

KEIO Research Institute at SFC

JAPAN Studies

Platform

Laboratory

Japan Studies at SFC

Since its founding, Keio University Shonan Fujisawa Campus (SFC) has consistently worked on practical research and education with the aim seeking out solutions to not only key social issues that the world confronts today, but also those of tomorrow. Our new Japan Studies opens this forum to the entire international community.

The Keio Research Institute at SFC (KRIS) Japan Studies Platform Laboratory, the driver of this project, has outlined three approaches for SFC's new Japan studies. These are: About Japan (research on Japan), With Japan (joint research with overseas research institutions interested in social issues), and In Japan (researching in Japan).

The social issues that Japan confronts today are or will be shared with the international community. Policymaking initiatives toward solving a number of issues also present interesting research themes for research partners and can serve to open yet more research fields. Using the international and interdisciplinary research networks of SFC faculty members and leveraging their extensive working knowledge, the KRIS Japan Studies Platform Laboratory furthers practical research on vital social issues and inputs and transfers the findings into both SFC and more general Keio University communities.

The KRIS Japan Studies Platform Laboratory aims to be the hub for Japan Studies and East Asian Studies as SFC moves to further promote these kinds of activities.

慶應義塾大学SFC研究所

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Theory and Practice in New Japan Studies classifies three major clusters of issues for research into three categories, and provides a foundation for building a global network through discussions with Japan studies specialists around the world. The first cluster consists of analyzing problems arising from aging societies and low birthrates: Meso-governance for Aging Societies with Low Birthrates. The second cluster focuses on problems accompanying the rise of the information society and researches issues on the theme Resolution in the Age of the Information Society. The third cluster is focused on problems surrounding international relations in East Asia and focuses on Security and Economic Partnerships of the East Asian Region, with the Asian region forming the base for Japan's growth strategy.

Indeed, far from being individual and independent issues, these three clusters of issues are of course interrelated. The first and second clusters comprise issues that are shared by the international community beyond any spatial or time axis, and place Japan as a testbed for problem solving. From these clusters, it will be possible to derive a "Japan model" as an applicable thesis from which to look at broader solutions; these results will then be applied to East Asia, the subject of the third cluster for problem solving and fieldwork. In this way the KRIS Japan Studies Platform Laboratory aims to be the hub for both Japan studies and East Asian studies, deepening research via cooperation with overseas Japan studies researchers and building a global research network.

First Cluster

"Meso-governance" for Aging Societies with Low Birthrates

Even compared with foreign countries and other regions, the speed with which Japan's society is aging is extremely rapid, and compounded with the low birthrate, means that the rate of depopulation will be very fast. Japan can no longer afford to wait and must look to start tackling the issues surrounding its fast aging population and low birthrate, and needs to look at ways to resolve related problems including social security and tax systems, the national land structure, and the decentralization of authority. China, the Republic of Korea, and Taiwan are also expected to face similar sorts of demographic compositions to Japan in the future. Therefore, right now at this very time there is great significance in promoting international joint research on Japan's aging population-low birthrate issues, as it is conceivable that these countries and the East Asia region in more generally will be forced to face and resolve similar sorts of societal and demographic issues common to those presently facing Japan.

This research group will work on research on "Meso-governance" for aging societies with low birthrates. Fields of this research span healthcare, nursing, pensions, labor, education, housing, and community issues. To provide solutions to such problems, this research group will undertake empirical and practical research regarding Meso-governance and system design on policy fields (e.g. in the areas of healthcare and traffic), space scaling (i.e. local and regional territories), and the public sphere, which is independent from administrative boundaries, such as municipalities and prefectures.

In concrete terms, this research group is undertaking international joint research that encourages both inbound and outbound tourism, such as connecting Japanese hot spring resorts and resorts elsewhere in the world. Taking this policy issue as just one example, Japan's success and failure has set a good example for the policy of increasing people-to-people exchanges in a wide range of areas, including in the health and tourism industries. For example, the issues explore the role and possibilities of public-private partnerships and changes required for the national land planning system for maintenance of servicing leisure facilities. It is also important to look at issues such as converting matured housing stock and facilities for tourism, and to create business models for the real estate market, as well as methods for developing new tourism-related industries including the so-called scenery industries.

Although confronting an aging society with a low birthrate, Japan's future construct — one that uses a limited working population and national resources efficiently and effectively to maintain a living standard above a certain level — will be one model for countries and regions that are confronting a similar situation.

Cluster 2

新しい
New "J"

Building Global

Resolution in the Information Society

In the present day, it is hard to imagine living without digital information and communications technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones. Not only the lifestyle of people, but also Japan's industrial structure and even politics are changing. Despite the fact that Japan was criticized for its late adoption of digital technologies in the 1990's, such technologies spread rapidly after 2000 and Japan has become one of leading countries in terms of optic fiber infrastructure, for example.

However, information and communications technology haven't only exerted solely positive influences — they have also presented new problems, including privacy and related issues such as the increase in volume of unverified information, issues of social alienation and cybersecurity. The challenges posed by new technologies span the political, economic, societal and cultural spheres, creating new issues that require novel policies.

Symbolized by the Arab Spring, the effects of information and communications technologies have not only exerted transformative challenges on developed countries, but the impacts are now being felt in developing countries and emerging economies. They represent one element of the driving force of globalization. Right now, information and communication technologies such as the Internet or social media have the ability to change political governance. And this is becoming a global issue.

Japan's experience in moving toward its transition into an information society has yielded one unusual aspect, which is sometimes called "Galapagosization." This does not refer to the ability to be in the leading pack in the world but describes a more independent or sometimes isolated existence. However, the emergence of this concept also indicates one of the evolutionary paths for civilization, and at the same time it is an important aspect of modern Japan studies. This aspect has important implications for developed countries, as well as countries that are adopting or promoting information and communications technologies.

This research group will consider both system construction and policy design, while applying the concept of "resolution," which in this context means, "explicate and solve difficult issues" while modeling issues based on Japan.

Third Cluster

Security and Economic Partnerships in the East Asian Region

China's influence over the regional order is necessarily highly significant, particularly in the East Asian region where Japan coexists. China, which has recently become the world's second largest economy in terms of GDP, is expected to be the economy of last resort during global economic recession. On the other hand, China is also a cause of anxiety to a number of countries as a revisionist power that has been promoting an assertive, even abrasive foreign diplomatic policy that declares a role for a rejuvenated Chinese nation, which is built on national prosperity and strategic resources acquisition. This rebalancing or recalibrating of the regional order is one of key topics for Japanese diplomacy.

This research group will analyze security issues within the East Asian region, while forming a base for Japan's growth strategy. The group will also research problems related to the liberalization of cooperative activities and the development of a regional free trade system based on the advancement of economic partnerships for the East Asian region that is backbone for Japan's growth strategy. This research includes addressing issues such as the sociopolitical and socioeconomic implications of changes in Japanese politics.

Issues related to international relations in East Asia are complex and interweave multiple issue areas such as defense, non-traditional security challenges, diplomacy, and economic partnerships, in which trade and investment play a central part. Therefore, this research group focuses on researching future methodologies for Japan's foreign policy, extracting cross-cutting issues and sharing knowledge related to research constructing adequate regional institutions. Specifically, this research group regards fields related to the rise of China and the destabilization of the Korean Peninsula, non-traditional security areas within the region (such as the international order of the sea, energy, transnational crime, and health issues), as well as areas related to global commons (space and cyber) as significant research issues.

Cluster 1

Cluster 3

「日本研究」
Japan Studies

about Japan
with Japan
in Japan

Networks

Building a Global Network

SFC enables students to learn a variety of languages, including Japanese, English, Arabic, Malaysian, Indonesian, Korean, Chinese, Spanish, French, and German, which are offered as intensive courses, and Italian and Russian as basic courses. Taking advantage of language education based on multilingualism and the international networks and exchanges enabled by researchers, target countries and regions will be designated and intergenerational research networks linking the three clusters will be created.

To build global research networks, beyond exchanges with researchers in overseas universities and research institutions, a deeper and broader level of exchanges is required, including student exchanges, and language training. Through networks between overseas universities fostered by faculty members who are experts in their fields with a wide range of practical knowledge, SFC conducts exchange programs that send students across a broad range of fields. In addition, SFC offers a wide range of other plus alpha learning opportunities, including co-teaching through teleconferencing and cooperative learning using video chat, double degree programs for Master's courses, and Japanese fairs that are staged in overseas universities. Such activities are essential to increase the motivation for students to really participate in meaningful international exchanges and encourage mutual understanding between different cultures. The SFC global network, which is formed from these activities, will raise the potential for Japanese studies experts, and it will certainly be huge driving force to become a hub of international research education for SFC as a vibrant base for academic and intercultural interchange among young researchers.

The joint research network between overseas universities and research institutions, formed via the KRIS Japan Studies Platform Laboratory, will serve to stimulate and activate the participation of students in the international community, increase the flow of exchange students in and out of Japan and the region, acting as a springboard to stimulate the global spread of practical studies serving the region and the globe.



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