



An Aging Democracy: How Young Japanese Engage with Politics

A hybrid *u:japan* lecture by Gabriele Vogt

Thursday
2025-01-09
18⁰⁰~19³⁰



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Is the future of democracy at stake? As population aging advances in many liberal democracies, intergenerational equity, societal sustainability, and the general capacity to implement reforms come under pressure. This paper focuses on the case of Japan, where the political participation and representation of the elderly seems to dominate the core democratic institutions of the nation. Many scholars even attest the young to be apathetic to politics. But is the story that simple? We take a closer look at how young people in Japan respond to and understand their role in the nation's aging democracy.

In this lecture, Gabriele Vogt addresses the following research questions: What are the attitudes of young Japanese towards political participation? Do they feel neglected and withdraw from politics or do they develop new strategies in informal politics to make their voices heard?

If so, how do they participate, and to what degree do they experience self-efficacy in the process? To answer these questions, in the fall of 2024, we conducted focus group interviews with Japanese university students. By basing the analysis on insights from group discussions among young Japanese and thus minimizing the researchers' effect, we strive for an unfiltered view on generational attitudes towards political participation and dynamics in problem perception. We want to understand how young Japanese negotiate the future challenges for Japan's political realm among their peers.

This lecture is based on a joint research paper with Anne-Sophie L. König, Stefanie Schwarte and Antonia Vesting as part of the DFG-funded research project "Demography and Democracy: How Population Aging Alters Democracy – The Case of Japan" at LMU Munich.

Gabriele Vogt

is Full Professor and Chair in Japanese Studies and serves as Director to the Department of Asian Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU Munich). She is the author of "Population Aging and International Health-Caregiver Migration to Japan" (Springer International, 2018). She currently spearheads two DFG-funded research projects, one highlighting the interconnectedness of demography and democracy in Japan (DFG 510553228), which this presentation is based on, and the other focusing on Japan's pandemic management amidst a culture of vigilance (part of CRC 1369 at LMU Munich). Her latest journal publication is a co-authored paper with Yosuke Buchmeier on: "The Aging Democracy: Demographic Effects, Political Legitimacy, and the Quest for Generational Pluralism" (Perspectives on Politics, 2024, 22:1, pp. 168-180, open access).



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