtle and not-so-subtle ways”.³² Graeber’s “violence” broadly refers to situations, which oppose the realisation of a more egalitarian social relationship when women are wary of challenging the status quo by seeking to debate, clarify, or re-negotiate contentious issues with their husband.³³ The cause behind the situation is the husband’s unwillingness to consider his wife’s point of view, expressed through abrupt endings to any discussions on the matter. Consequently, the husband’s point of view is justifiably perceived as unreasonable by his wife. In the interviews, none of the women disclosed any information suggesting they were in fear of, or had previously suffered physical harm. But following Graeber’s philosophy “physical harm” also includes verbal attacks that inflict mental psychological stress.³⁴ Due to her lack of financial autonomy and the social normative restrictions applied to women in Japan, the dominant position of Mrs. Gotō’s husband in the marital relationship is likely to remain unchallenged.

A number of important factors that explain why many spouses tolerate situations like Mrs. Gotō’s became clear during the conducted interviews. Reasons given by the elderly women included not to seek *jukunen rikon* (older couple divorce) on the ground of having invested so much into their relationships over a long period of time. Also, their husbands advanced age or poor medical prognosis often predicted a natural ending to their marriage. Women were also opposed to divorce considering possible negative effects on their children. Implications were also made, indicating the potential cause of a schism within the extended family network.

³² Cf. Graeber (2006), 7.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Intergenerational power dynamics

Daikazoku (large family) in Japan is an idealized image of the extended family household in which older parents demand power and respect, especially from their daughters-in-law, and it is synonymous with older parents being well cared for within the extended family settings.³⁵ However, Mrs. Katō and Mr. Ikeda stated that previous tensions with their daughters-in-law were the dominant factor behind the decision to live away from their son's families. Mrs. Yamashita also reported similar tensions that resulted in her daughter-in-law moving out. In each case, the daughter and parents-in-law were in dispute over a power struggle where the daughter-in-law refused to follow the established convention of the idealized image of the *daikazoku*.³⁶ It was further implied by several women of my study that their daughters-in-law had a mercenary mindset. The basis for this accusation was a reluctance on behalf of the daughters-in-law to provide care, where those cared for were unable to provide a financial legacy.

Although the older couples in my study who live in multi-generational settings received help from within their families, it is my contention that the idealised image of the *daikazoku* is exposed to increasing pressure due to social changes. Ochiai, Jenike, and Kasuga argue that the ideal of warmth in *daikazoku*, which assumes that elderly people in three generational households are well looked after by their extended family, is a myth.³⁷ Instead the older people in such households may struggle to be taken care of by their family, and in my study,

³⁵ Cf. Thang (2001).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Cf. Ochiai (1999), Jenike, Brenda R. (2004): *Alone in the family. Great-grandparenthood in urban Japan*, and Kasuga, Kisuyo (2009): *Kōreisha to jendā – hitori to kazokuno aida* [Older persons and gender – between individual and family].

some older couples did in fact struggle to care for each other when their co-resident children were busy. Ochiai and Jenike have pointed out that many older people living within multi-generational households experience loneliness and depression.³⁸ Jenike, Hashimoto and Kasuga have also highlighted how increasing numbers of older people who live in multi-generational households are becoming more isolated with less communication and other forms of contact with their co-resident children. This has been termed *kateinai hitorigurashi* (living as a single person within a family).³⁹

Older people's perception of what intergenerational relations ought to be in a stem family may also have changed. In my study, a major opinion of the elderly women was that the daughters-in-law were less normative in the way they related to their parents-in-law, and had greater autonomy than previous generations. The changed dynamic is such that most Japanese people believe that economically secure older parents should live independently in separate households to avoid possible conflicts with their daughters-in-law⁴⁰, an observation that also proved to be true in my study. This contradicts the "traditional" *daikazoku* ideal and until recently would have led to stigmatization of older parents, as it would have indicated their failure in raising children.⁴¹

This section has discussed the complex power dynamics between older couples in different household settings. Initially, the power dy-

³⁸ Cf. Ochiai (1999) and Jenike, Brenda R. (2003): Parent care and shifting family obligations in urban Japan, Chapter 9.

³⁹ Cf. Jenike (2004), Hashimoto, Akiko (2008). Blondie, Sazae, and their storied successors. Japanese families in newspaper comics, and Kasuga (2009), 2.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ueno (2007).

⁴¹ Cf. Koyano, Wataru (1996). Filial piety and intergenerational solidarity in Japan.

namics in the older couples were based on the patrilineal family system, in which the husband retained the dominant position despite his failing health. In the intergenerational setting, the power dynamics have shifted away from the elderly couples towards the younger generation where the former norm of the older parent's authority over the family has declined considerably. A further important area of interest related to caregiving involves the LTCI scheme introduced in Japan in 2000. The LTCI scheme is based on policies that are designed to provide support and care for the elderly in contemporary Japan.⁴² The large shift in Japan's population's age average coupled with the decline of multi-generational households and socio-economic factors, as well as the changing attitudes found in the society concerning how to take care of its elderly people means that the support provided under the auspices of the LTCI scheme is likely to become more significant. We now examine how the older couples in my study relate to the LTCI scheme.

Attitudes and use of external care (LTCI)

Ueno and Long et al. have argued that external care provided through the LTCI scheme can be beneficial in terms of the effect on the life quality of elderly couples where one partner has a serious chronic or disabling illness.⁴³ Mrs. Katō mentioned particular advantages of her husband's regular day care centre attendance, which offer her space and respite. Under the LTCI scheme, people can attend the day care centre several times a week, or receive home care visits, depending on

⁴² Cf. Sumiya (1992).

⁴³ Cf. Ueno (2007) and Long, Susan O., Ruth Campbell and Chie Nishimura (2009): Does it matter who cares? A comparison of daughters versus daughters-in-law in Japanese elder care.

the assessment of the individual's needs, the availability of particular services, and also the affordability of the combination of services. At the day care centre, elderly people are able to use a bathroom that has wheelchair adapted fixtures, and they can also receive assistance in feeding if required.⁴⁴ Mr. Hama used the LTCI scheme for his wife and had an attendant prepare meals at his home once a week. Mrs. Watanabe used the weekly home care bathing service for her husband, and Mr. Katō regularly attended the day care centre to take part in a rehabilitation program after his stroke.

However, Shimono and Takami et al. have argued that the LTCI scheme is not sufficient to support elderly disabled care recipients in the community because it is based on the premise that the caregiver's burden is reduced.⁴⁵ This issue was raised by elderly couples in my study who pointed out that the LTCI scheme is more beneficial for family caregivers who need respite from caregiving rather than for the care recipients themselves.

Factors in reluctant utilisation of external care services

The strength of social stigma that opposes the use of LTCI care has been reported by several scholars.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the number of eld-

⁴⁴ Cf. MHLW – Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2009): *Kaigo hoken seido no gaiyō* [An overview of the long term care insurance system]. http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/kaigo/index_gaiyo.html (accessed 19 September 2009).

⁴⁵ Cf. Shimono, Keiko (2007). Why it is important to have a kind daughter-in-law in Japan. Long-term care for the elderly in Japan and Australia, and Takami, Chie, Sawayo Tadatsu and Mizuko Manabu (2008). *Kaigo hoken sābisu riyōsha no sābisu ni taisuru manzokudo shakudo datōsei oyobi shiranaisei* [Validity and reliability of the scale of users' satisfaction with services received under the long-term care insurance system].

⁴⁶ Cf. Brown, Naomi (2003): Under one roof. The evolving story of three generation housing in Japan, Jenike (2003) and Tsukada, Noriko and Yasuhiko Saitō (2006):

erly people registered to use the LTCI services has significantly increased during the past 5 years.⁴⁷ Recent studies have shown that the social stigma is lessening, particularly amongst the younger elderly people.⁴⁸ However, it is often reported that significant numbers of older frail men in lower socio-economic groups are less inclined to use the health services to which they are entitled.⁴⁹

The frequent use of utterances such as “not wishing to be dependent” and “being unlucky” in relation to external care indicated the desire of many older men in my research not to depend on care provided through the LTCI scheme, neither day care visits nor home visits. Instead, Mr. Endō emphasised reciprocity, saying that as he had devoted a significant amount of time and effort into caring for his children and grandchildren in the past he now expected them to provide for his care. The intergenerational reciprocal ties are strong enough such that support is provided within the Endō family. But there’s also Mr. Ono who lives with his eldest daughter’s family whereas his wife leads a busy life managing her own hairdressing salon and is therefore not able to dedicate a lot of time to her husband’s care. She is an exception among the older women in my study. However, Mr. Ono is content with the care provided by his daughter and does not envision

Factors that affect older Japanese people’s reluctance to use home help care and adult day care services.

⁴⁷ Cf. Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (2009): *Annual report on the ageing society 2008*. <http://www8.cao.go.jp/kourei/whitepaper/w-2008/zenbun/20index.html> (accessed 17 May 2009).

⁴⁸ Cf. Wake, Junko *et al.* (2007): *Kaigo hoken seido shikō 5 nengo no kōreisha sābisi ninchi to riyō ikō* [The aim of the geriatric care system. Recognition and utilization after 5 years of implementation], and Long *et al.* (2009).

⁴⁹ Cf. Hiramatsu, Makoto, Katsunori Kondō and Hiroshi Hirai (2009): *Kaigo yobō shisaku no taishōsha ga kenshin wo jushin shinai haikei yōin* [Integral background factors for the neglect of health check-ups by recipients of the care precaution policy].

any future LTCI care intervention. External care was widely perceived as something undesirable among the older couples in my research, which come from a self-employed background. That included institutional care as well as any associated assistance provided under the LTCI scheme, even though a mandatory insurance premium is deducted from both state and occupational pensions.

The elderly people's desire not to depend on the state also relates to a stigma of not wishing to be seen as having been abandoned by one's family and to be perceived as being unable to cope in the eyes of friends or neighbours. On this basis, Jenike, Tsukada and Saito have argued that stigma is the prime cause of under-utilisation of the care services.⁵⁰ Furthermore, there was a strong sense of the individual capability to cope amongst the elderly couples in my study. The women tended to express their resoluteness by emphasising that they were physically able to provide care for their husbands, even if they were handicapped and/or multi-generational based care was not available. These older women's accounts indicate that they take pride in being able to take care of their husband's needs at home. Amada has highlighted how older wives providing care use mothering experiences and apply those to their husbands.⁵¹ Nakamura and Okura et al. have also reported that women participating in their studies commented on feeling pity for their husbands and caring for them because of their husband's frail state of health due to age.⁵² This was observed in my study as well, particularly in the case of Mrs. Ikeda who ex-

⁵⁰ Cf. Jenike (2003), Tsukada and Saito (2006).

⁵¹ Cf. Amada (2003).

⁵² Cf. Nakamura, Ritsuko (2004): *Rōrō kaigo saikō* [The rethinking of older spouse care] and Okura, Mika *et al.* (2008). Perceptions of nursing care held by elderly women in mountainous regions.

pressed complex emotional thoughts on looking after her terminally ill husband.

Tsukada and Saitō argue that stigma is the prime cause of under-utilisation of the care services.⁵³ Bathing involves nakedness and elderly people who consider assistance from external care service providers may be troubled by the fact that their bodies could be exposed to younger people during bathing. Twigg's study highlights how older people have an internalised image of their bodies and perceive it as unattractive, which then contributes to the sense of discomfort felt during personal hygiene and to the asymmetrical nature of the exchange, where the older person is in the position of least power.⁵⁴ During a recent hospital stay Mr. Yamashita was showered by a female nurse which he perceived as a humiliating experience. For older men in my study, it comes down to the importance of maintaining one's sense of self-sufficiency, authority, and masculine identity, and refusal to the "powerlessness" ascribed to care recipient dependant on the younger woman.

Another factor that explains why elderly people are reluctant to request external care was highlighted by Mr. Watanabe and Mr. Hama. They stated that the LTCI scheme doesn't meet their needs because it was founded by healthy people who fail to address the fact that people have different disabilities and need different types of care and discourage the disabled person's desire to be autonomous and independent.

This section has focused on different opinions on the LTCI scheme to be found amongst the older people – among which only three couples reported any previous associations or current uses of health care assistance provided under the LTCI scheme. An interesting criticism

⁵³ Cf. Tsukada and Saitō (2006).

⁵⁴ Cf. Twigg (2000), 59.

was directed towards the “young and able bodied” architects of the LTCI care services who, because they lacked a common frame of reference, were unable to take the particular needs of elderly disabled persons into consideration. Factors identified to shape the elderly peoples attitude towards the use of external care included their family background, generation and reciprocity. These issues of social class and LTCI care service affordability are also important factors for the avoidance of older people to either seek or receive external care that meets all their needs.

Care choice, constraint, and affordability

In Table 1, the care recipients (17 men and 4 women) have been characterised into three broad “mainstream” sub-groupings defined by Kelly.⁵⁵ This categorisation was based on my assessment of socio-economic groups according to the care recipients self-reported education level, former/current occupation and housing. Mrs. Ōtsuka and Mrs. Fujita are shown as members of the upper middle and middle class, respectively because of their husbands’ financial prosperity. Mr. Katō, who is a former *salaryman* with a university degree is categorised as lower middle class on the basis of his current declined socio-economic circumstances.

Class definitions in Japan are not directly comparable to social classes as in the UK or the US where social inclusiveness rather than categorical differentiation apply, as represented by the term *chūryū* (middle class) which translates as “mainstream”⁵⁶.

⁵⁵ Cf. Kelly, William Wright (2002): At the limits of new middle class Japan. Beyond “mainstream consciousness”.

⁵⁶ Cf. Kelly (2002).

Table 1: Major health problems, education level, and previous/current occupations of care recipients who were categorised by the author as (a) upper middle class, (b) middle class, and (c) lower middle class. These categories are in accordance with the “mainstream” identified by the term *chūryū*.

Care Recipient	Major health problems	Education level	Occupation
(a) upper middle class			
Mrs. Hama	depression, dementia, slow mobility	university degree	housewife
Mr. Harada	lung cancer	university degree	senior salaryman
Mr. Gotō	cerebral infarction, stroke, diabetes, hearing	university degree	dentist
Mr. Iriya	stroke, physically frail	university degree	senior salaryman
Mr. Niyama	multiple cardiac problems	high school	senior manager
Mr. Watanabe	paralysed below waist	high school	salaryman
Mr. Ono	pulmonary embolism, dialysis, HUS, vertigo	high school	accountant
Mr. Endō	frequent fever, lymph gland removed	basic school	agri-administrator
Mrs. Ōtsuka	diabetes, fluid on knee, cardiac pacemaker	basic school	cattle farmer
(b) middle class			
Mrs. Fujita	breast cancer in remission	high school	housewife
Mr. Nemura	vertigo, dementia, impaired movement	high school	agri-administrator
Mrs. Nemura	diabetes, thigh fracture, pancreatitis	basic school	crop farmer
Mr. Kubota	right side partial paralysis, poor vision	basic school	small business owner
(c) lower middle class			
Mr. Katō	stroke (in remission)	university degree	salaryman
Mr. Wada	multiple strokes, impaired movement	university degree	postman
Mr. Ikeda	terminal cancer, dialysis, poor vision	high school	haulage driver
Mr. Kotani	cardiac arrest, dialysis	high school	haulage driver
Mr. Miyamoto	cardiac arrest, gall stones	high school	poet
Mr. Ishikawa	diabetes, poor hearing and vision, fever	high school	small business owner
Mr. Kitagawa	dialysis, diabetes, cardiovascular, poor vision	high school	small business owner
Mr. Yamashita	wheelchair bound, slurred speech	basic school	grocer

This line of thought showed in the responses given by the majority of elderly people in my research. By identifying with the societal mainstream, the Japanese people tend to see themselves within the wider population in relation to class. Since the 1960s, about 90 per cent of

those questioned in large scale surveys have consistently seen themselves in the upper-middle, middle, or lower-middle class strata.⁵⁷

In Table 1, those belonging to the upper middle class had medical insurance and at least one private income through a pension or other sources, and consequently are more likely to find the relevant information on how to use the local authority care services. Mr. Hama was able to get information on hand rail support subsidies from his city council and regularly studies the care insurance systems. Mr. Watanabe increased his independence by purchasing a wheelchair adapted car, two imported wheelchairs and a French bed (operated by electric remote control). Mrs. Yamashita, on the other hand, has to assist her husband to get about and cannot afford certain essential care items. Consequently, Mr. Yamashita does not enjoy the same level of life quality.

In the UK, Arber and Ginn, and Twigg point out that substantial evidence exists to prove that people belonging to the middle class and people with a higher education have better negotiation skills dealing with professionals to optimise their care with help that meets their individual requirements.⁵⁸ Recently, this socio-economic class based inequality has been looked into in Japan. One aspect within the works of Kondō and Hisamatsu et al.⁵⁹ focuses on the ability of older people of lower skills or educational background and their comprehension of complicated information protocols on how to identify the most appro-

⁵⁷ Cf. Kelly (2002).

⁵⁸ Cf. Arber, Sara and Jay Ginn (1991): *Gender and later life. A sociological analysis of resources and constraint*, and Twigg (2000).

⁵⁹ Cf. Kondō, Katsunori (2005): *Kenkō kakusa shakai* [The society of polarized health] and Hiramatsu et al. (2009).

priate health care services, as well as completing the documentation to access these services.

The findings in my study revealed that socio-economic circumstances influenced the quality and availability of health care received by the older people on the basis of income through a pension as well as financial affluence, which depended on my interviewee's former occupation as low or medium skilled, or professionals. This agreed with results from other large scale researches.⁶⁰ The elderly people in my study who receive an occupational pension or other asset-related income are in a better position to afford a range of external care services, and also have more autonomy to purchase the required items to meet their individual needs. However, those shown in Table 2 as lower middle class are not so fortunate, which agrees with similar findings by Kondō.⁶¹ Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda went ahead with private surgery for Mr. Ikeda's cancer without medical insurance and consequently spent almost all of their savings on the medical procedure. Subsequently, Mrs. Ikeda had to seek *seikatsu hogo* (poverty relief). After drawn out negotiations with officials, Mrs. Ikeda obtained this benefit which exempted her from health care costs, local taxes and prescription costs. Several people from this group incurred significant hospital-based medical expenses, which impacted heavily on their financial state such that they are in a constant struggle to deal with the consequences.

⁶⁰ Cf. Kondō (2005), Hiramatsu *et al.* (2009), Hanibuchi, Tomoya (2010): *Iryō to kenkō no kakusa – JGSS-2008 ni motozuku iryō akusesu no bunseki* [Inequalities in health and health care access. Analysis of access to medical care using JGSS-2008] and Murata, Chiyoe (2010): *Iryō fuan to shakai keizai chii no kanren-JGSS-2008 ni motozuku bunseki* [Concern about health care and socio-economic status. Analysis using JGSS-2008 data].

⁶¹ Cf. Kondō (2005).

This section has illustrated the distinct gap between the older people who, through financial affluence and social background, are able to cope better in their retirement and obtain the required healthcare to meet their needs, as opposed to those in the lower middle class. A lack of adequate pensions coupled with costs incurred through medical expenditure, as well as normal everyday life expenses had a more significant impact on those in the lower middle class. Furthermore, those in couple households and belonging to the lower middle class, i.e., the Katō, Wada, and Miyamoto households, had to face additional disadvantages as they couldn't rely on support by extended family members to meet their care requirements.

To provide a wider perspective, the interrelated areas of spouse care, couple and intergenerational power dynamics, and external care have been researched upon to gain a deeper insight into the spouse care dynamics of older Japanese couples. The areas have focused on the processes of performing physical work connected to caregiving and the complex factors that come into play and have a bearing on whether or not external care assistance through the LTCI scheme or care from within the extended family is either sought or received.

Discussion

In terms of the key demographic, it is expected that approximately 40 per cent of Japan's population will be in retirement by the middle of this century, and that currently, nearly one in three older Japanese couples live on their own.⁶² With increased life expectancy into the 21st century, age-related health decline in both men and women is

⁶² Cf. IPSS – National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (2008): *Population statistics of Japan 2008*.

likely to put increased pressure on the care support system. To further complicate matters, the proportion of elderly people who live in multi-generational households is likely to continue to fall, so the care options provided within the family will decline as well. This paper has therefore explored the complexity of older spouse care in the rapidly changing Japanese society to further the understanding of older Japanese couple relationships.

The pressure, on older women in particular, to function as a caregiver and to provide care for a disabled spouse comes from a complex net of social conflicts, which arise out of discrepancies between couples, as well as discrepancies between generations; conflicts of interests and social processes such as individual attitudes and use of the LTCI scheme, and socio-economic reality linked to class-based considerations. In spouse care dynamics, it was highlighted how power imbalance between married couples has shaped the current care arrangement. The two main features were the lack of appreciation of the hidden (emotional) aspects of caregiving provided by the older women, and the reluctance of their husbands to give up or soften their dominant position within the household, even in cases where the man's physical health had declined. These marital dynamics should be further investigated particularly with respect to the men, who have been largely under-reported in previous researches. We need to understand in particular why older Japanese men are much less likely to provide care for their wives compared to the reciprocal arrangement, which is largely based on hegemonic patrilineal factors.⁶³

I have argued that spouse care and physical work correlating to caregiving for elderly people are pertinent pressing issues in Japan's

⁶³ Cf. Long, Susan O. (2008): *Someone's old, something's new, someone's borrowed, someone's blue. Tales of elder care at the turn of the 21st century*, Chapter 7.

ageing society. With the changes taking place in intergenerational reciprocity and power dynamics, some older people are increasingly at risk to be left without any family or external assistance. To ensure that sufficient care will be provided in the future, we need to look more closely at individual cases and family histories of elderly people in assessing their care requirements and needs, rather than assuming that elderly people will have sufficient family-based support.

I contend that the LTCI scheme could be further developed to provide care support for older people. To achieve this it is necessary to grasp the wide complexity of issues that currently serve to undermine its use amongst older people in the community. This paper has illustrated how such considerations are based on class and socio-economic factors, as well as gendered norms, and the adherence to patrilineal notions of care provision within the families. Furthermore, policy-makers need to take the diverse views of elderly people to modify the care services according to their needs into account although it is likely to be tempered to an extent by financial pragmatism and the tailoring of care services.

Outside of Japan, it is found that the strength of hegemonic masculinity in older men has precluded them from seeking medical help to deal with health problems.⁶⁴ Therefore more research is needed to explore the connection between health and socio-economic background of older men in Japan. Especially as the correlation between poor health and “risky behaviour” (e.g. drinking and smoking) has been discussed in the field of men’s studies, it is a promising area of

⁶⁴ Cf. Courtenay, William (2000): *Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men’s well-being. A theory of gender and health*, Charles, Nickie and Vivienne Walters (2008): *Men are leavers alone and women are worriers. Gender differences in discourses of health*, and Sieverding, Monica *et al.* (2008): *Gender differences in FOBT use. Evidence from a large German survey*.

research.⁶⁵ Research in this area is also of great importance in respect of lessening the future burden of women who currently have to provide care to their husbands at a relatively early stage in life.

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⁶⁵ Cf. Kondō (2005), Hiramatsu *et al.* (2009).

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COSIMA WAGNER

“Silver Robots” and “Robotic Nurses”? Japanese Robot Culture and Elderly Care

Abstract

Japan is often referred to as the “robot kingdom” as its robot culture is popular around the world. The general acceptance of robots as partners of human beings at their workplaces and at home is also a major argument of the Japanese government to promote the use of “social robots” in- and outside the factories to overcome the hardships of the ageing society and especially the decreasing number of Japan’s workforce population. A field of special interest is the “elderly care”-sector, as an increasing number of elderly people will need support in daily tasks and care in the near future. Numerous studies suggest that very soon the “robotic nurse” or robot technology based care will not only be a solution for the shortage of care givers, but will also become an important business in the silver market of the future. This paper will explain the expectations and measures regarding the use of robot technology for Japan’s ageing society and discuss the following questions: What expectations does the Japanese government have regarding a future market for “next generation robots” and which measures have been taken so far? What are the models of first applications of robot technology in the elderly care sector so far and can a “robot therapy” and “silver robots” have a “healing” effect on elderly people?

Finally, can the proposed Japanese “robotic lifestyle” of the future be a role model for other ageing societies?¹

Introduction

Robotto ga Nihon wo sukuu (Robots will save Japan) is the book title of a study by Nakayama Shin², Chairman of the Board of Yasukawa Electric Corporation (market leader in the manufacturing of industrial robots), in which he stresses the importance of new “social robots” or *jisedai robotto* (next generation robots) as a solution for the problems of Japan’s ageing society. According to him, they would not only eliminate labour shortage in the industry and service sector, but also become home helpers and lifestyle assistants for the elderly who want to lead an independent live in their homes as long as possible.³ In contrast to their counterparts in the manufacturing industry, a special feature of the “next generation robots” is their direct contact and often interaction with human beings. Therefore they are also called “social robots”, which can be classified into three categories:

1. Research oriented humanoid robots: This category contains humanoid robots like the famous *ASIMO*⁴ developed by car manufacturer Honda or the *HRP-2 PROMET*⁵ from Kawada Industries,

¹ For a detailed discussion on the subject of tele-care for the elderly and robot therapy refer to Wagner, Cosima (2009a): “Tele-Altenpflege” und “Robotertherapie”. *Leben mit Robotern als Vision und Realität für die überalterte Gesellschaft Japans* [“Tele-care for the elderly” and “robot therapy”. Living with robots as vision and reality in Japan].

² Cf. Nakayama, Shin (2006): *Robotto ga Nihon o sukuu* [Robots will save Japan].

³ *Ibid.*, 186–194.

⁴ Cf. ASIMO official website: <http://www.honda.co.jp/ASIMO/index.html> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁵ Cf. HRP-2 official website: <http://www.kawada.co.jp/mechs/promet/index.html> (accessed 17 July 2009).

which was developed as a national prestige project on the initiative of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) and National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) in the years 1998 to 2002 with a budget of 4.6 billion Yen⁶. Other examples are the android robots by Ishiguro Hiroshi from the University of Osaka, who is a leading roboticist in the field of “android science” and the development of android robots. In 2006 he introduced his robotic twin *GEMINOID* to the public.⁷

2. Robots for daily life, entertainment or therapeutic issues: Robots of this category usually have no or more than two legs, like Sony’s robot dog *AIBO*,⁸ which was for sale between 1999 and 2006, or the therapeutic robot baby harp seal *PARO*⁹. The first market ready household robot was *WAKAMARU*¹⁰ from Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. It was sold from 2005 to 2007 and costs the purchaser one million Yen, which proved to be too expensive and repair-intensive and prevented the product to become a mass consumer product.
3. Robots for extreme areas/maintenance robots: The third category includes maintenance robots (e.g. cleaning robots), guard robots like TMSUK’s *ARTEMIS*¹¹ and other robots also used in extreme areas like outer space or disaster aftermaths and in deep sea zones.

⁶ 1 Million Yen equals about 8,100 Euro (March 2010).

⁷ Cf. Website of Ishiguro Research Laboratory/*Geminoid*-project: <http://www.is.sys.es.osaka-u.ac.jp/research/0011/index.ja.html> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁸ Cf. AIBO official website: <http://www.sony.jp/products/Consumer/aibo/index.html> (accessed 17 July 2009).

⁹ Cf. PARO official website: <http://paro.jp/> (accessed 17 July 2009).

¹⁰ Cf. WAKAMARU official website: <http://www.mhi.co.jp/kobe/wakamaru/> (accessed 17 July 2009).

¹¹ Cf. ARTEMIS (TMSUK) official website: <http://www.tmsuk.co.jp/artemis> (accessed 12 July 2009).

Within the first two categories, a field of special interest is the “elderly care”-sector, as it contains an increasing number of elderly people who will need support in daily tasks and care in the near future. As numerous studies suggest, very soon the “robotic nurse” or robot technology based care will not only be a solution for the shortage of care givers, but will also become an important business in the silver market of the future. This paper aims to present some of these recent studies on the expectations of Japan’s future robot industry, referring in particular to the activities of the Japanese government, and to discuss the following questions: Which expectations does the Japanese government have towards a future market for “next generation robots” and what measures have been taken so far? Which models of first applications of robot technology in the elderly care sector already exist and can a “robot therapy” and “silver robots” have a “healing” effect on elderly people? Could the proposed Japanese “robotic lifestyle” of the future become a role model for other ageing societies?

Which expectations does the Japanese government have towards a future market for “next generation robots” and what measures have been taken so far?

As governmental strategy papers and numerous publications from engineers, robot manufacturers, and politicians in Japan suggest, there are high expectations towards the market scale, scope size and future role of *jisedai robotto* for Japan’s ageing society. According to the *Kōrei shakai hakusho heisei 20* (Whitepaper on Japan’s ageing society 2008), Japan is the oldest society in the world in regards to age. Its people between the age of 65 years and older make up a ratio of 21.5 per cent and a continuously decreasing workforce is observed in the

age group between 15 and 64.¹² This continuously decreasing national workforce will have to be replaced to keep the Japanese economy going. Yet, as political scientist Gabriele Vogt has pointed out in her research on Japan’s workforce measures, neither family policy nor migration policy are successfully addressing the issue of replacement. Especially Japan’s migration policy is still considered a “political taboo issue”.¹³ In an interview with the METI-Manufacturing Industries Bureau in 2006 I was told that “next generation robots” are regarded as a good solution for the dissent on the labour shortage and migration policy problem, because, thanks to their positive image, they would be “easier to accept for the Japanese society than invited foreign workers”.¹⁴

The easy acceptance of robots as partners of human beings at workplaces and at home is therefore a major argument of the Japanese government to promote the use of “social robots” in- and outside the factories. Yet, not only the positive image of robots but their economic prospects have led to a strategic governmental promotion of robot technology since 2002. In 2001 the Japan Robot Association (JARA) and Japan Machinery Federation (JMF) published a joint report titled *Technology strategy for creating a ‘robot society’ in the 21st century* on the future market potential of the robot industry. They criticized the Japanese government for not supporting the new promis-

¹² Cf. CAO – Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government (2008a): *Whitepaper on Japan’s ageing society 2008*, 8, 13.

¹³ Cf. Vogt, Gabriele (2008): Talking Politics. Demographic variables and policy measures in Japan, 23.

¹⁴ Interview with Yūko Nakagiri, Manufacturing Industries Bureau, METI, on 4 April 2006, see Wagner, Cosima (2009b): *Robotopia Nipponica – Recherchen zur Akzeptanz von Robotern in Japan* [Robotopia Nipponica – Research on the acceptance of robots in Japan].

ing next generation robot technology development outside the manufacturing industry and presented an impressive growth forecast: According to this forecast on the future market of robot technology the total market volume was estimated 7.2 trillion Yen in the year 2025 (Figure 1).

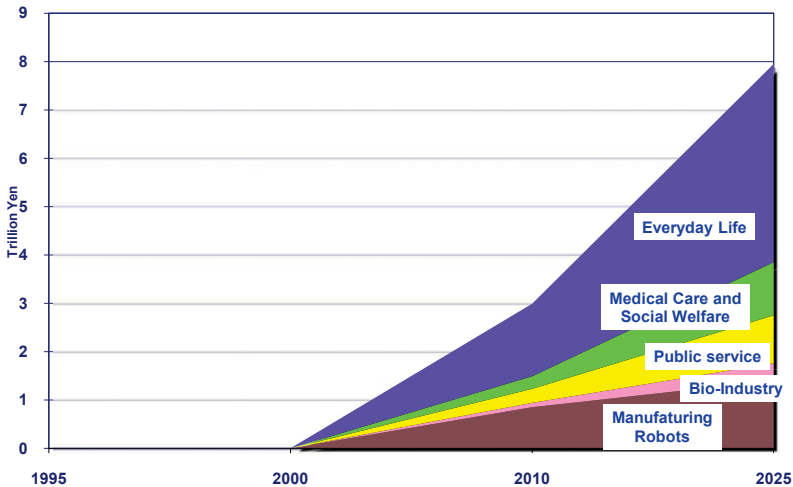


Figure 1: Market growth estimation for robot technology up to the year 2025 by JARA and JMF.

Source: JARA/JMF 2001, 10.

However, the biggest growth potential within the market of robot technology of the future was predicted for the market sector “everyday life”. It was estimated to make between 1.5 trillion Yen in 2010 to 4.1 trillion Yen in 2025. This sector was followed by the robot technology market for “medical care and social welfare” (an estimated 0.3 trillion Yen in 2010 and 1.1 trillion Yen in 2025), “public service” (0.3 trillion Yen in 2010 to 0.9 trillion Yen in 2025), and “bio-industry” (90 billion Yen in 2010 to 360 billion Yen in 2025). Only minimal growth potential was predicted for the currently biggest market sector of industrial robot technology in the manufacturing industry with an esti-

mated growth of 0.9 trillion Yen in 2010 to 1.4 trillion Yen in 2025.¹⁵ The main message of the report was a recommendation for the Japanese government to promote research and development in the promising field of non-industrial applications of robot technology. In 2008 a new research report on the future market of robot technology was published by JARA, correcting the figures of the 2001 report to a much higher proportion of the industrial robot technology sector. It doubled the estimated amount predicted in the study from the year 2001 to 1.4 trillion Yen, 3.7 trillion yen in 2025 and corrected the estimated 4.1 trillion Yen predicted for the household and service robot technology in 2001 to a lesser proportion of 1.3 trillion Yen for the year 2025 in the 2008 year estimation.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the first JARA/JMF report of the year 2001 caused a discussion in the METI’s Economic & Industrial Policy Bureau and robots for everyday life and elderly care were eventually classified as “most promising” and recommended for promotion.¹⁷

From 2002 onwards METI took over leadership in convening study groups and commissions to discuss and promote next generation robot technology in general and for the elderly care sector in particular. Members of the study groups and commissions were robot technology

¹⁵ Cf. JARA/JMF – Japan Robot Association/Japan Machinery Federation (Eds.) (2001): *Heisei 12 nendo. 21seiki ni okeru robotto shakai sōzō no tame no gijutsu senryaku chōsa hōkokusho* [Technology strategy for creating a “robot society” in the 21st century], 10.

¹⁶ Cf. JARA – Japan Robot Association (Ed.) (2008): *RT (robotto tekunorojī) ni yoru sangyō hakyū kōka to shijō bunseki ni kan suru chōsa* [Survey on the market growth effect of robot technology and market analysis], 6.

¹⁷ Cf. METI – Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Ed.) (2001): *Sangyō kōzō shingikai – Shinseichō seisaku bukai. Chūkan torimatome* [Economic & Industrial Policy Bureau – Interim report on new economic growth policies], 60–61, 92, 102, 110.

manufacturers, scientists, experts from welfare organizations, observers from other ministries and even a science fiction author (Sena Hideaki) in 2004. The *Jisedai Robotto Bijon Kondankai* (Study Group on The Vision of Robots in the Future) recommended to take measures towards a standardization of robot technology (similar to household electronic appliances), the introduction of a “robot license” (similar to a driving license), the modularization of robot components, the enhancement of data security measures as well as the promotion of *sangakukan* (industry-academic-government cooperation) and public relations activities to promote the use of “next generation robots”.¹⁸ To support the idea of the “one robot in every household”-goal the report also included three “science fiction stories” describing a family’s life in the year 2025 with robots as household helpers etc. One of these governmental science fiction stories featured the character of a household robot through which a working mother is connected to her household, greeting her son when he returns from school and monitoring his activities through the robot’s camera eyes. Remarkable about the story is a comment in the report regarding the plan of wanting to increase the number of working women in the future, especially mothers with children who currently stay at home. The report reads: “Household robots [as machines] will make housework attractive to men and convince them to engage in housework and child rearing thereby enabling more women to go to work [...]”.¹⁹ In the *Nakagawa Report towards a new industrial structure* of May 2004 the robot industry was designated as one of seven key industries for Japan’s fu-

¹⁸ Cf. METI – Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Ed.) (2004a): *Jisedai robotto bijon kondankai hōkokusho no torimatome ni tsuite* [Report of the “Study Group on the Vision of Robots in the Future”], 10–12, 14, 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

ture economy.²⁰ The *Robotto Seisaku Kenkyūkai* (Robot Policy Research Group) of the years 2005 and 2006 formulated the following mission statement: “To envision a future ‘Neo Mechatronics Society’ and to implement robot technology measures in order to prevent a weakening of the Japanese economy as a result of Japan’s ageing society and its decreasing workforce”.²¹ In addition, the report contained first market research data on the acceptance of household robots stating e.g. the readiness of half of the probands to use robot technology for the home care of family members.²² In order to make the establishment of a Japanese “Neo Mechatronics Society” a nationwide project, the Robot Policy Study Group also initiated the formation of the robot business network *Roboness*²³ with four local robot business promotion centres in Kawasaki, Gifu, Kansai and Fukuoka and budgeted a total of 5.5 billion Yen for the promotion of next generation robot technology.²⁴ The current budget for fiscal year 2009 amounts to 1.4 billion Yen.²⁵ Furthermore, Japan’s parliament was probably the only parliament in the world, in which the Robot Care Study Group

²⁰ Cf. METI – Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Ed.) (2004b): *Shin-sangyō sōzō senryaku* [Strategy for a new industrial structure], 9.

²¹ Cf. METI – Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Ed.) (2005): *Robotto Seisaku Kenyūkai chūkan hōkokusho. Robotto de hiraku bijinesu furontia* [Interim report of the Robot Policy Research Group. To open new business opportunities with robots], 12.

²² *Ibid.*, 51–53.

²³ See Robotto Bijinesu Suishin Kyōgikai official website: www.roboness.jp (accessed 7 July 2009).

²⁴ Cf. METI – Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (Ed.) (2006): *Robotto Seisaku Kenyūkai hōkokusho. RT kakumei ga nihon o hiyaku saseru* [Final report of the Robot Policy Research Group. Robot technology will lead to an economic recovery], 49.

²⁵ Cf. CAO – Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government (Ed.) (2008b): *Heisei 17 nendo kagaku gijutsu kankei yosan ni okeru jūten no gairyaku* [Overview of the main points of the budget for science and technology in 2009], 4.

(*Jimintō Robotto Kaigo Kenkyūkai*) consisting of members of the parliament (representatives of the Liberal Democratic Party, LDP) could be found (until 2009). The founder of the group, former LDP-representative of the Lower House (member until August 2009), Shin'ya Ōno, illustrated his visions of a robot nurse²⁶ and other social robots in Japan in a book. He even developed a calculation model on financing the “one robotic nurse for one household”-program with the care insurance system.²⁷

As elaborated on earlier in this paper, there are high expectations on the future use and the market scale of robot technology for Japan's ageing society by the Japanese government. Robot technology is regarded as one of Japan's most important future industries. Therefore large amounts of money are invested in the research and development of new social robots. From December 2008 to March 2009 a new *Robotto Sangyō Seisaku Kenkyūkai* (Robot Industry Policy Research Group) was installed. In their final report of 25 March 2009 they announced that only within five years robot technology devices for the elderly care sector would be market-ready.²⁸

²⁶ For a detailed analysis of Ono and his “robot nurse“-vision see Wagner 2009a and 2009b.

²⁷ Cf. Ōno, Shin'ya (2005): *Robotto hassō omochabako* [Show bag of robot ideas], 94–99.

²⁸ For latest information on recent robot technology promotion projects with special focus on robots for daily life and elderly care refer to the Japanese project websites of METI (<http://www.meti.go.jp/policy/robotto/robokenkyu/roboken.htm>) (accessed 7 July 2009) and NEDO (New Industrial and Industrial Technology Development Organisation) (<https://app3.infoc.nedo.go.jp/informations/koubo/koubo/EP/nedokoubo.2009-03-11.7032429880>) (accessed 7 July 2009).

Which models of first applications of robot technology in the elderly care sector already exist and can a “robot therapy” and “silver robots” have a “healing” effect on elderly people?

Despite the governmental visions and sketches of a future Japanese “robotopia”, market-ready “silver robots” for senior consumers are still rare. However, there are a lot of ideas, prototypes and very few commercial products like the robot seal *PARO* mentioned before or the feeding robot *My Spoon*²⁹. Remarkable about the discussion on social robots for Japan’s ageing society is the variety of scenarios of a “robot-living” in the future and a great interest of the government in communicating its robot visions to the Japanese public. In 2007 the newly established Innovation Strategy Council of the Abe Cabinet Office published a report on innovation strategies for Japan including a governmental science fiction story with the title *2025-nen Inobe-ke no ichinichi* (One day in the life of the Inobe family in the year 2025) featuring a “typical” Japanese family with two children and grandparents living together in a high-tech-house with their household robot *Inobe-kun* and other innovative new products. The “Year 2025 Inobe family”-story was published in May 2007 and a manga with the same title followed. In the preface of the manga written by the former Minister of State for Science and Technology Policy, Food Safety and Consumer Affairs, Takaichi Sanae, the Japanese public is asked to understand the importance of the innovation initiative for Japan’s ageing society and the need for a change in values of the society.³⁰ The

²⁹ Cf. MY SPOON official website: <http://www.secom.co.jp/personal/medical/myspoon.html> (accessed 7 July 2009).

³⁰ Cf. Eguchi, Fujii (Ed.) (2007): *2025-nen Inobe-ke no ichinichi* [A day in the life of the Inobe-family in the year 2025].

way it is depicted in the Inobe-Manga, the Japanese robot technology does not only become the number one robot technology in the world, but also an essential asset to the average household. The fictional household robot *Inobe-kun* monitors the health status of the grandparents and cleans the house, while mother Inobe is doing telework from her home office. Analyzed from a gender studies point of view, the Inobe-Manga clearly promotes the traditional family role of a mother as a housewife, who manages her household and family (with the assistance of robot technology), though in the manga she also juggles a part-time telework-job.³¹ Furthermore the report and manga suggest a very nationalistic technological empowerment vision towards China. In the book the rivalling country is described as looking up to Japan for its progressive bio- and robot technology.³²

On the other hand, not only politicians or bureaucrats engage in envisioning a robotic lifestyle for elderly people: Kobayashi Hisato, professor of engineering and robotics at Hōsei University in Tokyo wrote his own robot science fiction short story in a book titled *Robotto wa tomodachi da!* (Robots are friends!) in the year 1999. In it he describes the life of a three-generation family, in which the grandparents still work and lead an independent life at the age of 70. In his story scenario Kobayashi describes the grandmother, who is monitoring care robots all over Japan through a tele-robotic control desk (Figure 2). Through the tele-monitoring feature of her care-robots the grandmother is able to communicate with other seniors all over Japan and is

³¹ For a further discussion of the Inobe-Manga from a gender studies perspective refer to Robertson, Jennifer (2007): *Robo sapiens japonicus. Humanoid robots and the posthuman family*, 369–398 and Robertson, Jennifer (2008): *Science fiction as domestic policy in Japan. Humanoid robots, posthumans, and innovation* 25, 29–34.

³² Cf. CAO (2007), 7–17.

therefore not controlled by machines, but controlling machines herself. Kobayashi therefore completely reverses the image of the heteronomy of old age in his narration and invented the new human species of “robot empowered senior[s]”.³³

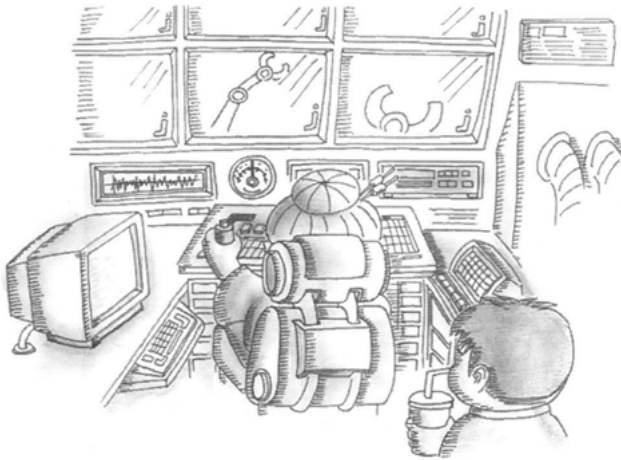


Figure 2: Kobayashi Hisato's vision of a grandmother communicating with care robots all over Japan via telemonitoring.
Source: Kobayashi (1999), 99.

A recent non-fictional but real care robot is the robot *Twendy-One* (Figure 3), developed by Sugano Shigeki, professor of robot engineering at Waseda University in Tokyo, who introduced his invention to the public in November 2007. *Twendy-One* is about 1.5 meters high, weighs 111 kg, and has 47 degrees of freedom. With her back and big arms she has a higher resemblance to a body-builder or an ET-like

³³ Cf. Kobayashi, Hisato (1999): *Technolife Series. Robotto wa tomodachi da!* [Technolife-series. Robots are friends!], 99.

fantasy figure than to a care robot. She was developed explicitly as a social robot for the care of elderly people and is capable of fetching hot toast bread as well as things from the fridge. According to a promotional video she is even capable of lifting physically handicapped persons out of bed. However, *Twendy-One*'s market release is not scheduled until as late as 2015 and her estimated price is 146.000 Euro.³⁴

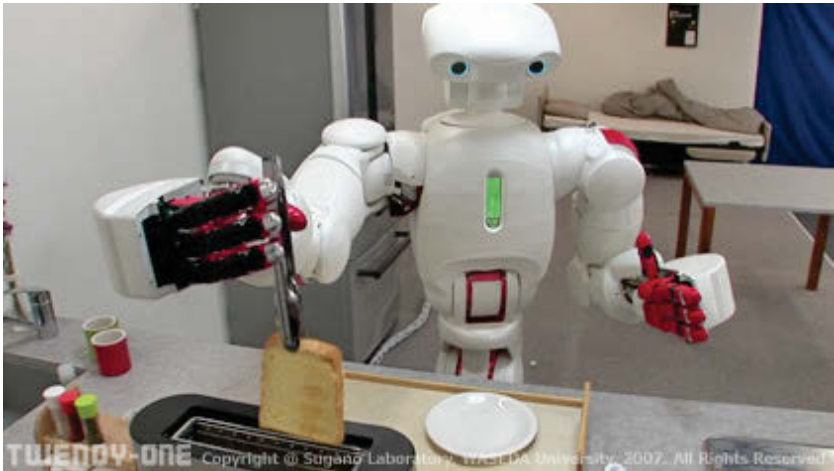


Figure 3: Twendy-One, a future “robotic nurse” (?!), retrieving a slice of hot white bread from a toaster.

Source: Waseda University Sugano Laboratory (Ed.) (2009): Internet.

An example for already market-ready robot technology with therapeutic value for elderly people and especially people with dementia is the robot seal *PARO* (Figure 4) mentioned before in this paper. Robot therapy is a new field of interdisciplinary cooperation between robot

³⁴ Cf. Waseda University Sugano Laboratory (2009): Homepage Twendy-One project. <http://twendyone.com> (accessed 3 July 2009).

engineers, psychologists and physicians in Japan. The *Robotto serapii bukai* (Study Group of Robot Therapy) was founded in 2002 in Tokyo and counted 17 regular members with support of a team of volunteer activists (mostly students) in December 2007. During my PhD-scholarship in 2006 at the German Institute for Japanese Studies in Tokyo, I had the chance to a participant observation of the work of the group in a nursing home in Takao city in Tokyo. The robot therapy research group visits the nursing home every month and offers the patients 30 minutes to play with a robopet and talks to them about it. The robopet is positioned on a table in front of the participants. While communicating with the residents of the nursing home, the reaction of the participants to the robots is filmed and analyzed afterwards: which robopet was most popular with the participants, how do they talk with it, where do they touch it and what are the changes in the mood and vitality signs (emotions, blood pressure) of the participants after a session, etc.

One member of the group, Shibata Takanori, senior researcher at AIST, has gained worldwide popularity with his “world’s most therapeutic robot”, the seal-like *PARO* (abbreviation of *pāsonaru robotto*, personal robot), in numerous studies and fieldwork in nursing homes. Shibata has proven positive effects, especially on patients with dementia, through robot therapy with *PARO*. *PARO* has been on sale in Japan since 2005 and costs 420,000 Yen (around 2,700 Euro). It can also be rented and is sold to research cooperation-partners in South-Korea, Sweden, Italy, Brunei, USA and as of recently, to Germany and Denmark as well.



Figure 4: The robotic seal PARO.
Source: Promotion CD-ROM of Shibata Takanori

PARO's therapeutically value is measured by three "effects":³⁵

- psychological effect (relaxation, motivation),
- physiological effect (improvement of vitality signs),
- social effect (activation of communication between patients and care givers)

The same effects could be achieved through animal therapy with real dogs and cats, but due to hygienic reasons, animals are usually not allowed in hospitals and nursing homes. As Shibata has shown in numerous studies, *PARO*'s appearance in nursing homes lightens up the atmosphere and increases the interaction of the residents.³⁶ However, these effects cannot only be found in an allegedly robot friendly country like Japan, but in other countries such as Germany, where Barbara Klein, professor for organization and management of social work at Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, researches on it as well. She

³⁵ Cf. *PARO* official website: http://paro.jp/?page_id=244 (accessed 23 July 2009).

³⁶ Cf. Shibata, Takanori (2006): Mentaru kommitto robotto *PARO* to robotto serapī no tenkai [Therapeutical robot *PARO* and the progress in robot therapy], 319–322.

has been testing *PARO* in a senior residence and with autistic children in Germany since January 2009.³⁷

On the one hand, robot therapy appears to be a rather pragmatic approach to solving the problem of shortages in caregiver personnel, on the other hand its positive effects cannot be denied. To exemplify the international acceptance of *PARO*'s positive effects on its consumer's health it should be mentioned, that the Danish government bought 1,000 *PAROs* for literally every nursing home in Denmark³⁸ on 17 November 2008.

However, as recent promotional videos for *PARO* show, the inventor Shibata now also aims for the pet-market boom and to use *PARO* as a substitute pet for elderly people. In a promotional film Shibata presents an elderly couple, who lives with a *PARO* and praises him as the “ideal pet” for elderly people. They argue that in contrast to real animals it can be taken everywhere, even on voyages, and there is no need to worry about a caretaker for the mechanical pet, if its owner dies.³⁹ But at 420,000 Yen still rather expensive, the Silver-Market-Hit-Product-factor remains modest to the day.

Could the proposed Japanese “robotic lifestyle” of the future become a role model for other ageing societies?

As I have argued in more detail in my dissertation on the acceptance of robots in Japan, the positive image of robots and their continuous narration in form of manga, anime and (governmental) science fiction

³⁷ Cf. Klein, Cook (2009): Ein Freund... ein guter Freund. Was kann die elektronische Robbe? [A friend, a very good friend... What are the abilities of the electronic seal?], 34–36.

³⁸ Cf. *PARO* official website at: http://paro.jp/?page_id=293 (accessed 2 July 2009).

³⁹ Cf. *PARO* official website at: http://paro.jp/?page_id=247 (accessed 2 July 2009).

stories is a successful “cultural construction”. It enables engineers and the Japanese government to propose a future “robotic lifestyle” with special emphasis on the development of robots for the elderly.⁴⁰ If any of these visions and strategies will become reality, is questionable. Thinking about Japan as a future “robotic lifestyle”-role model for other ageing industrial societies like Germany, three factors regarding the acceptance of robots have to be taken into consideration:

- The importance of the “robot narrative soil”: In my dissertation on the Japanese “Robotopia” I have elaborated in detail on how the “narrative soil” of a history of “social” robots and robots as friends, as it can be found in hundreds of pop-cultural manifestations like manga, anime, plastic model figures etc., not only influences potential future consumers of robot technology, but also engineers, robot researchers and governmental policy makers.⁴¹ The positive narration of robots as friends of human beings is crucial for the creation of a future silver robot market, but cannot be found in Germany.
- Robotisation \neq Rationalization: Although there has been a lot of rationalization due to robot technology’s introduction in Japan in the 1980s⁴², a strong debate about the issue, as it marks the discourse on robot technology in Germany is lacking totally in the Japan of today. The German fear of rationalization through robot technology makes it difficult to promote robots as “saviours” of the German ageing society.

⁴⁰ Cf. Wagner (2009b).

⁴¹ A famous example is the robot manga hero *Astro Boy* (*Tetsuwan Atomu*), who was the role model for Honda’s engineers when developing the first bipedal walking robot of the world: ASIMO (for more examples refer to Wagner 2009b: chapter 3.2).

⁴² See for example Kamata, Satoshi (1988): *Robotto zetsubō kōjō* [The hopeless robot factory].

- Ethical questions: Unlike in Japan, the introduction of robot technology as a solution to the problems of an ageing society in Germany is accompanied by a strong ethical debate on the question of whether using technology is a general solution to social problems. Therefore the scepticism against a therapeutical and supportive value of robot technology in Germany is rather high. Another strong point of criticism in Japan as well as in Germany is the “misuse” of robot technology for military use as it is the aim of the entire research on robots in the USA (financed by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, DARPA). The denying of all military purposes in Japan’s robot technology research and consequent development is an important factor in the acceptance of the idea of a “social” robot.

Although the discourse on robot technology as a measure for the German ageing society is still very critical, some first robot technology appliances for seniors in Germany can already be found: The German Fraunhofer Institute has developed a *Care-o-Bot*⁴³ as a prototype household robot for seniors since 1998. Furthermore, German robotic scientists like Thomas Christaller also predict the growth potential of service robots in our Western daily life.⁴⁴

⁴³ Cf. *Care-o-bot* official homepage: <http://www.care-o-bot.de/> (accessed 1 July 2009).

⁴⁴ Christaller, Thomas (2006): *Haushalts- und Spiele-Roboter als Begleiter und Helfer* [Household robots and entertainment robots as companions and assistants], 133–151.

Summary

To summarize the findings on “silver robots”, “robotic nurses”, and Japanese robot culture it can be concluded, that there is a lot of innovative potential and ideas for a future silver market of robot technology appliances. It is strongly supported not only by governmental and scientific robot visions, research and development, but also by robot strategies and investments, which the Japanese government has enforced since the beginning of the 21st century. However, how much of these plans and strategies will be realized and if Japanese elderly people and other consumers are really ready to accept social robots in their midst, has to yet to be proven.

Finally, by analysing social robots in Japan with a cultural sciences perspective on technology research and development, the “negotiation character”⁴⁵ of the creation and use of technical artefacts can be shown. By highlighting the socio-cultural context and negotiability of all technology development and use, social robots as a cultural topos reveal the desires, dreams and needs of a society at a certain point in time. Therefore social robots will continue to be a fruitful research topic for the understanding of the contemporary Japanese society.

⁴⁵ Cf. Hoerning, Karl (1985): Technik und Symbol [Technology and symbol]. *Soziale Welt* 36, 186–207.

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ATSUHIRO YAMADA

The Effectiveness of New Job Security Measure for the Older Employees in Japan^{*}

Abstract

In this paper, we examine the amended Law for the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons (LSEOP) that was enforced in 2006. The LSEOP requires enterprises to take one of three job security measures for their employees in line with the upward revision of the pensionable age: a) any increase in the mandatory retirement age that exceeds the current pensionable age; b) the introduction of continuing employment systems; or c) the complete abolition of mandatory retirement systems. Our results suggest that a wage reduction after the mandatory retirement age is a key determinant of continued employment in an enterprise. Because the LSEOP does not regulate wage reductions, the effect of the LSEOP is limited. However, our results

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also imply this would be appropriate for avoiding the distortion of labour demand, particularly the increase of young recruits.

Introduction

Japan retains a relatively high labour force participation (LFP) rate of older people among developed countries. In 2004, the LFP rate of people aged 60 to 64 in Japan exceeded 70 per cent. This is the seventh highest rate among OECD countries and has not changed since 1970.¹ The LFP rate of males aged 60 to 64 is close to 90 per cent, which is the second highest next to the Iceland among developed countries.

In June 2006, the amended Law for the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons (LSEOP) was introduced. Under this law, all enterprises, which set their mandatory retirement ages under 65, are obliged to introduce a job security measure that allows their older employees to continuously work up to the pensionable age in the same enterprise. Because the mandatory retirement policy is a major factor in inducing retirement in Japan², this new policy is expected to increase the LFP of older people in Japan. Nevertheless, at the same time, the LSEOP may increase labour costs by generating continued employment, which enterprises may resist. In this paper, we investigate how enterprises manage this possible increase in labour costs and investigate the determinants of increasing continued employment or an increase in the mandatory retirement age. To do so, we use a new

¹ Cf. OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2006): *Live longer, work longer. Aging and employment policy*.

² Cf. Seike, Atsushi and Atsuhiko Yamada (2004): *Kōreisha shūgyō no keizaigaku* [The economics of older people].

data set collected by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT): the “Survey of the Continued Employment of Older Employees (SCEOE)”.

Our analysis suggests that reducing the wages of older employees is a key device for controlling the continued employment rate (CER) in the enterprise. Older workers do not want to extend their employment contracts, because they have to accept reduced wages. A popular job security measure is the introduction of the reemployment system, which enables the enterprise to considerably reduce the wages of workers past the mandatory retirement age, compared with the upward revision of the mandatory retirement age. Substantial wage reductions reduce the number of applicants for continuing employment contracts. Therefore, the amended LSEOP may have only a marginal effect on the LFP of older people in the short run. Policymakers did not realize this when the LSEOP was amended.

The organization of this paper is as follows. In the next section, we outline the policies related to older employees, including the public pension and wage subsidies. This facilitates an understanding of the interaction between public policies and company wage setting. In the third section, we develop a simple model to explain the relationship between wage reductions and the continued employment of older people. In the subsequent section, we describe the data set used in our analysis. The fifth and sixth sections descriptively and statistically describe the interactions between wage setting, public benefits, the upward revision of the mandatory retirement age, and the continued employment of older workers. The final section provides discussion and brief concluding remarks about the effect of the LSEOP on the job security of older employees.

Social policies related to older employees

The amendment of the LSEOP

In Japan, most regular employees in the private sector are covered by the Employees Pension (EP), which provides both flat-rate and earnings-related public pensions.³ Before 2001, the pensionable age for full EP benefit was set at age 60. However, because of a rapidly ageing population, several reforms have been made to strengthen the financial sustainability of the EP scheme.⁴ Two types of upward revisions of the pensionable age in the EP scheme are important elements of these reforms. The 1994 pension reform introduced the upward revision of the pensionable age for the flat-rate portion, which took effect in 2001. In addition, the 2000 pension reform scheduled the upward revision of the pensionable age for the earnings-related portion, to take effect in 2013. Details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Scheduled upward revision of the pensionable age for the full EP benefit
Note: The upward revision for women was delayed for five years.

Flat-rate portion		Earnings-related portion	
Year	Age	Year	Age
2001	61	2013	61
2004	62	2016	62
2007	63	2019	63
2010	64	2022	64
2013	65	2025	65

³ Non-regular workers, whose working hours exceed 75 per cent of those of regular workers, are also covered by the EP scheme. More than 60 per cent of employees are estimated to be insured under the EP scheme. Public employees and private school teachers are covered by Mutual Aid Association Pensions (MAAPs), which also provide both flat-rate and earnings-related public pensions.

⁴ In Japan, the public pension system has been reformed every five years, based on actuarial reviews. This legislated reform process contributes to minimizing political conflict.

This revision would have substantially reduced the total income of people aged 60 and over if new job security measures had not been introduced. This is because mandatory retirement is a common employment practice in Japan, and takes effect at age 60, which is the legal minimum.⁵ In addition, in 2000, the unemployment rate for people aged 60 to 64 was 8 per cent, which is three percentage points above the population average. This means that supplementing reduced EP benefits by finding a new job after reaching the mandatory retirement age is difficult for older people. This reduced-income risk, caused by the upward revision of the pensionable age, forced the government to introduce a new job security measure. In 1998, the LSEOP was amended to oblige enterprises *to make an effort* to ensure the job security of their employees up to age 65. However, official statistics show that in 2004, only 16 per cent of enterprises with mandatory retirement schemes implemented continuous employment after the mandatory retirement age.⁶ Because of low continued employment after the mandatory retirement age, the government further amended the LSEOP in 2004. The new amended LSEOP, enforced in 2006,

⁵ According to the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare, almost 100 per cent of workplaces with more than 100 employees have mandatory retirement systems and more than 90 per cent of those workplaces set their mandatory retirement age at 60 (MHLW – Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (2006a): *Survey on employment conditions of elderly persons 2004*. <http://www-bm.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/itiran/roudou/koyou/keitai/04/index.html> (accessed 28 June 2010)). For a wider discussion of Japanese retirement income systems from an international comparative perspective see Casey, Bernhard H. (2001): *The employment of older people. Can we learn from Japan?* <http://www.cepii.fr/anglaisgraph/communications/pdf/2001/enepri07080901/casey.pdf> (accessed 28 June 2010) and Casey, Bernhard H. (2004): Reforming the Japanese retirement income system. A special case? http://www.bc.edu/centers/crr/issues/gib_4.pdf (accessed 28 June 2010).

⁶ Cf. MHLW – Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (2006a): *Survey on employment conditions of elderly persons 2004*. <http://www-bm.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/itiran/roudou/koyou/keitai/04/index.html> (accessed 28 June 2010).

obliges enterprises to adopt a job security measure for their employees following the upward revision of the pensionable age (see Table 1, p. 158).⁷ For example, from April 2007, all enterprises must provide a job security measure for their employees up to age 63.

The job security measure required by the amended LSEOP

The amended LSEOP requires the enterprise to take one of three measures for ensuring the job security of older employees until their pensionable age: a) any increase in the mandatory retirement age that exceeds the current pensionable age; b) the introduction of continuing employment systems; or c) the complete abolition of mandatory retirement systems. The first and third measures provide effective job security for all older employees up to their retirement age; however, the second measure allows the enterprise to select older employees who are on continuing employment contracts through a labour agreement or working regulation. The second is the most common measure. According to the survey conducted by the government just after the enforcement of the amended LSEOP, 84 per cent of the enterprises that employed more than 50 employees had already introduced some job security measure.⁸ Most enterprises (86 per cent) used continuing employment systems, and 13 per cent of enterprises increased the mandatory retirement age. Of those enterprises with continuing employment systems, 61 per cent selected their employees who applied for continuing employment contracts, and the other 39 per cent offered continuing employment contracts to all applicants. Only a few

⁷ For female employees, the upward revision of the pensionable age for males is applied for job security measures.

⁸ Cf. MHLW – Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (2006b): *Report on implementation of job security measures for older employees required by the amended LSEOP*. <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/houdou/2006/06/h0609-1.html> (accessed 28 June 2010).

enterprises (1 per cent) completely abolished mandatory retirement systems.

There are two types of continuing employment systems: the reemployment system and the employment extension system. Whether the employment contract is terminated or not at the mandatory retirement age distinguishes these two systems. Under the reemployment system, contract termination occurs at the mandatory retirement age and it usually involves a large wage reduction. Most enterprises (92 per cent) chose reemployment systems rather than employment extension systems.⁹

Social security benefits related to continued employment

Besides the LSEOP, there are two important social security benefits, which implicitly or explicitly affect the employment of older people: the Employment Continuation Benefit for the Aged (ECB) and the Old-age EP for Active Employees (EPAE). The ECB was introduced in 1995 under the employment insurance system. The ECB is paid in the form of wage subsidies to workers. The objective of this in-work benefit is to increase the incentives for older persons aged 60 to 64 to continue working rather than take up unemployment benefits. Under current ECB rules, older workers aged 60 to 64, whose wages have fallen by more than 25 per cent below their wages at age 60,¹⁰ are eligible for the ECB at the reduced rate of 15 per cent of their current wages. This rate is reduced further if the current wage is between 61

⁹ Cf. Arakawa, Sota (2007): *Kōnenreisha no keizoku koyō no jittai ni kansuru kigyō chōsa* [A Summary of the survey on continued employment of older employees (SCEOE) conducted by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training (JILPT)].

¹⁰ The maximum wage at age 60, which is considered for the calculation of ECB, is 454,000 yen. This is equivalent to around 150 per cent of the average monthly wage of regular workers.

per cent and 75 per cent of the wage at age 60.¹¹ Even workers who are reemployed in the same workplace can receive this benefit. The maximum duration of this benefit is two years, which is much longer than the maximum period of 150 days for receiving unemployment benefits in the case of job loss through mandatory retirement.

The EPAE was originally introduced in 1965. Before 1965, pension benefits had been fully suspended for workers aged 60 and over, because the qualification as a beneficiary was “retirement”. This meant that people in poverty could not supplement their low pension benefits with earnings. Under the current rules, the EP benefits of regular employees aged 60 and over who are working in enterprises covered by EP insurance are partially or fully suspended depending on their wages. The earnings rule differs slightly between employees aged 60 to 64, those aged 65 to 69, and those aged 70 and over, but generally, one unit of pension is suspended for every two-unit increase in earnings for those who earn a particular level of wages and EP benefits.¹² The earnings rule has been reformed several times to minimize work disincentives.

From the viewpoint of enterprises, both the ECB and EPAE can be utilized as wage subsidies and may reduce wages for older employees, although the earnings rule of the EPAE creates a disincentive effect on the labour supply side. As we show later, many enterprises take account of these benefits when setting wages for continuing employees.

¹¹ If their current wages exceed 341,000 yen, which is equivalent to 110 per cent of the average monthly wage of workers, the ECB will not be paid. Moreover, if the sum of current wages and the ECB exceeds 341,000 yen, an amount of ECB equivalent to the amount above 341,000 yen will be suspended.

¹² The earnings rule for working EP beneficiaries will be applied when the sum of their monthly wages and EP benefits exceed 280,000 yen. This amount is equivalent to around 90 per cent of the average monthly wage of regular workers. For those aged 65 and over, the rule will be applied when the sum exceeds 480,000 yen.

Wage-age profiles, wage reductions and continued employment

Previous work on continued employment

Lazear¹³ develops a model that facilitates an understanding of continued employment after the mandatory retirement age. According to his theory, the wage profile has an upward slope, even if the value of the marginal productivity (VMP) of workers is constant. Concretely, enterprises pay wages below the VMP when workers are young and pay wages above the VMP when workers are old. This type of implicit contract discourages workers from shirking or engaging in malfeasance by shifting compensation to the end period of the contract. In addition, mandatory retirement is necessary when the delayed compensation is exhausted.

Carmichael¹⁴ and Gibbons and Murphy¹⁵ extend this implicit contracts theory to the employment contract after the mandatory retirement age has been reached. They show that support given to workers by employers in finding post-mandatory retirement jobs would have the same effect as a deferred wage contract, and would therefore discourage shirking behaviour by workers. Interestingly, Gibbons and Murphy¹⁶ explain why the mandatory retirement age in Japan is usually lower than the pensionable age. They suggest that the discrepancy between the mandatory retirement and pensionable ages reflects employer attempts to retain influence on workers to the end of the em-

¹³ Cf. Lazear, Edward P. (1979): Why is there mandatory retirement?

¹⁴ Cf. Carmichael, H. Lorne (1989): Self-enforcing contracts, shirking, and life cycle incentives.

¹⁵ Cf. Gibbons, Robert and Kevin J. Murphy (1989): Optimal incentive contracts in the presence of career concerns. Theory and evidence.

¹⁶ Ibid.

ployment period. Rebick¹⁷ and Yamada¹⁸ show that enterprise support in finding post-mandatory retirement jobs raises workers' new wages substantially above those that workers could obtain without support. Therefore, employees' expectations of getting such support are an important work incentive before their mandatory retirement. The amended LSEOP, which obliges an enterprise to provide job security up to the pensionable age, may counteract these incentive strategies adopted by enterprises. Moreover, unless the VMP is equal to the wage before the mandatory retirement age is reached, the amended LSEOP may impose additional labour costs on enterprises.

Continuing employment contracts and the steepness of the wage-age profile

We now consider how enterprises would react to a potential increase in labour costs following amendment of the LSEOP. Figure 1 illustrates the simplified model originally proposed by Lazear¹⁹.

The horizontal and vertical axes record age and the wage-to-VMP ratio, respectively. The line *AE* represents the VMP of a worker and the line *BD* represents the wage-age profile. We assume that VMP is constant through the whole period of the employment contract. At point *B*, the worker is hired and is paid wage *B*, which is below the VMP. His or her wage increases with age and is equal to the VMP at point *C*. After point *C* is reached, the worker's wage exceeds the VMP, and deferred compensation (represented by area *ABC*) totally offsets the excess payment (area *CDE*) at point *T*, which represents the

¹⁷ Cf. Rebick, Marcuse E. (1995): Rewards in the afterlife. Late career job placements as incentives in the Japanese firm.

¹⁸ Cf. Yamada, Atsuhiko (2000): Intai katei ni okeru chingin teika to shotoku hoshō [Wage reduction after quitting the career job. Implications for social policy].

¹⁹ Cf. Lazear (1979).

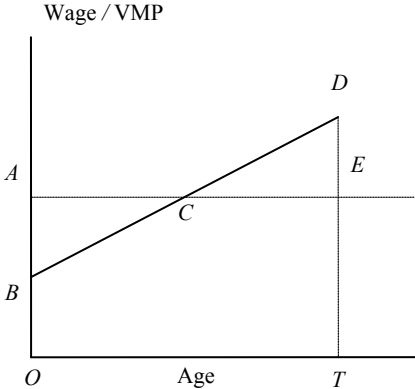


Figure 1: The wage, the VPM and the mandatory retirement age

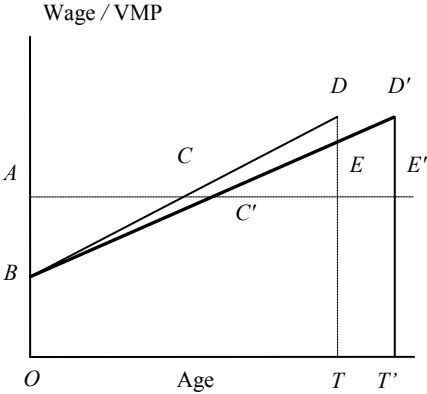


Figure 2a: Possible options after amendment of the LSEOP

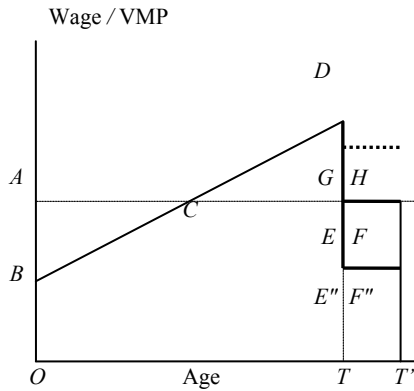


Figure 2b: Possible options after amendment of the LSEOP

mandatory retirement age. If a worker cheats and the employer discovers this, the worker will be fired and will lose the deferred compensation. Therefore, this deferred compensation arrangement discourages worker shirking or malfeasance.

Figure 2a shows the two possible options for the enterprise when the amended LSEOP is introduced. Figure 2b shows the change of wage profile from BD to $B'D'$. The new deferred compensation ABC' matches $C'D'E'$ under the less steep wage-age profile ($B'D'$) and, therefore, the mandatory retirement age can be increased from T to T' .

Many studies indicate that this option actually exists. By using Japanese micro data sets, Ohashi²⁰, Clark and Ogawa²¹, and Mitani²² found that higher ages of mandatory retirement are associated with lower wage growth with increased job tenure. By using the US Cur-

²⁰ Cf. Ohashi, Isao (1990): *Rōdō shijō no riron* [Labour market theory].

²¹ Cf. Clark, Robert L. and Naohiro Ogawa (1992): Effect of mandatory retirement on earnings profile in Japan.

²² Cf. Mitani, Naoki (2003): *Nenrei-chingin purofairu no henka to teinen enchō* [Changes in age-wage profiles and the extension of mandatory retirement age].

rent Population Survey, Hirsch *et al.*²³ also found that steep wage profiles are associated with fewer older workers and fewer older hires. By using cross-sectional national data, the OECD²⁴ found evidence of a negative relationship between the employment rate of males aged 55 to 64 and the wages of male workers aged 55 to 59, relative to those of male workers aged 25 to 29.²⁵ However, adjusting the steepness of the wage profile takes time because it requires falls in the current wages of all employees. Therefore, it may be relatively difficult to take this option in response to the amended LSEOP because there were only two years between the enactment and the enforcement of the amended law.

Another option is to reduce the wage levels for periods T and T' by generating the new wage profile $BDEF$. In this new wage profile, the wage level represented by EF is equivalent to the VMP, as Figure 2b (p. 12) shows. This option only affects the wages of reemployed workers, but the associated wage contract may induce cheating by reemployed workers. This is because the deferred compensation has been already exhausted at the mandatory retirement age at T . It is difficult to reset an implicit contract for the relatively short period of continued employment between T and T' . Given that the typical mandatory retirement age is 60 and given that, as of 2006, the amended LSEOP imposes an additional minimum of two years of continued employment, the period from T to T' is rather short.

²³ Cf. Hirsch, Barry T., David A. Macpherson and Melissa A. Hardy (2000): Occupational age structure and access for older workers.

²⁴ Cf. OECD (2006).

²⁵ The OECD suggests that Japan is an exceptional case because a steep wage curve coexists with Japan's high LFP rate for older people (OECD (2006)).

One solution, which may be acceptable to both enterprises and workers, is to reduce the wage level below the VMP (line $BDE''F''$) and then utilize the ECB. The line $BDGH$ indicates the sum of the wage fall and the ECB. If worker's shirking or malfeasance is discovered and the worker is fired, the worker will lose not only his or her wage but also the ECB. In addition, even if the worker is employed by some other enterprise and receives the ECB, his or her income is lower than $BDGH$ because of the loss of his or her firm-specific skill. Therefore, enterprises can continuously employ their workers on low wages after they have reached the mandatory retirement age (T) and can simultaneously discourage workers from cheating by utilizing the ECB. By using the simple model, we investigate the relationship between the rate of continued employment on the one hand and the steepness of wage profile, the extent of wage reduction, and the utilization of the ECB and other benefits, on the other. Concretely, we test: 1) whether enterprises that succeed in reducing wages after the mandatory retirement age by using the ECB and other benefits are more likely to employ older workers continuously after they have reached the mandatory retirement age; and 2) whether enterprises with less steep wage profiles are more likely to either set their mandatory retirement age above 60 or completely abolish mandatory retirement systems. For our analysis, we use new data from the SCEOE collected by the JILPT.

The data and descriptions of variables

The SCEOE

Six months after the amended LSEOP was introduced, the JILPT conducted the SCEOE in October 2006. Five thousand private sector en-

terprises, each with more than 300 employees, were randomly sampled from all over the country and asked a wide range of questions relating to the job security of older employees.²⁶ The questionnaire was sent by mail and the effective response rate was 22 per cent. We excluded from the sample enterprises that did not respond to questions about wages, because this variable is crucial to our analysis. Some enterprises introduced a job security measure, but did not use it because they did not employ anyone aged 60 or over. We excluded these enterprises from our analysis because we are interested in how the rate of continued employment is determined. This data cleaning process eliminated 30 per cent of the enterprises surveyed; the final sample constitutes 700 enterprises.

Definitions of subsamples and the dependent variables

Corresponding to our two hypotheses, we create two subsamples for our analysis, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: Subsamples

Subsample A: N = 687	Enterprises that employ <i>all</i> older workers above age 60, and enterprises that employ <i>some</i> older workers above age 60
Subsample B: N = 470	Enterprises with continuing employment systems that were actually utilized by their employees in the last three years, and with a mandatory retirement age of 60. This subsample is a subset of subsample A

Subsample A is used to investigate the determinants of increases in the mandatory retirement age. This subsample covers all enterprises that introduced one of three job security measures for their older employees below the pensionable age: a) an upward revision of the man-

²⁶ Enterprises in the agriculture, forestry, fisheries and mining industries are also excluded from the sample.

datory retirement age; b) the introduction of continuing employment systems; or c) the abolition of mandatory retirement systems. Subsample B is used to identify the determinants of continued employment, or the difference between the amount of ECB and other benefits and the rate of continued employment. This subsample comprises enterprises that have continuing employment systems that were actually utilized by their employees in the last three years, and that have a mandatory retirement age of 60. Subsample B is a subset of subsample A. We use the two dependent variables described in Table 3.

Table 3: Definition of the dependent variables

Variable	Definition
<i>MR</i> : Mandatory retirement age > 60	A dummy variable that indicates whether the enterprise employs <i>all</i> (= 1) or <i>some</i> (= 0) older workers beyond age 60
<i>CER</i> : $\ln p/(1 - p)$	The average rate of continued employment in the last three years as a percentage of employees who reached their mandatory retirement age of 60

The first is a dummy variable that indicates whether the enterprise has a mandatory retirement age exceeding 60. Thus, this variable splits subsample A into two groups, depending on whether the enterprise continuously employed *all* its workers beyond age 60 or not. The second dependent variable is the average rate of continued employment as a percentage of the number of employees who reached the mandatory retirement age of 60 in the last three years and is the product of two variables: the proportion of applicants who wish to be continuously employed after reaching the mandatory retirement age of 60, and the approval rate of continued employment as a percentage of the number of applicants.

Definitions of the independent variables and the econometric model

Corresponding to the two models to be estimated, Table 4 lists the independent variables and their expected effects (signs) on the continued employment of older workers.

Table 4: Definitions of the independent variables

Variable	Description	Sign
<i>W</i> : average wage schedule (ln)	The average wage schedule for university graduate employees.	(+)
<i>WI</i> : wage increase rate	The annual rate of increase of the wage schedule for university graduate employees.	(-)
<i>WD</i> : wage reduction rate	The rate of reduction in the wage schedule of university graduate employees who are continuously employed after the mandatory retirement age of 60.	(+)
<i>PB</i> : public benefits (10,000 yen)	The ECB and EPAE, which are received by workers continuously employed after the mandatory retirement age of 60. The amount of benefit is calculated based on the wage schedule for university graduate employees.	(+)
<i>PP</i> : corporate pension benefits (10,000 yen)	Corporate pension benefits, which are received by workers continuously employed after the mandatory retirement age of 60. The calculated amount of benefit is based on the wage schedule for university graduate employees.	(?)
<i>RE</i> : growth rate of regular employment	The average growth rate of regular employment in the last five years.	(+)
<i>NG</i> : hiring rate of young recruits	The average hiring rate of young recruits (just out of education into work) in the last three years as a percentage of regular employment.	(-)
<i>S</i> : Firm size	The number of employees, excluding temporary employees.	
<i>I</i> : Industry dummy	Dummy variables, corresponding to construction; manufacturing; transportation; wholesale and retail trade; finance, insurance and real estate; services; and other industries.	

The first model is a probit model, which investigates the determinants of increases in the mandatory retirement age. The model is:

$$\Pr(MR = 1 | X = x) = \phi(x'\beta) \quad (1)$$

The vector of independent variables (x) contains the following: average wage schedule (W); wage increase rate (WI); growth rate of regular employment (RE); hiring rate of young recruits (NG); firm size (S); and industry dummies (I). We expect positive coefficients for W and RE . The average wage schedule is standardized to represent the wage schedule of university graduate employees, and hence, should proxy accumulate firm-specific skills. Higher firm-specific skill levels are expected to induce longer employment contracts. The growth rate of regular employment proxies enterprise labour demand, which is expected to increase the mandatory retirement age. As explained in Section 3.2, the less steep the wage profile, the easier for the enterprise to increase the mandatory retirement age. Therefore, we expect the coefficient of WI to be negative. The hiring rate of young recruits (NG) is another proxy for enterprise labour demand; however, it may also reflect the enterprise's preference for employing younger employees. Ohta's²⁷ survey of the literature for Japan suggests that there is a trade-off between the employment of older workers and recruitment; however, there is cross-country evidence to the contrary.²⁸ Therefore, the expected sign of the NG coefficient is negative. Firm size (S) and the industry dummies (I) are used to control for other enterprise characteristics. The second model, estimated by using OLS, investigates whether enterprises that lower wages substantially for workers who reach the mandatory retirement age are more likely to employ older workers continuously. The model is:

$$CPR = \alpha + x\beta \quad (2)$$

²⁷ Cf. Ohta, Souchi (2003): *Wakamono no shugyō kikai no genshō to gakuryoku teika mondai* [Declining opportunity of younger employment and falling academic standards].

²⁸ Cf. OECD (2006).

In this model, the vector of independent variables (x) contains the (already defined) W , WI , RE , NG , S , and I , as well as the wage reduction rate (WD), public benefits (PB), and corporation pension benefits (PP). For the reasons given above, we expect positive coefficients on W and RE , and negative coefficients on WI and NG . According to the simple model described in Section 3, the coefficients of WD and PB are expected to be negative and positive, respectively. The variable WD reflects how well the enterprise can adjust the wage levels of its continuing employees in relation to their VMPs after they reach the mandatory retirement age. Better wage adjustment is expected to increase continued employment. The use of public benefits, particularly the ECB, to absorb wage reductions is expected to increase continued employment. Unlike public benefits, corporation pension benefits are expected to have an ambiguous effect even though these benefits play the same role in enterprises. However, given that corporation benefits are seen by employees as deferred payments, employees may view these benefits as further wage reductions and thus be deterred from continuing their employment. The summary statistics are reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary statistics

Dependent Variables	Subsample A		Subsample B	
	Mean	[Std. Dev.]	Mean	[Std. Dev.]
Dependent Variables				
<i>MR</i> : Mandatory retirement age > age 60	0.045	[0.207]		
<i>CER</i> : Continued employment rate = $ARCE \times DRCE$ (ln p/(1-p))			2.061	[4.573]
(<i>ARCE</i> : Applicant rate for continued employment)			2.511	[4.522]
(<i>DRCE</i> : Adoption rate of applicants for continued employment)			9.305	[6.248]
Independent Variables				
<i>W</i> : average wage schedule (ln)	12.745	[0.223]	12.748	[0.216]
<i>WI</i> : wage increase rate	0.035	[0.018]	0.035	[0.018]
<i>WD</i> : wage reduction rate			0.510	[0.186]
<i>PB</i> : public benefits (10,000 yen)			4.463	[4.646]
<i>PP</i> : corporate pension benefits (10,000 yen)			2.054	[3.899]
<i>RE</i> : growth rate of regular employment	-0.008	[0.131]	-0.011	[0.127]
<i>NG</i> : hiring rate of young recruits	0.028	[0.030]	0.028	[0.029]
<i>S</i> : Firm size	1281.531	[2498.6]	1378.357	[2682.0]
<i>I.C.</i> : construction industries	0.072	[0.258]	0.083	[0.276]
<i>I.M.</i> : manufacturing industries	0.272	[0.445]	0.296	[0.456]
<i>I.T.</i> : transportation industries	0.076	[0.265]	0.089	[0.286]
<i>I.W.</i> : wholesale and retail trade industries	0.244	[0.430]	0.236	[0.425]
<i>I.F.</i> : finance, insurance and real estate industries	0.035	[0.184]	0.032	[0.176]
<i>I.S.</i> : services industries	0.173	[0.378]	0.164	[0.371]
<i>I.O.</i> : other industries	0.128	[0.334]	0.100	[0.300]
N	712		470	

Empirical results

The wage schedule and continued employment

We expect that the less steep the wage-age profile, the higher the mandatory retirement age. Figure 3 illustrates this relationship.

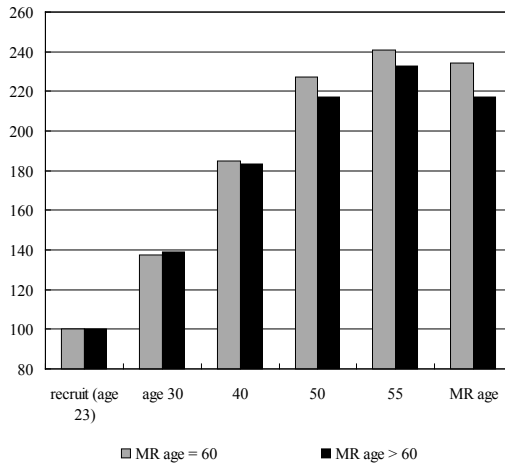


Figure 3: The wage schedule by age and mandatory retirement (based on the wage schedule for university graduates; the wage at recruitment = 100)

There are two wage schedules: one for enterprises with a mandatory retirement age of 60, and one for those with a mandatory retirement age of over 60. The former schedule applies to 95 per cent of enterprises. The wage schedule for enterprises with a mandatory retirement age of 60 is higher than the other, particularly for workers between ages 40 and 55. In addition, wages fall more for workers over 55 in enterprises that have a mandatory retirement age of 60. This suggests that enterprises with a mandatory retirement age of above 60 have a less steep wage-age profile. Figure 4 illustrates the relationship

between the wage schedule and the CER after the mandatory retirement age has been reached.

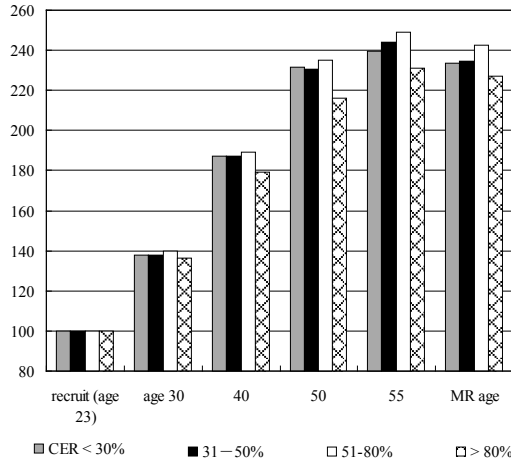


Figure 4: The wage schedule by age and the CER after the mandatory retirement (based on the wage schedule for university graduates; the wage at recruitment = 100)

The CER is based on the three-year average in each enterprise. The highest CER (of over 80 per cent) is recorded in enterprises with the lowest wage schedules in all age categories except at recruitment. However, the relationship between the wage schedule and the CER is unclear in enterprises with a CER of less than 80 per cent.

Wage reductions, the utilization of public benefits and continued employment

As explained in Section 3.2, it is not only the wage curve, but also wage reductions after the attainment of the mandatory retirement age and the utilization of public benefits that are important determinants of the CER. We expect large wage reductions to encourage enterprises to continuously employ their workers beyond the mandatory retirement

age. Table 6 shows the relationship between the CER and the targeted income level after the attainment of the mandatory retirement age of 60.

Table 6: The targeted income level and CER after the mandatory retirement age (based on wage schedule for university graduates in enterprises with continuing employment systems)

Targeted income level as a percentage of income at mandatory retirement age	Distribution (%)	Wage (10,000 yen)	Wage as a percentage of average wage (%)	CER (%)
around 100%	5	31	99	65
80 - 90%	15	30	98	69
60 - 70%	48	22	72	66
50%	22	17	54	55
30 - 40%	9	10	33	50
less than 30%	1	4	12	31
(N=470)	100	21	70	62

The targeted income considered by the enterprise is the sum of social security benefits (such as the ECB and EPAE), corporation pension benefits, and the wage. Table 6 shows that half the enterprises target the post-mandatory retirement income at age 60 to 70 per cent of the income before the mandatory retirement age. On the other hand, more than 30 per cent of the enterprises target the income level at 50 per cent or less than the income at the mandatory retirement age. This suggests that wage reductions after the mandatory retirement age are quite substantial in some enterprises. Enterprises targeting the income level at 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the income at the mandatory retirement age only pay wages of 100,000 yen. This amount is equivalent to one-third of average wage for regular employees. With respect to the relationship between wage reductions and continued employment, the larger the reduction in wages, generally, the lower the CER.

This is contrary to our expectation. Let us now consider how enterprises utilize public benefits and corporation benefits to absorb these wage reductions. Table 7 reports the determinants of the wage levels of continuing employees.

Table 7: Determinants of the wage levels of continuing employees
(for enterprises with continuing employment system)

Determinants of wage standard (multiple answer)	(%)
Average wages in the same industry	24
Average wages of the assigned job in the same industry	16
<u>The Wage reached at mandatory retirement</u>	<u>52</u>
Wage at the recruitment in the same enterprise	7
<u>Benefits level of EPAE</u>	<u>30</u>
Minimum wage in the region	5
Retirement benefits level	1
<u>Benefits level of ECB</u>	<u>31</u>
Other	5
(N=470)	
	100

Half the enterprises consider the wage level at the mandatory retirement age for continuing employees. Thirty percent of enterprises take account of the EPAE or ECB when setting wages. This suggests that the social policies designed for older workers broadly affect wage setting by enterprises. Figure 5 (p. 24) shows the distribution of how enterprises utilize social benefits and corporation pensions to compensate for wage falls after the mandatory retirement age.

For this figure, enterprises that do not pay these benefits are excluded. Although the modes of the distributions of both benefits are between 20,000 and 40,000 yen, which is equivalent to between 6 per cent and 12 per cent of the average wage of regular workers, 20 per cent and 15 per cent of enterprises, respectively, pay out more than 100,000 yen in social benefits and corporation pensions as wage com-

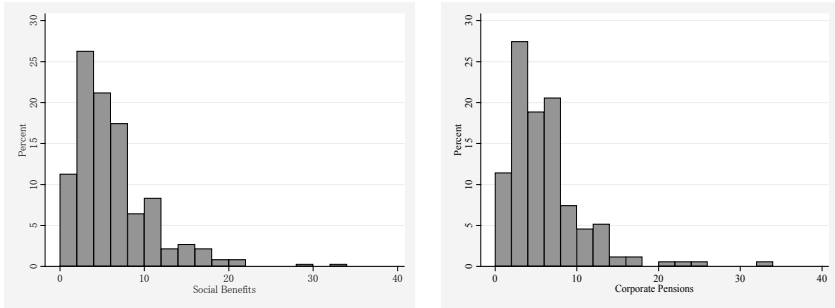


Figure 5: Amounts of social benefits and corporation pension use to maintain income level (based on the wage schedule for university graduates; in 10,000 yen)

pensation. We classified the enterprises that introduced continuing employment systems into four types, depending on whether they used social benefits and/or corporation pensions to compensate for wage falls after the mandatory retirement age. The results are reported in Table 8.

Table 8: Combinations of social benefits and corporate pensions used to maintain wages

Utilization of ...			(%)	Composition ratio of income (%)				Ave. income (10,000 yen)	CER (%)
Social Benefits	Corporate Pensions	Wage		Social Benefits	Corporate Pnesion	Total income			
1	No	No	27	100	0	0	100	32.1	67
2	Yes	No	40	74	26	0	100	29.1	63
3	No	Yes	2	68	0	32	100	31.0	65
4	Yes	Yes	32	60	18	21	100	28.3	58
(N=470)			100	73	19	9	100	28.1	62

Twenty-seven percent of enterprises did not utilize either social benefits or corporate pensions to compensate for wage falls; of the four types, these enterprises paid the highest average monthly income of 320,000 yen. Seventy-four percent of enterprises used social bene-

fits or corporate pensions that amount to 30 per cent to 40 per cent of their targeted incomes. Half of these enterprises utilized both social benefits and corporate pensions to compensate for wage falls. However, their average targeted income is the lowest of the four types. In terms of the relationship between the utilization of these benefits and the CER, enterprises that do not pay benefits have the highest CER of the four types. Enterprises that pay both benefits to compensate for wage falls have the lowest CERs. Because we cannot control for wage falls, the effect of using social benefits on the CER is unclear. Later, we attempt to control for these effects when estimating the OLS model. To summarize the results in this section, the less steep the wage curve, the higher the mandatory retirement age and the CER; however, wage reductions seem to lower the CER, contrary to our expectation.

The relationship between wage setting and the mandatory retirement age

As already mentioned, upward revision of the mandatory retirement age is an effective way of providing job security for older employees relative to the introduction of a continuing employment system. This is because the former guarantees that all workers are employed up to the mandatory retirement age under the lifetime employment system for regular employees in Japan, whereas the latter allows enterprises to choose from applicants for continuing employment contracts after the mandatory retirement age is reached. Table 9 reports our probit estimates.

The dependent variable is whether the enterprise's mandatory retirement age is above 60 (= 1) or not (= 0). Remember that, before the amendment of the LSEOP, age 60 was the most common mandatory

Table 9: The determinants of an increased mandatory retirement age (probit estimates; marginal effects ($\partial F/\partial x$))

Dependent Variable	Model (1)		Model (2)		Model (3)	
	dF/dx	[Std. Err.]	dF/dx	[Std. Err.]	dF/dx	[Std. Err.]
MR: Mandatory retirement age > age 60						
Independent variables						
<i>W</i> : average wage schedule (ln)	0.100	[0.040]	**	0.098	[0.040]	**
<i>WI</i> : wage increase rate	-1.621	[0.537]	***	-1.611	[0.535]	***
<i>RE</i> : growth rate of regular employment				-0.048	[0.047]	
<i>NG</i> : hiring rate of young recruits						-0.628 [0.263] **
<i>S</i> : Firm size	0.000	[0.000]		0.000	[0.000]	
<i>LC</i> : construction industries	0.076	[0.061]	*	0.072	[0.060]	*
<i>IT</i> : transportation industries	0.136	[0.072]	***	0.136	[0.072]	***
<i>LW</i> : wholesale and retail trade industries	-0.001	[0.023]		0.000	[0.023]	
<i>IF</i> : finance, insurance and real estate industries						
<i>LS</i> : services industries	0.100	[0.047]	***	0.106	[0.048]	***
<i>IO</i> : other industries	0.064	[0.046]	*	0.063	[0.046]	*
						0.074 [0.049] **
Log likelihood	-114.546			-114.011		
Pseudo R ²	0.115			0.119		0.144
obs. P.	0.047			0.047		0.047
pred. P.	0.031			0.030		0.027
<i>N</i>		687		687		687

Note: Subsample A is used for estimation. *** implies 1% significance, ** implies 5% significance, and * implies 10% significance. The manufacturing industry is the base for the industry dummies. Because all enterprises from the finance, insurance and real estate industry in our sample have a mandatory retirement age above 60, we excluded these enterprises from our sample.

retirement age in Japan. For the analysis of this section, enterprises that completely abolished mandatory retirement were categorized as the former group because of their small sample size. The preferred model is (3). Our results suggest that the wage system is a key determinant of the mandatory retirement age. The average wage schedule (*W*), which can be regarded as an indicator of accumulated firm-specific skills, has a positive effect on the mandatory retirement age. The wage increase rate (*WI*) reduces the probability of an increased mandatory retirement at a statistically significant level. A one percent increase in the slope induces a 1.5 per cent decrease in the probability that an enterprise sets the mandatory retirement age above age 60. These results are consistent with empirical results in Ōhashi²⁹, Clark

²⁹ Cf. Ōhashi (1990).

and Ogawa³⁰, and Mitani³¹, with our predictions, and with Figure 3 (p. 20). While the rate of increase in regular employment (*RE*) does not significantly affect the mandatory retirement age, the hiring rate of young recruits (*NG*) correlates negatively with the mandatory retirement age. A one percentage point increase in *NG* lowers the probability of an increased mandatory retirement age by six percentage points at a statistically significant level.³² This result suggests that there is a trade-off between the employment of younger and older workers in Japan³³, in terms of a higher mandatory retirement age.

The relationship between wage setting and the CER

We now use OLS to investigate how the CER is determined. Most enterprises chose continuing employment systems as a job security measure in response to the amendment to the LSEOP, rather than raising the mandatory retirement age. Table 10 reports OLS estimates of the determinants of the CER.

The estimating sample is enterprises with a mandatory retirement age of 60 in which employees used continuing employment systems in the last three years (i.e., subsample B). Again, the preferred model is (3). The average wage schedule (*W*) is not statistically significant in all three models. A powerful predictor of the CER is the wage reduction rate after the mandatory retirement age (*WD*); however, the sign is negative, contrary to our expectation. This result implies that wage falls might discourage older people from staying with enterprises. We investigate this hypothesis in the next section. The coefficient on the

³⁰ Cf. Clark, Ogawa (1992).

³¹ Cf. Mitani (2003).

³² Putting these two variables into our regressions separately did not change our results.

³³ Cf. Ohta (2003).

Table 10: OLS estimates of the determinants of the CER

Dependent Variable	Model (1)		Model (2)		Model (3)	
	Coef.	[Std. Err.]	Coef.	[Std. Err.]	Coef.	[Std. Err.]
CER: Continued employment rate						
Independent variables						
<i>W</i> : average wage schedule (ln)	0.825	[1.529]	1.038	[1.536]	0.752	[1.531]
<i>WI</i> : wage increase rate	15.073	[17.68]	16.809	[17.74]	19.208	[17.70]
<i>WD</i> : wage reduction rate	-5.837	[1.116]	*** -5.393	[1.285]	*** -4.846	[1.296]
<i>PB</i> : public benefits (10,000 yen)			0.057	[0.048]	0.045	[0.048]
<i>PP</i> : corporate pension benefits (10,000 yen)			-0.116	[0.059]	* -0.115	[0.059]
<i>RE</i> : growth rate of regular employment					4.555	[1.658]
<i>NG</i> : hiring rate of young recruits					-1.471	[7.363]
<i>S</i> : Firm size	0.000	[0.000]	0.000	[0.000]	0.000	[0.000]
<i>I_C</i> : construction industries	-0.060	[0.803]	-0.070	[0.801]	0.115	[0.799]
<i>I_T</i> : transportation industries	0.565	[0.779]	0.560	[0.776]	0.639	[0.778]
<i>I_W</i> : wholesale and retail trade industries	1.311	[0.556]	** 1.310	[0.555]	** 1.457	[0.554]
<i>I_F</i> : finance, insurance and real estate industries	0.015	[1.193]	0.061	[1.198]	0.456	[1.199]
<i>I_S</i> : services industries	2.696	[0.628]	*** 2.645	[0.629]	*** 2.554	[0.627]
<i>I_O</i> : other industries	0.748	[0.749]	0.729	[0.747]	0.927	[0.755]
Constant	-6.814	[18.96]	-9.840	[19.08]	-6.492	[19.01]
F value	5.890		*** 5.390		*** 5.220	
Adj. R ²	0.095		0.101		0.112	
<i>N</i>	470		470		470	

Note: Subsample B is used for estimation. *** implies 1% significance, ** implies 5% significance, and * implies 10% significance. The manufacturing industry is the base for the industry dummies.

growth rate of regular employment in the last five years (*RE*) is positive and implies that a one percentage point increase in *RE* results in a five percentage point increase in the CER. In other words, increased enterprise labour demand substantially raises the CER. Unlike in the model for increases in the mandatory retirement age, the hiring rate of young recruits (*NG*) is not statistically significant.³⁴ The amount of corporation pension benefits (*PP*) used to compensate for wage reductions has a negative effect on the CER, although it is only marginally significant. This may reflect the fact that employees consider corporation pension benefits as deferred wages. Older workers would leave enterprises that use corporation pension benefits because otherwise they would have lost some part of their lifetime wages, which includes deferred wages in the form of corporation pension benefits. The nega-

³⁴ Putting *RE* and *NG* into our regressions separately did not change our results.

tive effect of *PP* indicates that the CER is determined on the labour supply side; we examine this in the next section.

The relationship between the wage system and the application rate for continued employment

Contrary to the prediction in Table 4 (p. 17), wage reductions reduce the CER. This may be because wage falls and the use of corporate pension benefits affect the labour supply side rather than the labour demand side. To examine this, we separately model the application rate of older employees for continuing employment contracts (*ARCE*) and the adoption rate of applicants by enterprises (*DRCE*). Recall that the product of these two rates is equal to the CER. Table 11 reports our OLS estimates for *ARCE*.

Table 11: OLS estimates of the determinants of the application rate for continued employment

Dependent Variable	Model (1)		Model (2)		Model (3)	
	Coef.	[Std. Err.]	Coef.	[Std. Err.]	Coef.	[Std. Err.]
<i>ARCE</i> : Applicant rate						
Independent variables						
<i>W</i> : average wage schedule (ln)	-0.152	[1.508]	0.195	[1.513]	-0.036	[1.509]
<i>WI</i> : wage increase rate	25.533	[17.43]	28.810	[17.47]	* 30.259	[17.44]
<i>WD</i> : wage reduction rate	-5.398	[1.100]	*** -4.472	[1.266]	*** -4.012	[1.277]
<i>PB</i> : public benefits (10,000 yen)			0.028	[0.047]	0.016	[0.047]
<i>PP</i> : corporate pension benefits (10,000 yen)			-0.143	[0.059]	** -0.140	[0.058]
<i>RE</i> : growth rate of regular employment					4.445	[1.633]
<i>NG</i> : hiring rate of young recruits					-5.955	[7.254]
<i>S</i> : Firm size	0.000	[0.000]	0.000	[0.000]	0.000	[0.000]
<i>I_C</i> : construction industries	-0.085	[0.792]	-0.119	[0.789]	0.038	[0.787]
<i>I_T</i> : transportation industries	0.557	[0.768]	0.560	[0.764]	0.572	[0.767]
<i>I_W</i> : wholesale and retail trade industries	1.232	[0.548]	** 1.207	[0.546]	** 1.363	[0.546]
<i>I_F</i> : finance, insurance and real estate industries	-0.169	[1.177]	-0.232	[1.180]	0.154	[1.182]
<i>I_S</i> : services industries	2.915	[0.619]	*** 2.912	[0.620]	*** 2.803	[0.618]
<i>I_O</i> : other industries	0.715	[0.739]	0.698	[0.735]	0.960	[0.744]
Constant	5.418	[18.70]	0.560	[18.80]	3.411	[18.73]
F value	6.160		*** 5.720		*** 5.490	
Adj. R ²	0.099		0.108		0.118	
N	470		470		470	

Note: Subsample B is used for estimation. *** implies 1% significance, **implies 5% significance, and * implies 10% significance. The manufacturing industry is the base for the industry dummies.

We use the same set of independent variables as that used for CER. The wage fall (*WD*) in the preferred model (3) is statistically significant; a one percentage point wage fall after the mandatory retirement age reduces the application rate for continued employment (*ARCE*) by four percentage points. This indicates that wage reductions affect labour supply behaviour. The amount of corporation pension benefits (*PP*) paid to compensate for wage reductions is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level and its coefficient is negative. As we discussed in the previous section, older workers may consider corporate pension benefits as deferred wages; therefore, older workers may see these benefits as reducing their lifetime wages. Our results support this view. Based on the *F*-values, the overall significance of the models for *DRCE* is much lower than for the *ARCE* models. This is shown by the preferred model (3) in Table 12.

Table 12: OLS estimates of the determinants of the adoption rate of applicants

Dependent Variable	Model (1)		Model (2)		Model (3)	
	Coef.	[Std. Err.]	Coef.	[Std. Err.]	Coef.	[Std. Err.]
DRCE: Adoption rate of applicants						
Independent variables						
<i>W</i> : average wage schedule (ln)	2.007	[2.181]	1.803	[2.197]	1.416	[2.194]
<i>WI</i> : wage increase rate	4.786	[25.21]	1.994	[25.37]	5.510	[25.36]
<i>WD</i> : wage reduction rate	-3.640	[1.591] **	-4.579	[1.838] **	-3.846	[1.857] **
<i>PB</i> : public benefits (10,000 yen)			0.112	[0.068] *	0.098	[0.068]
<i>PP</i> : corporate pension benefits (10,000 yen)			-0.007	[0.085]	-0.007	[0.085]
<i>RE</i> : growth rate of regular employment					5.761	[2.375] **
<i>NG</i> : hiring rate of young recruits					0.580	[10.55]
<i>S</i> : Firm size	0.000	[0.000] **	0.000	[0.000] **	0.000	[0.000] **
<i>LC</i> : construction industries	-1.283	[1.145]	-1.229	[1.145]	-0.983	[1.145]
<i>LT</i> : transportation industries	-0.321	[1.111]	-0.347	[1.110]	-0.211	[1.115]
<i>LW</i> : wholesale and retail trade industries	0.253	[0.793]	0.312	[0.793]	0.490	[0.794]
<i>LF</i> : finance, insurance and real estate industries	1.643	[1.702]	1.953	[1.714]	2.453	[1.718]
<i>LS</i> : services industries	1.159	[0.895]	1.005	[0.900]	0.901	[0.898]
<i>LO</i> : other industries	1.700	[1.069]	1.682	[1.068]	1.894	[1.082] *
Constant	-14.614	[27.05]	-11.925	[27.29]	-7.466	[27.23] **
F value	1.620	*	1.580	*	1.810	**
Adj. R ²	0.013		0.015		0.024	
<i>N</i>	470		470		470	

Note: Subsample B is used for estimation. *** implies 1% significance, **implies 5% significance, and * implies 10% significance. The manufacturing industry is the base for the industry dummies.

Interestingly, wage falls (*WD*) significantly lower *DRCE*. However, *PP* is not significant in these models. Given the *ARCE* results, there may be reverse causality between *WD* and *DRCE*. Enterprises that do not want to continuously employ their older workers would cut wages substantially after they reach the mandatory retirement age to deter them from applying for continuous employment. Unfortunately, our data set is cross sectional, and panel data is needed to investigate this possible causality; however, the descriptive results shown in the next section seem to support our argument.

Labor cost is not a challenge for continued employment in most enterprises

The SCEOE asks about challenges to promoting continued employment after the mandatory retirement age. Descriptive results for the responses to this question are shown in Table 13.

Table 13: Challenges to continued employment (multiple responses)

Challenges (multiple responses)	(%)	Challenges (multiple responses)	(%)
It is difficult to set tasks for older workers in the enterprise	40.9	The labor union or employee representation opposes continued employment.	1.8
It is difficult to find out jobs for older workers in the affiliated companies.	12.6	The work ethic of younger and prime-aged employees will deteriorate	16.2
It is difficult to arrange facilities or equipments for the older workers.	8.7	Labor costs will increase.	13.1
The lack of know-how for managing older workers.	20.1	The productivity of the enterprise will decline.	9.7
It is difficult to arrange administrative positions.	41.2	Other reasons.	2.2
It is difficult to arrange compensation and benefits packages for continuing employees.	26.4	There is no barrier to continued employment.	16.6
(N=712)	100.0	(N=712)	100.0

The main challenges are the difficulty of setting tasks for older workers in the enterprise (41 per cent) and managing administrative positions after the mandatory retirement age (41 per cent). It is note-

worthy that only 13 per cent of enterprises consider the increased labour costs generated by continued employment to be a challenge. This is presumably because most enterprises introduced reemployment systems and can substantially reduce wage levels after the mandatory retirement age. In fact, 70 per cent of enterprises say that wage reductions will offset increased labour costs. These wage reductions will decrease the application rate for continued employment. In this respect, the amended LSEOP is not a panacea for strengthening the job security of older workers after they reach the mandatory retirement age. This is because enterprises retain a free hand in controlling wage levels and can thereby lower the application rate for continuing employment contracts.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, we examined the effect of the Law for the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons (LSEOP), which was enforced in 2006 and obliges enterprises to take one of the following three job security measures for their employees, in line with an upward revision of the pensionable age: a) any increase in the mandatory retirement age that exceeds the current pensionable age; b) the introduction of continuing employment systems; or c) the complete abolition of mandatory retirement systems. By using a new data set constructed by the Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training, we identified the determinants of continued employment and increases in the mandatory retirement age. To summarize, our findings are as follows:

- The less steeply the wage schedule rises, the less likely is an enterprise to set the mandatory retirement beyond age 60; a one percent decrease in the steepness of the wage schedule induces a two per-

centage point increase in the probability that an enterprise sets its mandatory retirement beyond age 60. However, there is no significant effect on the continued employment rate.

- The more the enterprise recruits young people who have just left education, the less likely is the enterprise to set the mandatory retirement beyond age 60; a one percentage point increase in young recruits lowers the probability of an increase in the mandatory retirement to beyond age 60 by six percentage points; however there is no significant effect on the continued employment rate.
- The more an enterprise reduces wages after the mandatory retirement age, the less likely are older workers to stay; a one percentage point fall in the rate of wage reduction for workers who have reached the mandatory retirement age reduces the application rate for continuing employment contracts by four percentage points.
- The more an enterprise utilizes corporation pension benefits to compensate for wage reductions after the mandatory retirement age, the less likely are older workers stay; a 10,000 yen increase in corporate pensions to compensate workers beyond the mandatory retirement age for wage reductions lowers the application rate for continued employment by 14 percentage points.
- The higher the number of regular worker employed by an enterprise, the more likely are older workers to stay; a one percentage point increase in the growth rate of regular employment raises the continued employment rate by five percentage points, but there is no significant effect on the mandatory retirement age.

The most important of the above findings is that enterprises can use wage reductions to discourage continued employment. Moreover, the amended LSEOP allows enterprises with continuing employment sys-

tems to select workers for continued employment under the explicit rules agreed to with labour unions or employee representatives.

This means that, in practice, the amended LSEOP has a limited effect on the job security of older workers. However, strengthening job security by further amending the LSEOP may have side effects. Job security could be strengthened by raising the mandatory retirement age or by abolishing mandatory retirement for all enterprises. This would be more effective to increase job security for older employees relative to the introduction of the continued employment system. This is because raising the mandatory retirement age or abolishing mandatory retirement would ensure that all workers would be employed up to the mandatory retirement age under Japan's lifetime employment system for regular employees. However, had the LSEOP imposed one of these two options on all enterprises, enterprises would have employed fewer young recruits, which would have distorted the labour market, as our first finding above suggests.

In this sense, the limited effect of LSEOP is desirable, even if it is not a panacea for the job security of older employees. Nevertheless, if there is steady economic growth and population ageing generates a serious shortage of labour supply, wage reductions will be suppressed; therefore, the continued employment rate will increase. Our results suggest a positive relationship between the continued employment rate and regular employment. In such circumstances, the LSEOP would effectively enhance the job security of older workers.

List of abbreviations

LSEOP	Law for the Stabilisation of Employment of Older Persons
LFR	Labour Force Participation
JILPT	Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training
SCEOE	Survey of the Continued Employment of Older Employees
CER	Continued Employment Rate
EP	Employees Pension
ECB	the Employment Continuation Benefit for the Aged
EPAE	Old-aged EP for Active Employees
VMP	Value of the Marginal Productivity
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares

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**Comparing Social Policies:
The Long-term Care Insurance as a Case**

Abstract

In the field of long-term care insurance looking at both Germany's and Japan's approach means not only to compare policies but to analyze processes of translation between political fields as Germany's system has obviously influenced Japan's decisions. On a regional level, the introduction of the long-term care insurance has led to anxieties as well as euphoria in Japan. While the insurance was welcomed as a step towards more regional political independence, local politics and specialists did not feel ready for some of the changes. One way to gain a better understanding of the new system was to learn more about the German system. As the example Fukuoka shows, bureaucrats and specialists with different backgrounds of knowledge did discuss the German example on different levels, which stipulated various processes of contextual translation that helped to develop approaches to specific problems. Gregory Kasza's concept of diffusion, which seeks to explain the similarities between different welfare states, including Japan, can therefore be extended to include the notion of translation.

Introduction

Since the second half of the last century, Japan has rapidly expanded economically. Today, despite two financial crises within two decades, the country remains one of the world's three most powerful economic powerhouses. This remarkable level of success has raised questions about the conditions that preceded it. Especially because Japan is an Asian country, making its classification as a "Western" nation seem odd, the country has been studied thoroughly. But as an outsider, Japan was always seen either as a blueprint for the modernization of non-Western countries or as an exception to be explained. Over the last two decades, a changing world has cooled discussion of Japan's special character, and other countries have entered the picture. China or India are now considered likely replacements for the struggling Japanese, but even as the phenomenon of Non-Western modernization has spread, the questions surrounding the conditions that lead to it remain.

Given this background, it is no surprise that scrutiny of Japan's success has long been built around a core of comparisons between that country and the West. After all, modernity has been seen as a realm of the West, and the success of Japan in achieving modernity as defined by economic growth, political integration and lifestyle changes did not lead to this idea being rethought but to Japan being classified as part of the Western world. Despite this inclusion, Japan's status has remained that of the "other", a situation that allowed for comparisons and a better understanding of the conditions preceding modernity. Other states, such as third world countries, could not have served as such interesting objects of comparison, as the extent to which they lag behind the West precludes their serving as alter-others.

The notion of “development” or “progress” invoked here is another part of the problem. Economic comparisons arguing in these terms have been formulated within the paradigm of modernity. One common topic of comparison has been Japanese social policy, which was often seen as lagging behind the western standard.¹ By keeping standards of social welfare deliberately low, it was argued, Japan was able to cut costs and gain an unfair market advantage. On the other hand, the strong involvement of companies in providing welfare was acknowledged and raised again questions as to whether the concept of “Japan Inc.” as a big family was the ideal model for success.

Comparisons of Japan’s and western social policies thus have some tradition, albeit to a limited extent. But this tradition has been riddled with theoretical problems and blind spots. Since the main objective was to point out the differences in systems and explain the consequences, a methodological nationalism was introduced to produce results.² Japan, and in reversal Western countries, were conceptualized as entities closed off from each other. Mutual learning or influence was considered only for limited historical time periods. For the Meiji Era as well as for US occupation after WWII, learning effects on the Japanese side were conceded, but often enough, culturalist arguments eradicated even these allusions to entanglements³ of knowledge.

¹ Terms such as “development”, “progress” or “lagging behind” are often used to imply a temporal lag between the West and Non-Western countries. Johannes Fabian (1983) has deconstructed this dichotomization along spatial and temporal categories in his book *Time and the other. How anthropology makes its object*.

² Cf. Beck, Ulrich and Edgar Grande (2006): *Cosmopolitan Europe*, 174.

³ Entanglement is a term introduced by Conrad and Shalini which expresses very well interdependences on political, social and semantical levels (Conrad, Sebastian and Randeria Shalini (2002): *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus. Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* [Beyond eurocentrism. Postcolonial perspectives in historical and cultural studies]).

However, comparisons of welfare systems that fail to acknowledge that systems learn from each other and are deeply entangled are no longer sustainable, especially in cases such as that of long-term care insurance in Japan. Introduced in 2000, it was strongly influenced by the German example, which was in turn derived partly from the example of the Dutch. Welfare systems are not stand-alone projects owing their shape only to the culture they are placed in. This entanglement of systems has to be described and analyzed theoretically. In the following I therefore want to employ data gathered in a fieldwork project during the first two years after the introduction of long-term care insurance to formulate ideas about how knowledge crossing the borders between welfare systems circulated in Japan. To do this, I will consider methodological nationalism in more detail, first concentrating mainly on Gøsta Esping-Andersen and his book about the “three worlds of welfare.”⁴ While this book is now nearly two decades old, it is still inspiring new culturalist theories related to the comparison of welfare systems in Japan. Gregory Kasza has written an excellent study of the development of Japanese welfare, which is based on the ideas presented by Esping-Anderson and refutes many culturalist arguments. But Kasza offers no convincing theory of how knowledge moves between systems.⁵ At this point, the observations of the previously mentioned fieldwork will be introduced to form a clear picture of translation as a major factor. Knowledge and its translation during the process of introducing the new insurance will be analyzed on multiple levels. Firstly, the insurance itself is a product of translational and relational processes. Additionally, the formation of regional and

⁴ See Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1991): *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*.

⁵ Cf. Kasza, Gregory James (2006): *One world of welfare: Japan in comparative perspective*. *Cornell studies in political economy*.

local knowledge about the new system depended on translation. Yet, as I will try to show in the end, translations can fail and cause disturbance and ambiguities, which ultimately can be seen to be productive in forming knowledge, as well, and should not be seen as simple cases of misunderstanding.

Theories of Comparing Social Welfare

Comparing social policies has been a fruitful field of analysis in recent decades, but in my eyes it has some serious shortcomings. Especially in area studies such as East Asian Studies, or *Japanologie*, the even more limited German terminology, this sort of approach has often led to a kind of double self-exotification. Japan has so often been presented as a special case with special rules – even Esping-Andersen made this point⁶ – that it has led East-Asian Studies to use this special case as self-legitimatory repository for academic auto-exotification. In the end, container-like images of a closed culture with a depending social-system have been created.

This only mirrors the situation of the much broader stream of comparative analysis in Japan, which has shown the same strong tendency to define its case as special. Since Gøsta Esping-Andersen has been widely read the last decades in Japanese welfare studies, this tendency has gained even more ground. While many Japanese researchers have realized the problematic stance of *nihonjinron* (Japanese discourse) as a genre of auto-orientalism, the Scandinavian capacity gave new credibility for setting Japan's case apart.

⁶ Cf. Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (1997): Hybrid or unique? The Japanese welfare state between Europe and America, 180f.

Esping-Andersen's groundbreaking works⁷ have certainly deepened the tendency toward Japanese auto-orientalism in welfare studies, not so much because he himself set up a theoretical framework furthering the container view, but because his theories can be easily misread. His book *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*, published first in 1990, which can surely be called the bible of comparative welfare-state analysis, treats the national welfare regimes that are its objects as distinct entities not connected to each other for analytical reasons. To allow cross-sectional quantitative analysis, 18 countries are modelled as auto-genetic welfare regimes which can be clustered but do not relate to each other beyond that. Though three types of welfare-regimes – liberal, conservative and social-democratic – are analyzed in their genetic development since the mid-19th century, Esping-Andersen nowhere explains how countries within these regimes exchange information and come to resemble each other. Because the regimes cluster geographically or connect historically, the liberal centred in the Anglo-American sphere, the conservative in Central Europe and the social-democratic in Scandinavian countries, it seems implicitly obvious that there has been a regional consensus based on exchange of information. But this only deepens the danger of misinterpreting Esping-Andersen's comparison of welfare regimes. A geographically based categorization reminiscent of Huntington's⁸ rightfully much-criticized *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order* comes to mind.

⁷ Cf. Esping-Andersen (1991), Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (Ed.) (1996): *Welfare states in transition. National adaptations in global economies* and Esping-Andersen (1997).

⁸ Cf. Huntington, Samuel P. (1996): *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*.

Japan is treated in passing by Esping-Andersen in the “Three worlds”. But the analysis is highly superficial even keeping in mind Esping-Andersen’s warning that he has to work with oversimplification in order to get the big picture.⁹ In the first part of *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*, Japan is clustered mostly with countries like Germany, Italy, France or Finland, which are categorized as conservative and etacist.¹⁰ As a historical explanation, Catholicism is cited along with the fascist past of some of these countries.¹¹ While Japan’s case might be explained by the fascist argument, Catholicism is surely no reason for its welfare regime. In other words, Esping-Andersen ignores Japan to make a point for the rest of the cluster. Other parts of the book cut out Japan completely though it might have been an interesting case for comparison. When discussing full employment, which was only maintained in Scandinavian countries following the 1970s oil shocks, Japan would have been the obvious exception. Seven years after his initial treatment, Esping-Andersen took up the case of Japan more thoroughly in a paper claiming that the country should not be classified at all yet because “it is arguably the case that the Japanese welfare system is still in the process of evolution”.¹²

This conclusion was not very convincing and the lacuna in argumentation has thus incited Japanese researches to develop their own category for Japan and/or Asia generally within Esping-Andersen’s framework, an effort which in a sense resembles similar undertakings by their western colleagues.¹³ In applying geographical logic and us-

⁹ Cf. Esping-Anderson (1991), 2.

¹⁰ See for example Esping-Anderson (1991), 52.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹² Cf. Esping-Andersen (1997), 187.

¹³ Cf. Goodman, Roger and Ito Peng (1996): *The East Asian welfare states. Peripatetic learning, adaptive change and nation-building.*

ing Esping-Andersen's strong leaning toward historical-genetic analysis, Japan and/or Asia is constructed as its own, fourth world of welfare. The undertaking is lavishly funded by state agencies, which have long been on the side of auto-orientalism with regard to welfare. Furthermore, the Asian world of welfare is not only constructed around Esping-Andersen's logic but also built on Weberian theses. Popular readings of Weber have long used the nexus of religion and economy to claim that Japan constitutes a case of its own with a strong tradition of indigenous development of modern capitalism.¹⁴ In their analysis of welfare states, these readings ultimately arrive at conclusions stressing the Confucian or Buddhist influence in the east.¹⁵ Mixed with Esping-Andersen's worlds of welfare capitalism, the auto-orientalist cocktail tends to get theoretically poisonous as it nears itself to short-sighted categorizations of the world in Huntington-like style.

Of course, political decisions in the field of welfare are often made at a national level, and political discourses tend to legitimize themselves by means of culturalistic arguments. Therefore, political analysis and comparison have to deal with politicians' culturalistic arguments. The idea of a Japanese welfare society based on traditional family values, coined in the late 1970s, is but one example of this, and has been criticized and deconstructed quite convincingly a number of times.¹⁶ But one has to go further than that. As Gregory Kasza has

¹⁴ Cf. Bellah, Robert N. (1957): *Tokugawa religion. The values of pre-industrial Japan*.

¹⁵ Cf. Esping-Andersen (1997), 181 and Rieger, Elmar and Stephan Leibfried (2004): *Kultur versus Globalisierung. Sozialpolitische Theologie in Konfuzianismus und Christentum* [Culture versus globalisation. Socio-political theology in Confucianism and Christianity].

¹⁶ Cf. Campbell, John Creighton (1992): *How policies change. The Japanese government and the ageing society*, 220, and Takahashi, Mutsuko (1997): *The emergence of welfare society in Japan*, 142–166.

shown in 2006 in his excellent book *One world of welfare: Japan in comparative perspectives*, Japan is not an extraordinary case when compared to other nations of the so-called Western world. Hence, all claims that Japan's welfare is exceptional can ultimately be disregarded. Roger Goodman, Gordon White and Huck-ju Kwon have termed such theories "welfare-orientalism"¹⁷, linking them to Edward Said's description of orientalism¹⁸. In most areas where welfare states normally provide insurance, such as occupational accidents, health, or unemployment, Japan is average or has introduced some of the central elements of welfare rather earlier than later, considering its general economical development. Kasza refutes popular prejudices which present Japan as a late-comer in terms of developing a welfare state. He concludes:

We have established that Japan was early or average in the timing of all its first welfare policies [...] and that its welfare spending has not differed sharply from that of other countries at comparable levels of economical development and population age.¹⁹

He also discards culturalistic approaches as misleading when looking at the contents and semantics of Japanese welfare. Kasza thus strongly questions Esping-Andersen's models, leading to the question of why Japan has followed typical lines of development for its welfare-state. Esping-Andersen's answer comes down to pointing out structural similarities which have shaped overall spending for welfare, while political peculiarities account for differences resulting in the three (or four) worlds.

¹⁷ Cf. Goodman, Roger, Gordon White and Huck-ju Kwon (1998): *The East Asian welfare model. Welfare orientalism and the state. Vol. ESRC Pacific Asia programme.*

¹⁸ Cf. Said, Edward W. (1978): *Orientalism.*

¹⁹ Kasza (2006), 80.

Kasza is on the right track in his search for a different answer. As an explanation he offers the diffusion of ideas, by which countries learn from each other when developing welfare.²⁰ This is quite apparent when considering the history of Japan since the 1868 Meiji Restoration. At that time, foreign experts were called to help rebuild the country and local experts were sent into the West to study. But while the level of Kasza's analysis is highly impressive and hits the mark consistently, the concept of diffusion seems an oversimplification in explaining how notions of welfare were introduced in Japan, or how Japan has shared its own experiences with the rest of the world.

Instead of diffusion, translation is a more appropriate term for describing how ideas of welfare cross the borders of nation-states and influence each other. Translation is not only important on the level of national politics, but equally if not more significant at the level of bringing politics to life on the spot, that is in the case of care for old-aged people, care-homes, group-homes etc. In the following I would like to introduce some ethnographical examples, which serve to demonstrate how such processes of translation look on the ground, and how they influence both the implementation of political decisions and the understanding of such politics. We thereby leave the field of national politics, and the arguments will not directly refute Kasza but will hopefully convey an idea of how translational processes work in practice.

²⁰ Cf. Kasza (2006), 156–182.

Introducing Care for the Elderly and Political Translations

Long-term care insurance in Japan was introduced in 2000. It was and is seen as an important step in adapting to Japan's rapidly ageing society. Since other articles in this volume deal more in depth with these demographic changes, it will suffice here to point out only the most important indicators for this change. In 2000, elderly persons, those 65 or older, compromised 24.2 per cent of the Japanese population.²¹ Though this number is already impressive, the proportion of the elderly within the population will rise still further in coming decades. Demographic studies estimate that around 2050, numbers will rise to about 40 per cent.²² This rapid change demands political solutions. Easing the situation by increasing immigration seems an unlikely solution for various reasons. The UN report on replacement migration has calculated that Japan would be able to stabilize its age distribution of 2005 with 600.000 immigrants yearly.²³ But neither the general attitude towards migration nor the consequences for overall numbers of population make this approach likely. At the moment immigration is only promoted in order to bring staff for long-term care into the country.²⁴

²¹ Cf. MHW – Ministry of Health and Welfare (Ed.) (2000): *Kōseihakusho. Atarashii kōrei shazō o motomete – 21 seiki no kōreishakai o mukaeru* [Ministry of Health and Welfare. Searching for a new image of the elderly – welcoming the elderly society in the 21 century], 7. [http://www.wam.go.jp/wamappl/bb16GS70.nsf/0/49256fe9001adf9249256923000f6feb/\\$FILE/hakusyo12.pdf](http://www.wam.go.jp/wamappl/bb16GS70.nsf/0/49256fe9001adf9249256923000f6feb/$FILE/hakusyo12.pdf) (accessed 22 June 2010).

²² Cf. Atoh, Makoto (2008): Japan's population growth during the past 100 years, 19.

²³ Cf. UN – United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2000): *Replacement migration: is it a solution to declining and ageing populations*.

²⁴ Cf. Vogt, Gabriele (2006): Doors wide shut? The current discourse on labor migration to Japan.

In the context of long-term care insurance, one more point within the scenario of the ageing society is of interest. The regional distribution of elderly is highly distorted in Japan. While in absolute numbers, most elderly live in large cities in percentage the picture changes dramatically. Cities like Tokyo at the moment have roughly about 15 per cent elderly citizens. In contrast in small villages and towns in the countryside this number can be up to more than 40 per cent but rarely falls below 20–25 per cent. Due to the migration within the country during the decades following WWII, when young people were drawn to the vibrant cities for good jobs, regional patterns of ageing in Japan have been distorted strongly. The trend will reverse in the upcoming decades when major cities will catch up with the countryside. Until then the problems of the ageing society are mostly felt in places, which have been literally left behind in the years of the economical catch-up and which are now struggling with the sluggish economy more than anywhere else.²⁵

With no easy solutions at hand to change these demographic trends, Japanese politics began expanding care systems for the elderly in the early 1990s. As three-generation households, once celebrated as a Japanese solution for questions of welfare, were decreasing in numbers,²⁶ and many women resented the burden of caring for their parents or in-laws, professional care was to be expanded to fill the gap. But the so-called “golden plan” set up in 1989 proved insufficient.²⁷ Women were not substantially relieved, and continued to carry the main burden in caring for the elderly. *Kaigo-tsukare* (exhaustion through care) remained a widespread disease among caring women.

²⁵ Cf. Lützel, Ralph (2008): Regional demographics, 70.

²⁶ Cf. MHW (2000), 20.

²⁷ Cf. Peng, Ito (2008): Ageing and the social security system, 1038.

Kaigo-tsukare was even officially acknowledged as a disease. The only remedy Japanese families found was to hospitalize their elderly in high numbers. This avoided the social stigma of abandoning one's elders, but caused severe problems for the social system since these hospitals were an expensive and, at the same time, inefficient institution for providing such care. For example, Japan became the country with the highest per capita diaper consumption worldwide, as hospitals did not care to help the bedridden to the toilet.²⁸ Japanese politics started to look abroad for other solutions.

In the second half of the 1990s, Germany's model for long-term care insurance was discussed as a solution suitable to Japan. In 2000, Japanese long-term care insurance was instituted, with strong echoes of the German model. Though the insurance systems resembled each other strongly, the model had not simply diffused from Europe to Asia but had been translated on various levels and thereby recontextualized. This was necessary not least because the discourse surrounding the introduction of long-term care insurance in Germany followed specific patterns which did not match the situation in Japan and stressed concepts which hitherto had played no role there. The two main rationales invoked in the political arena to introduce long-term care insurance in Germany were *Würde* (dignity) and *Gerechtigkeit* (justice).²⁹ Neither of these two terms is easily translated into Japanese, and the finer semantic nuances of the words are even not even easily translatable into

²⁸ Cf. Shimada, Shingo and Christian Tagsold (2006): *Alternde Gesellschaften im Vergleich. Solidarität und Pflege in Deutschland und Japan* [Ageing societies in comparison. Solidarity and care in Germany and Japan], 103f.

²⁹ Cf. Shimada, Shingo, Stefan Blüher, Manfred Stosberg and Christian Tagsold (2001): *Öffentlichkeit im Wandel. Die Einführung der Pflegeversicherung in Japan und in Deutschland* [Public sphere in transition. The introduction of the long-term care insurance in Germany and Japan], 145–148.

English, which seems much closer to German. Political uses of terms can lead to complex meanings. It is therefore not surprising that even though equivalents of both terms exist in Japanese, they have not been used as frequently as in Germany, and with different connotations. The technical application of long-term care insurance following the German model thus had to be recontextualized through semantically shifting translations.

Translations were not only necessary at the level of abstract concepts. Changes were made to adapt to the Japanese context at the level of concrete measures, as well. An example is the denial of cash benefits for caring family members in Japan, a key practice in Germany. In the German case, these transfers have often been used to organize additional care services at low cost by hiring Eastern European nurses at low wages. It was feared, by Japanese feminists in any case, that moral pressure would have caused this to simply prolong the “hell of caring,” as it was often called by overburdened female relatives in the 1990s.³⁰ At the same time, conservative politicians were opposed on the basis that it was seen as commoditizing family relations, as Esping-Andersen would have put it.³¹

There are many more examples of alterations in the general and special conditions of the long-term care insurance as it was adopted in Japan, and some will be treated in the following since they take us to different levels of translation. If these translations cannot be subsumed under the notion of diffusion, would it be possible to talk of adaption? Adaption covers only the more conscious alteration of concepts to the Japanese context. But many underlying German principles were not easy to understand from the Japanese perspective. Interpretation was

³⁰ Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 147ff.

³¹ Cf. Esping-Andersen (1991).

needed, constituting the basis for translation. Some meanings of the German long-term insurance passed more easily into the Japanese discourse than others.

Institutional Translations on the Regional Level

Following translations of long-term care insurance, we now move to the actual field of research. This field was situated in Fukuoka, the centre of the southern island Kyūshū. In a sense, Fukuoka was not the best spot to start research on long-term care insurance, as the city is relatively young. Because of that, Fukuoka has been the test case for new products or chain stores to Japan, and it emphasizes the disproportionate demographics of the city that Toys“R”Us was among the chains to open their first stores there. Nevertheless, Fukuoka proved to be an interesting field. As the capital of its prefecture, it is a hub for northern Kyūshū, making urban and rural comparisons easy.³²

As in most municipalities, the new insurance system was simultaneously the source of great euphoria and great anxiety. This was due to the fact that the insurance, in order to strengthen regionalization, made municipalities responsible for insuring their citizens, leading to the creation of new insurers. This was broadly welcomed, though it meant that rural villages with a much higher percentage of elderly people have to charge higher insurance fees from their citizens than demographically younger urban centres. Because regulations require identical benefits regardless of where one lives, charging higher fees and stipulating volunteerism are the only ways for rural municipalities to comply with the regulations without running deficits. Notwithstanding such budgetary problems, discourses of regionalization in the

³² Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 118ff.

1990s had prepared the ground for such a political move.³³ The obvious incompetence with which the central government had reacted to the great earthquake in Kōbe in 1995, is an excellent example of the sort of phenomenon that had given this discussion momentum.³⁴

Despite the general approval the new policy met with, most municipalities were only halfway prepared to accept their new responsibilities and use their newly gained freedom to enhance civil society. As one of the biggest cities in Japan with a well functioning municipal bureaucracy, Fukuoka was surely better off than many of the smaller cities and villages in the same prefecture in northern Kyūshū. Many of these smaller municipalities formed a common association comprising nearly all potential insurers in this area. The mayor of one of the small villages that opted out of this association explained in an interview that the association, in his opinion, was formed out of unwillingness to tackle problems at the local level using one's own creativity and power. Indeed, the staff of the association admitted that distribution of information about the new situation was one of the major problems. All in all, along with the opportunities of self-responsibility, uncertainty was widespread. The association somehow contradicted the aim of regionalization, since it elevated the problem again to a more general level. It was only in northern Kyūshū that an association of such a size was formed. Nevertheless it was seen as a possible model for other small municipalities in Japan.³⁵

Owners of retirement homes and nursing homes also made great efforts to bring more sense into the new rules. Though the new insur-

³³ Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 118ff.

³⁴ Cf. Matsushita, Takeshi (1996): *Nihon no jiji bunken* [Japans current decentralisation], 19f.

³⁵ Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 125ff.

ance was set up to foster caring for the elderly at home by bringing in help from outside, it had the adverse effect of pushing more elderly into nursing homes. Under the old system, nursing homes had a bad reputation for caring only for those elderly who had been virtually abandoned by their families. Now the status of nursing homes was to change, and along with this the expectations to the owners. With the stress on efficiency and cost-cutting through the implementation of a market for care, the rules of the game also changed dramatically for owners. New companies and non-profit organizations also started to push into this market. Just like the region's municipalities, care providers in homes felt that they needed more information on how to provide the best possible care within the bounds of a market.³⁶

One way to successfully cope with the new situation was to look at foreign examples. Germany was the obvious example in this case, as it had served as the role model for the new Japanese system. In doing so, however, the different actors trying to make sense of the new situation used their own understanding of the underlying problems and also their own ideas of welfare in general to interpret the German example. As there was an urgent need for information, it is not surprising that translation took place not only at the national but also at the regional level. Local policy makers had often been sent to Germany for a few days to question their counterparts, but this approach was marred by serious shortcomings. Not trained in German and as interested in sightseeing as in gathering information, Fukuoka's bureaucrats somehow seem always to have taken their fact finding missions to Baden-Baden. The city must have been a rather influential hub for information about long-term care insurance at that time. Surely it could not

³⁶ Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 132ff.

have been the case that all the tours were heading for this town because of its status as a famous hot springs for the well-off. Even if conducted most thoroughly, such tours could offer only very superficial information and at the same time were a tool for team-building and recreation of the bureaucrats involved.

So other means had to be found to gather information from the outside. A circle of influential owners of homes for senior citizens and nursing homes organized monthly meetings for themselves and invited politicians and decision-makers as well, though these surely were a minority. One reason could have been the entrance fees for those meetings, about 20,000 Yen for a scientific presentation at a central hotel in Fukuoka with a dinner afterwards at a restaurant for informal exchange. A head of a private university from Kansai spoke twice within a few months at those meetings on long-term care insurance in Europe as a sociologist. His analysis of the situation, which mostly emphasized the fact that the first such insurance system was set up in the Netherlands and not in Germany, was warmly welcomed in Fukuoka's circles. I interviewed this professor later and told him about my own research and that I wanted to compare the German and Japanese long-term care insurance systems. He very self-confidently assured me that I should not bother too much, as he had already done all this exhaustingly. Additionally he gave me a copy of his paper dealing with long-term care insurance in Germany and Japan. It turned out that he had gone twice to Europe for about one week to assemble material and interview specialists in the field. The technical details of his interpretations were all in all correct, but his conclusions regarding the reasons for Germany's introduction of such policies sounded more like an answer to the riddles of Japan's opaque and irrational politics than a fair and well-founded account of higher and lesser aims. Since

it was based on a single interview with a local bureaucrat somewhere in the north of Germany, one could not expect much more.

One should not be misguided at this point. This example is only partly a critique of the practice of writing scientific articles and giving presentations based on a rather shallow foundation of data. Much more important is the fact that the German model influenced not only decision-makers at the top level, but also helped local agents to understand the new situation. It is true that some misunderstanding and superficial interpretation was involved, but we all know that not all our work is based as much on data at times as we would like it to be. This case rather shows that scientific authority, an undefined situation and the translational process together help to form new knowledge. Speaking simply of the diffusion of ideas, as Kasza does, would be somewhat misleading. The processes of knowledge formation are much more complicated.

Broken Chains of Translation

Knowledge of Western models was also discussed by experts in the field themselves on different occasions. As the experts search actively for information, they not only rely on others but sometimes visit Europe themselves too. The information gathered there, or more indirectly through books, the internet and by listening to presentations, is redistributed. But this knowledge serves not only to discuss better service. It is also important in terms of status and distinction. One example was a congress of grassroots elderly-care homes in Kumamoto involving hundreds of specialists from all over the North of Kyūshū. This congress took place on a weekend in summer and lasted a whole day. Since most of the attendants were very actively involved in their own grassroots projects, discussions were quite lively and

sometimes heated. Some of the presentations and arguments brought forth at this congress help to understand how knowledge is used strategically. At the same time, we change levels of knowledge production. This time, it was not so much knowledge of systems to be traded, but rather principal matters and to a certain degree stereotypes, which help to define unclear situations by means of simplification.

The first speaker of the congress introduced himself with a telling line: “While most here champion the Swedish model, I am very much in favour of the Danish model of welfare. But we can discuss this later.” Sweden has often been cited in Japanese discourses of welfare,³⁷ and most of the time quite outside of a general political context, as an example for welfare policy. Esping-Andersen’s (1991) markedly political discussions of the Swedish welfare model as the paradigmatic example of a system driven by social democracy have not been absorbed in general discussion. Despite the fact that Sweden has undergone major changes and has mostly discarded the model it stood for in the second half of the 20th century in favour of a more neo-liberalist strategy, most discussions in Japan would still assume that the Scandinavian welfare is heaven.³⁸ At the congress all listeners had an idea of what Sweden stood for, although this might have been highly stereotypical. Most of the listeners would also favour the Swedish model as a best-practice example which should be adhered to as closely as possible in Japan, as well. In contrast to Sweden, the Danish welfare system is nearly unknown in Japan and even if it had been, it would still have been questionable what Japan could learn from it. But the remark made by this speaker was not so much about the pros and cons of specific welfare systems but seemed to be made for reasons of

³⁷ Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 91.

³⁸ Ibid.

personal distinction. By invoking a rather exotic welfare model, at least from the Japanese point of view, the speaker made clear that he was a real expert with insights not shared by the majority. His self-positioning was not questioned since his offer to compare Sweden vs. Denmark later did not lead into a discussion. The topic was dropped after the initial statement by the congress.

The Swedish example was later used by another speaker in a rather peculiar way and caused much discussion. This ardent supporter and operator of small care units showed a short video to the audience, which he had shot himself. A Swedish and a Japanese nurse cared for an elderly male, who had more or less lost awareness. The Japanese nurse cared for him using child-talk, explaining most of her acts directly but getting no reaction. The man underwent all provisions deemed necessary by the nurse without betraying any feeling. For the audience, the scene was well-known from their own experience. In stark contrast, the Swedish nurse sang to the man and tried to stimulate his awareness by hugging him. And indeed, he reacted to her although he had mostly ignored her Japanese colleague, prompting the speaker to praise Swedish techniques of nursing. He stressed that Sweden was not only a role model for the general governance of welfare but succeeded in detail, as well. Japanese nurses, he argued, should be trained in the techniques of her Swedish colleagues shown in the video.

Nevertheless the general reaction in the audience was disapproving. Too obviously the elderly had reacted to the Swedish nurse and her care not because of her technique, but because she was blonde and foreign, while the Japanese nurse was simply the same person he saw every day. Change of daily care routines coupled with sensations on a different level made the man react. His facial expression showed sur-

prise but it was not easy to guess whether he liked the way the Swedish nurse cared for him or not. In other words, the speaker's attempt to translate knowledge from a European context failed as it seemed ill-conceived for the audience. The problems were not touched upon in detail in the following discussion. But the reaction of the audience had been clear when the speaker presented his theories. Non-verbal and verbal reactions showed astonishment and all of the members of audience I interviewed later disapproved openly. Clearly not all translational processes help to define the situation and some are rejected.

This example shows that chains of translation, as Bruno Latour would call them, can be broken if some link of the chain is not convincing. In complex translations, it is normally not one simple term, phrase or technique that is to be translated. Rather facts, meanings and words are linked to each other in a chain. One referent is the next one's reference. Chains of translation can be surprisingly long and remain convincing. The start of the chain and its outcome make sense, because every single relation of reference to referent forming the links of the chain seems to be logical and inevitable.³⁹ In the example of the Swedish nurse, a sense of human dignity was involved as elderly persons should not be treated like children but instead should feel human affection when taken care of. Human dignity was translated into forms of behaviour by the Swedish caring nurse. This was understood by her patient. Further, this had to be re-translated into an understanding of human dignity by the Japanese audience. However, some of the intervening steps of translation did not seem to make sense. The old man's understanding was not based on the special form of human warmth he was offered. Rather, it was the novelty of the whole situation that im-

³⁹ Cf. Latour, Bruno (1999): *Pandora's hope. Essays on the reality of science studies*.

pressed him so deeply. A young blonde Swedish nurse took care of him instead of a middle aged Japanese one. Additionally, his daily routine was interrupted. By invoking the Swedish model using a Swedish nurse, the presenter had hoped to back up his general point easily, because Sweden has mostly been thought of as a kind of welfare paradise in Japan, but Sweden could not cover up his weak chain of translation.

This is only a very simple example of a chain of translation. Clearly enough, when much more complex terms like *Würde* (dignity), *Solidarität* (solidarity), and other concepts that were often invoked in the German context of long term care insurance were to be translated into Japanese, the concepts transformed within the chain of translation. They did not simply diffuse to Japan but got interpreted and twisted. The Japanese discourse did not take up many of these basic concepts. Nevertheless, the impression of a successful translation prevailed. While the Japanese system of long-term care insurance had different aims, it was conceived as quite similar to the German one.⁴⁰ Diffusion took place only at the surface, yet looking closer at the introduction of the long-term care insurance in Germany and Japan, we can see why it is more accurate to talk of translation.

It is important to stress that this not a critique of misunderstandings on the Japanese side and problematic translations. The point to be made with such an analysis is that processes of translation have to involve interpretations. Even in the German discourse, dignity and solidarity are not terms with fixed meanings. In discussions, politicians, experts and citizens use these terms differently and have their own interpretations of what is meant.⁴¹ When translated, the picture

⁴⁰ Cf. Shimada, Tagsold (2006), 27f.

⁴¹ Cf. Shimada *et. al* (2001), 145.

gets more complicated, as terms, meanings and context are recontextualized. By talking of diffusion we would easily tend to ignore this. Just comparing national social politics would be even worse, as it would cut out the ongoing exchange of knowledge by translation, bringing us back to simple exotification.

Translation, Interpretation, Understanding

In the age of globalization, welfare systems are still mostly structured nationally. Moving from Japan to Germany or vice versa for work involves uncertainties about welfare entitlements. Entitlements acquired in one country are not transferred to another, even within political contexts such as the European Union. Public political discussions also often revolve around cultural traits or national specifics as reasons for reshaping welfare systems. Finally, welfare systems have often been described as evolving on paths. Decisions once made heavily influence future developments of the system. Because of all these reasons, a methodological nationalism in welfare research seems to be well founded. Systems are best explained by their own logic when adhering to methodological nationalism.

While this is surely not completely wrong and can help to explain partly why Germany's long-term care insurance is structured as it is, methodological nationalism has its blind spots and weaknesses. Explaining welfare systems as completely autonomous entities not related to each other is especially misleading. It is a first step to acknowledge that the development of a welfare system such as Japan's is not completely atypical. Gregory Kasza has convincingly shown that Japan is rather a textbook case for introducing different branches

of social insurance.⁴² But this point could still be supported in line with methodological nationalism. Esping-Andersen discusses the structuralist argument of welfare development. The structuralists assume that necessities of emerging capitalism drive the development of welfare and that because of this, modern welfare states resemble each other.⁴³ Kasza proves that structuralist assumptions are valid for Japan but goes beyond this argument when introducing diffusion of knowledge as another factor.⁴⁴

Welfare systems do learn from each other. This learning is often difficult to discern. Experts travelling to other countries or meeting each other at congresses and forums do not take part often in public discussions. Their views inform politicians and media but the source of expertise is often opaque to the outside. But the examples from fieldwork have shown that knowledge about other welfare systems is used on all levels. Laws are read, systems analyzed and practice discussed in order to understand better how long-term care in Japan can be improved. These processes of knowledge transfer rely on translation and interpretation. Sometimes these translations seem to be problematic or even wrong. But instead of insisting on philological equivalence, something never to be achieved fully anyway, the relevance for actors is much more interesting in our context.

Understanding these processes of translation and interpretation helps to understand why methodological nationalism is wrong. Even if welfare systems are governed at a national level, they are interdependent with regard to their information. Welfare evolves in accordance with structural necessities, with national paths but also with shared

⁴² Cf. Kasza (2006).

⁴³ Cf. Esping-Andersen (1991), 13f.

⁴⁴ Cf. Kasza (2006), 197f.

knowledge about solutions. The Japanese long-term care insurance is an excellent example to prove this. It cannot be understood on the basis of Japanese cultural traits or the development of the Japanese welfare-system alone but only when taking into account that there is a constant flow of information to and from Japan.

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GERMAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE
RESEARCH ON JAPAN (VSJF)

PROGRAMME

Annual Meeting of the VSJF

Demographic Change in Japan and the EU Comparative Perspectives

Friday, November 28 – Sunday, November 30, 2008
Mutterhaus Tagungszentrum
Geschwister-Aufricht-Straße 1, 40489 Düsseldorf

Friday, November 28

13.30 h	Registration
14.00 h	Opening Remarks, Greetings
14.15 h	Introduction to the Conference Topics Annette SCHAD-SEIFERT

Opening Session 1: Demographic Trends and Social Analysis – Observations from Japan and the EU

Chair: Annette SCHAD-SEIFERT

- 14.30 h **Why do we need a Paradigm Change in Family Policy?**
Uta MEIER-GRÄWE (Justus-Liebig-University Gießen)
Socio-economic Inequality in a Rapidly Ageing Society – Japan in Cross-cultural Comparison with Europe
Sawako SHIRAHASE (Tokyo University)
- 16.00 h Coffee Break
- 16.30 h **Population Decline and Ageing in Japan – the Bitter Fruits of Success**
Keynote Speech: Florian COULMAS (German Institute for Japanese Studies)
- 19.00–21.00 h Dinner

Saturday, November 29

Session 2: Family and Welfare Policies in Japan and the EU

Chair: Celia SPODEN

- 09.00 h **Social Policy in Comparison – Germany and Japan**
Christian TAGSOLD (Heinrich-Heine-University Dues-seldorf)

Political Responses to Low Fertility in Japan

Axel KLEIN (German Institute for Japanese Studies)

**Japanese Single Mothers in an Era of Welfare
Restructuring**

Aya EZAWA (Leiden University)

10.30 h Coffee Break

**Session 3: Aging Society and the Organizations of
Households**

Chair: Shingo SHIMADA

11.00 h **Elderly Housing in Contemporary Japan – Ex-
ploring Alternative Forms of Living**

Maren GODZIK (German Institute for Japanese Studies)

**Generational Divides in Housing Pathways and
Life Courses in Japan**

Richard RONALD (Delft University of Technology)

Care Dynamics Focussed on Disabled Older Men

Akiko ODA (University of Surrey, UK)

12.30–13.30 h Lunch

14.00 h **Parallel Working Group Sessions**

15.30 h Coffee Break

16.00 h **Parallel VSJF Section Sessions**

18.00 h Dinner

19.30–21.00 h VSJF General Member Meeting

Sunday, November 30

Session 4: Demographic Change and the Economy

Panel 1: How Enterprises Cope with Demographic Challenges

Chair: Ruprecht VONDRAN

9.30 h **Japan's 2007 Problem and the Challenge of an Ageing Workforce**

Florian KOHLBACHER (German Institute for Japanese Studies)

The Effectiveness of New Job Security Measure for the Older Employees in Japan

Atsuhiko YAMADA (Keio University)

11.00 h Coffee Break

Panel 2: The Silver Market and Seniors as Consumers

Chair: Florian KOHLBACHER

11.30 h **“Silver Robots” and “Robotic Nurses”? Japanese Robot Culture and Elderly Care**

Cosima WAGNER (Johann Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt)

How are Markets Created? The Case of Japan's Silvermarket

Cornelia STORZ and Werner PASCHA (Universitys Frankfurt, Duisburg-Essen)

12.30 h Closing Remarks

13.00 h End of the Conference