

Interdisciplinary Aspects of Well-Being in Changing Societies. 12th Meeting of the German-Japanese Society for Social Sciences (GJSSS)

Werner Reimers Stiftung, Bad Homburg, 21.–23. May 2013

As part of the conference series due to the 125th anniversary of Werner Reimers and 50th anniversary of the Werner Reimers Stiftung (WRS), the 12th meeting of the GJSSS focused on “Interdisciplinary Aspects of Well-Being in Changing Societies.”

The conference was organized in cooperation with the WRS and was supported by the German Institute for Japanese Studies, Tokyo, the Max Weber Stiftung, and the Japan Foundation.

Young and senior scholars from Japan, Germany, the U.S., Switzerland, and Israel participated and discussed the general topic in six sessions including 19 presentations and two public evening sessions (three key notes, one panel).

As introduction, the president of the society, G. Trommsdorff (Konstanz), highlighted the 24 years history of the GJSSS, followed by H.-J. Kornadt (Saarbrücken) discussing the relationship between the GJSSS, Japan, and the WRS.

The public evening sessions were opened by greetings from representatives of various Japan-related institutions: W. R. Assmann, Head of WRS; M. Schubert-Zsilavecz, Vice-President Goethe-University Frankfurt; H. Duchhardt, President Max Weber Stiftung; Y. Kobayashi, Vice Consul General of Japan; T. Kiyota, Director Japan Foundation; H. Menkhaus, President JSPS-Club; and G. Trommsdorff, President GJSSS.

In his key-note, H. Harada (Kyoto) discussed past and ongoing changes in the Japanese policy on nuclear energy and their consequences for the society. The second keynote by K. Shire (Duisburg-Essen) dealt with the subjective turn in social structure analysis focusing on ongoing socio-economic changes and their effects on life-style and wellbeing.

The 2nd public evening session was introduced by a key note on social reporting and life quality research in Germany by J. Schupp (Berlin) discussing past, present, and future theoretical and methodological developments. The panel discussion on “Further Directions in Research on Well-Being: Strategies for Achieving Well-Being in Changing Cultural Contexts and Under Stressful Situations” included substantial statements by Y. Uchida (Kyoto) on

Japanese approaches for the assessment of well-being and W. Jagodzinski (Cologne) on conceptualization, measurement, and causality issues for further research on life satisfaction.

The 1st session on “Well-Being after the Fukushima Disaster?” started with a presentation by Y. Uchida et al. about happiness before and after the disaster. This was followed by the presentation on the role of trust for subjective well-being after the disaster by C. Hommerich (Tokyo).

Session 2 on “Social Structure and Political Strategies for Achieving Well-Being in Japan and Germany” began with a presentation by F. Fürstenberg (Bonn) on social inequality in Japan and Germany discussing employment structures. M. Mori (Tokyo) talked about discrepancies of Japanese well-being based on a case study of Shintaro Ishihara. The presentation by S. Rudolph (Kassel) on sustainable energy and climate policy dealt with recent developments in Japan and Germany. B. Holthus and H. Tanaka (both Tokyo) reported results on family policies in Japan.

Session 3 “Individual Strategies for Achieving Well-Being in Different Contexts” began with a presentation about Muslim and Jewish Israeli adolescents’ future orientation in relation to well-being by R. Seginer (Haifa). The role of self-efficacy beliefs and trust for well-being in Germany and Japan was the topic of T. Heikamp (Konstanz) et al. A. Scherer (Cologne) discussed how individual involvement in cleaning activities in Japan contribute to happiness. D. Chiavacci (Zurich) focused on the role of new religions for well-being, clarifying the cultural specificities of Japanese religious beliefs.

The 4th session on “Cultural Values and Well-Being” started with a presentation by J. Ziehm (Konstanz) et al. on mothers’ intuitive theories in five cultures, highlighting the cultural specificity of well-being as part of socialization. F. Merkel (Konstanz) et al. talked about the role of work-life-balance for life satisfaction of employed mothers in India. The presentation on family-related values and well-being in Japan in comparison with other countries by B. Mayer (Berne) and G. Trommsdorff indicated a low family orientation of Japanese adolescents. Y. Ogihara (Kyoto) and Y. Uchida discussed the influence of globalization on happiness in East Asia and pointed out to the *Asian* perspective on happiness. P. G. Schmitz (Bonn) presented a cross-cultural comparison of components and determinants of well-being.

Session 5 on “Conceptualizations, Dimensions, and Levels of Well-Being” started with a lecture by T. Tiefenbach and F. Kohlbacher (both Tokyo) about different concepts of happiness in Japan and necessary methodological improvements. S. Olbrich (Berlin) reported about parental well-being. S. Fukushima (Kyoto) and Y. Uchida focused on collective well-being in Japan, suggesting a culture-specific conceptualization of well-being in future research.

The 6th session focused on “Werner Reimers and Japan” with a presentation about Japanese art in Werner Reimers’ collection by T. Schneider (Kassel).

By contributing to the understanding of well-being from different scientific perspectives in diverse, especially Asian, cultures this conference resulted in innovative approaches for future collaborative research on well-being in changing socio-cultural contexts.

More information on the conference as well as the GJSSS is available at: <http://www.psychologie.uni-konstanz.de/en/trommsdorff/german-japanese-society-for-social-sciences-gjsss/>.

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