

JAWS

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JAPAN ANTHROPOLOGY WORKSHOP NEWSLETTER NO. 51

2016

FROM THE JAWS OFFICERS

FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL	7
FROM THE TREASURER	9
FROM THE EDITORS	11

JAWS NEWS

JAWS PUBLICATION NEWS	13
26 th JAWS CONFERENCE 2015 REVIEW	18

OPEN JAWS

JAWS Business Meeting Minutes	58
-------------------------------	----

28 th JAWS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT	62
---	----

JAWS FROM THE DEEP

Laura Dales and Aline Henninger Interview William W. Kelly	64
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TOMORROW'S RESEARCHERS TODAY	74
------------------------------	----

RESEARCH REPORTS	75
------------------	----

REGISTER OF JAWS MEMBERS	78
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FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

Brigitte Steger

It was great to see so many of you at the EAJJ/JAWS conference at Kobe University in September. Our sister organisation, AJJ (Anthropology of Japan in Japan; ajj-online.net), is organising frequent conferences and workshops in Japan, which is why JAWS normally concentrates its activities to places outside the country. Nevertheless, the EAJJ conference at Kobe University was a welcome opportunity to connect to our colleagues currently working or researching in Japan, and it was great to meet so many young colleagues. Under the theme of rituals and daily lives, the paper themes ranged from larping and naked *matsuri* to toilet and hand washing rituals. We heard fascinating papers on housing trends, rural revitalisation and on education. I am very grateful to Carmen Tamas for organising the JAWS section of the conference as well as one of the highlights, the JAWS dinner in the Do With Cafe in Osaka. Delicious food and *nomi hodai* helped us to connect to our old and new colleagues in no time. And the performances of drag queens Foxy-O, Robin and Undine added to the festive atmosphere.

Of course, the days we spent at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul a year ago are still very present in my memory as well. It was great to see so many of you there. Selçuk Esenbel, Erdal Küçükyağcı, Kiraz Perinçek Karavit and their many colleagues and helpers made this a really unforgettable event. Despite the many lures of the exciting city bridging Asia and Europe, it was good to see that our members stayed at the conference most of the time, engaging in discussion, both academic and social. Several conference reports are found in this newsletter, and I hope that they will bring back the memories to you. The dinner cruise on the Bosphorus where we had a record number of 100 participants was a fantastic opportunity to share our reflections, to dance and plan for future collaboration.

This summer, our colleagues in Turkey had to cope with enormous adversities. It was reassuring to hear that they are holding the helm regardless of the very difficult political situation. Selçuk and Erdal are also working on the first edition of their new journal *Global Perspectives on Japan* with articles from the Istanbul JAWS conference and we plan a journal launch party at the upcoming EAJJ/JAWS conference in Lisbon in August/September 2017.

This conference might yet see another journal launch; at the business meeting in Kobe we decided to change the name of the very newsletter you are now reading, and this might result in some more changes we have yet to discuss.

Our decision to switch to life membership at JAWS proved to be a good one. I am very pleased to say that we have more than doubled in numbers since the JAWS/EAS conference in Ljubljana in August 2014; we welcomed many new members and old members re-joined. As Anne Mette writes in her report, our financial situation is very healthy and I look forward to hearing ideas from JAWS members for workshops, conferences and other ways to promote Japan Anthropology and especially help those at an early stage in their careers. Now that the politicians in every country seem to get crazier and crazier with 'forward drift reforms' or 'restructuring' at Japanese and Asian Studies departments and cutting down funds and opportunities, it is reassuring to know that in the JAWS community supporting each other to work well and to do exciting research counts more than competition. I am sure that this is strengthening our field of Japan Anthropology as a whole as well as us all.

The Calls for Papers for the upcoming EAS/JAWS conference in Lisbon in August 2017 are now out. I hope to see you there!

FROM THE TREASURER

Anne Mette Fisker-Nielsen

JAWS Coop bank account balance:

	Cash in	Cash out
Interest	£0.00	
Commission		£4.00
Royalties	£273.72	
Membership	£215.69	
Proofreading		£1,800.00
Funding Toshiba	£8,000.00	
JAWS conference reimbursement		£3,249.00
JAWS conference dinner		£3,245.41
Correction	£0.00	
Total	£8,489.41	£8,298.41

Coop opening balance	8/21/2015	£14,877.47	
Coop closing balance	8/18/2016		£15,068.47

Membership cheques	£0.00	Membership cheques
Membership PayPal	£629.85	Membership PayPal
Donation PayPal	£0.00	Donation PayPal
Balance as of 18/8/16		£15,698.32

To sign up for membership or to pay via PayPal, go to

www.japananthropologyworkshop.org

and click “subscribe”. There will be a onetime payment of £25 or the equivalent in your own currency.

It is also possible to pay directly into the account. From a UK bank account, this will be free. For people outside the UK, this may incur extra cost. Please contact me if you want to subscribe this way.

FROM THE EDITORS

Andrea De Antoni, Emma Cook, Blai Guarné

This issue of the Newsletter comes with an uttermost delay. First of all, then, let us Editors apologize for this. Some pretty fundamental changes have occurred in each of our careers in the last couple of years and, consequently, time has become a rare commodity. We hope that you understand and forgive our resultant tardiness with this newsletter!

Nevertheless, we are happy to finally publish this issue because, as you will see, it is the result of many different people who submitted their reports. From an ontological approach perspective, this makes our Newsletter a stronger, wider and denser network, thus moving it into a different “mode of existence”, as Latour (2013) would argue. We are particularly glad that, other than the established and well-renowned Anthropologists of Japan, we could rely on the contributions of a number of young early-stage scholars who attended the JAWS Conference in Istanbul and provided us with their perspectives on it.

Unfortunately, time did not make it possible to do the same for the following 27th JAWS Conference that took place on the 24th and 25th of September 2016 in Kobe University, concurrent with the 2nd EAJIS Japan Conference and organized by Carmen Săpunaru Tămaş. The Meeting witnessed a very good attendance of scholars mainly based in Japan, who gave interesting and very informative presentations about a pleasantly surprising variety of topics. This means that not only the JAWS network is expanding, but that “newcomers” are enriching it with a well-grounded diversity of research interests. We also publish the Minutes of the discussions that took place during the JAWS Business Meeting in Kobe: an idea by the Secretary General and a new effort to keep all the Members up-to-date with important issues and decisions. Thus, anthropologists of Japan can now have “Open JAWS”.

A special thanks goes to the Convener and Organizer, Carmen Săpunaru Tămaş, who did a wonderful job of putting all the papers together in consistent thematic sessions that fostered very interesting discussions. Moreover, as Brigitte also mentioned above, Carmen organized an excellent official dinner at the Do With Cafe in Osaka. The performing drag queens (Carmen’s research partners) and the delicious food definitely made up for the short trip from Kobe to Osaka, and provided a brilliant background to further discussions. All the participants definitely appreciated it.

One more important announcement regards the next JAWS Meeting is that it is going to take place in Lisbon, together with the EAJIS Conference, from the 30th of August to the 2nd of September 2017. As it has been in the past years, the two sections that will interest

JAWS Members most directly are sections 5a “Anthropology and Sociology” and 5b “Media Studies”. This time around, these two sections will be organized by the Editors of this Newsletter: respectively Andrea and Emma will be the convenors of the first and Blai with Ronald Saladin of the second. The Calls for Papers were published recently and can be found on the [EAS Conference Webpage](#), but we publish them also in this Newsletter.

One more highlight of this issue is the great interview that Laura Dales and Aline Henninger did with William W. Kelly. This new “JAWS From the Deep” Section – that originated from an idea by Laura – is only at its second stage, but it already promises quite a few interesting developments and, it appears, is really appreciated by members.

This issue also features one report in the “Tomorrow’s Researcher Today” and one in the “Research Reports” sections respectively. The two projects seem to be very promising and up-to-date with the wider anthropological discussion. We are always glad to accept and review new contributions so, again, keep them coming!

Last but not least, a couple of pieces of news regarding the Newsletter itself. We are considering the idea of making it into a web-based browsable Journal, so that all the contributions can be edited and uploaded as they arrive. There will need to be some email exchanges with the Webmaster (Christopher Feldman) and it might take a little bit of time to set up, but it will probably be done sooner than later. At the Business Meeting in Kobe a name change for the “Newsletter” was also discussed with the aim to make it sound more “academic” and consequently be more appealing for young scholars to submit their research reports to. Various possibilities were discussed in the Business Meeting in Kobe (see the “Open JAWS” section below), but it seems that “Japan Anthropology Report” (JAR) was the more successful. There will probably be an email going around about the topic as soon as we solve some technical issues so, please, keep (also) your eyes open.

Finally, we would like to officially introduce two new Members who joined the Newsletter crew: Jennifer McGuire and Alina Radulescu, who were so kind as to volunteer to support us in looking for new contributors and in chasing people up. As we wrote in the beginning of this blurb, our positions are becoming more and more demanding from several perspectives and we feel that we are not being able to give the JAWS Newsletter all the attention that it deserves, particularly as successors of Peter Cave and Gordon Matthews, who were able to keep a paper-based edition timely and ongoing for several years. Therefore, on the one hand, during the last Business Meeting, our proposal to issue the Newsletter once per year was accepted. On the other, we hope that this can give us some time to work with Jennifer and Alina and that, eventually, they (maybe with the help of other young scholars), can subsequently take over as Editors.

We are looking forward to meeting you in Lisbon!

JAWS PUBLICATION NEWS

Joy Hendry

The JAWS book series Editorial group has now recruited two new members, recommended to the existing Board and then to the general meeting held at the JAWS conference in Istanbul last September, where their choice was agreed unanimously.

The first, **Christoph Brumann**, has already published both a monograph (Tradition, Democracy and the Townscape of Kyoto: Claiming a Right to the Past; 2012) and a collection jointly edited with Rupert Cox (Making Japanese Heritage, 2010) in the JAWS series, so we are pleased that he has agreed to join the Board. He introduced himself to the JAWS meeting as follows (slightly abridged):

After studying anthropology and Japanese studies at the universities of Cologne and Sophia University, Tokyo, I obtained my doctorate (1997) and habilitation degree (2005) from the University of Cologne where I held a number of consecutive teaching positions, interrupted by a JSPS-funded stint as Foreign Research Fellow at Minpaku, Osaka, in 1998/99. Since 2010, I have been Head of Research Group at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany, and since 2011, I have been Honorary Professor of Anthropology at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. I am a past president of the German Association for Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF) and a member of the Academia Europaea. My Japan-related publications deal with utopian communes, gift giving, and the debates and conflicts concerning the townscape and other public heritage of Kyoto. I have also written on utopian communes in general, globalisation, the anthropology of heritage, the anthropological concept of culture, and the debate about Captain Cook's death, and my work has appeared in such journals as Current Anthropology, American Ethnologist, Comparative Studies in Society and History, and Social Anthropology. Currently, I am writing up the results of a multi-sited research project on the UNESCO World Heritage arena (with a significant Japan component), within the framework of the group "The Global Political Economy of Cultural Heritage" I am heading. My other Max Planck research group "Buddhist Temple Economies in Urban Asia" includes a project on Tokyo.

I have been committed to JAWS for a long time, and I value the JAWS series as a showcase for ethnographically grounded and theoretically and methodologically sophisticated work on contemporary Japan and would like to keep it that way. I bring to this task not only my research and publication experience on Japan but also a good sense of current debates and international trends in general anthropology, nurtured by working in an English-speaking environment with anthropologists from forty countries, a wide array of research areas and topics, and a strong commitment to comparison.

The second new member of the Board is **Henry Johnson**, professor in the Department of Music at the University of Otago, New Zealand. He and Erica Baffelli organised the JAWS conference held there in 2011, so again we are delighted that he has agreed to join the group, and particularly also because he can bring an Antipodean dimension to work on Japan. He introduces himself as follows:

I am an anthropologist of Japan with over 20 years' experience. I have undertaken extended research in Japan, having lived there for several years and visiting there almost annually. My research has focused on the performing arts, especially in connection with music. I have written extensively about Japanese music, both traditional and popular, and have also published in island studies on Japan, museology, regionalism, nationalism, and disasters.

*I have published a number of books on Japan, and edited several others, including **Performing Japan**, and have much experience editing books and journals, and refereeing for leading publishers (e.g., OUP) and journals (e.g., *Journal of Japanese Studies*; *Asian Studies Review*; *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies*). I was Editor of *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* for four years.*

Sadly, our long-term Australian Board member, **Wendy Smith**, has now resigned from the group due to ill-health and retirement from her position at Monash University in Melbourne. We would like to thank her for her many years of tireless service to the Board and wish that her retirement will enable her to recover some good health to enjoy it.

We have a couple of splendid books in preparation at the moment, both collections based on conferences and workshops organised by and with JAWS members, so I hope these will be available in a few months' time. One is intriguingly entitled **Escaping Japan: Reflections on Estrangement and Exile in the Twenty-first Century**, edited by **Paul Hansen** and **Blai Guarne**. The other addresses the equally intriguing subject of happiness and is edited by Wolfram Manzenreiter and Barbara Holthus, entitled **Happiness and the Good Life in Japan**

As always, we are ready to receive your proposals if you would like your own work to be considered to join the illustrious list you will find below. We are very proud of our collection and we would like to encourage all JAWS members to think about contributing their research. The books may seem a little expensive at first sight, but there is a generous offer to all JAWS members to buy up to 15 copies of any book in the series at 30% of the hardback price, and all the books can be ordered in paperback after a maximum of 2 years in hardback. We publish monographs, collections and translations, and we are always open to consider new ideas for the series, so do please get in touch

with me (jhendry@brookes.ac.uk) if you have something you would like to offer and I will send you the guidelines for submission of a proposal. Go to <http://www.routledge.com/books/series/SE0627/> to see the complete list, and to order books, using the discount code as a JAWS member, which is **JAWS1**.

Full list in order of publication:

A Japanese View of Nature: The World of Living Things by Kinji Imanishi

Translated by Pamela J. Asquith, Heita Kawakatsu, Shusuke Yagi and Hiroyuki Takasaki; edited and introduced by Pamela J. Asquith

Japan's Changing Generations: Are Japanese Young People Creating A New Society?

Edited by Gordon Mathews and Bruce White

Community Volunteers in Japan: Everyday Stories of Social Change

Lynne Nakano

The Care of the Elderly in Japan

Yongmei Wu

Nature, Ritual and Society in Japan's Ryukyu Islands

Arne Røkkum

Dismantling the East West Dichotomy: Essays in Honour of Jan van Bremen

Edited by Joy Hendry and Dixon Wong

Psychotherapy and Religion in Japan: The Japanese Introspection Practice of Naikan

Chikako Ozawa-de Silva

Pilgrimages and Spiritual Quests in Japan

Edited by Maria Rodriguez del Alisal, Instituto de Japonologia, Madrid, Peter Ackermann, University of Erlangen, and D.P. Martinez, University of London

Japan and the Culture of Copying

Edited by Rupert Cox

Primary School in Japan: Self, Individuality and Learning in Elementary Education

Peter Cave

Globalization and Japanese Organization Culture: An Ethnography of a Japanese Corporation in France

Mitchell Sedgwick

Japanese Tourism and the Culture of Travel

Edited by Sylvie Guichard-Anguis and Okpyo Moon

Making Japanese Heritage

Edited by Christoph Brumann and Rupert Cox

Japanese Women, Class and the Tea Ceremony: The Voices of Tea Practitioners in Northern Japan

Kaeko Chiba

Home and Family in Japan: Continuity and Transformation

Edited by Richard Ronald and Allison Alexy

Abandoned Japanese in Postwar Manchuria: The Lives of War Orphans and Wives in Two Countries

Yeeshan Chan

Tradition, Democracy and the Townscape of Kyoto: Claiming a Right to the Past

Christoph Brumann

Religion and Politics in Contemporary Japan: Sōka Gakkai Youth and Kōmeito

Anne Mette Fisker-Nielson

Language, Education and Citizenship in Japan

Genaro Castro-Vasquez

Disability in Japan

Carolyn Stevens

Death and Dying in Contemporary Japan

Edited by Suzuki Hikaru

Ascetic Practices in Japanese Religion

Tullio Federico Lobetti, with an introduction by Nakamaki Hirochika.

Japanese Tree Burial: Innovation, Ecology and the Culture of Death

Sebastien Penmellen Boret

Japan's Ainu Minority in Tokyo: Urban Indigeneity and Cultural Politics

Mark Watson

The First European Description of Japan, 1585: Striking Contrasts in The Customs of Europe and Japan

Luis Frois, S.J., Translated and annotated by Daniel Reff, Richard Danford and Robin Gill

The Japanese Family: Touch, Intimacy and Feeling

Diana Adis Tahhan

26th JAWS CONFERENCE 2015 REVIEW

1-4 September 2015

Boğazçi University, Istanbul

Conference Report

Susanne AUERBACH

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Freie Universität Berlin

From the 1st to 4th September the 26th Conference of the Japan Anthropology Workshop (JAWS) took place at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. Convened by Cosima Wagner and Cornelia Reiher from the Freie Universität Berlin and organised by Selcuk Esenbel and Erdal Küçükylaçı from Boğaziçi University, the conference gathered over 80 people from all over the world to give a variety of presentations on the theme of the conference “Technology and Nature”. The conference theme being broad in its possible scope and at the same time, considering recent events like the 3.11. disaster, of enormous relevance, led to a high number of exceptional paper proposals, so the following three days were filled with two parallel sessions and a final roundtable discussion on Japanese Studies in Turkey. Before the conference proper started, the first evening offered the opportunity for a leisurely get-together with a lovely reception and a stunning view over the Bosphorus Strait and the Asian part of Istanbul, which felt almost symbolic considering the gathering of scholars from East and West.

The morning of the first day started off with two panels on “Robot Technology and Elderly Care in Japan” and “The Unnatural in Life and Death” which centred around questions of life and death/illness. Parallel to these was a session concerned with the aftermath of 3.11. Here presentations were especially focused on how the people directly affected by the destructive force of nature and technology dealt with reconstruction. Where can we find resilience and what form does it take? Most of the papers were a mixture of observations and introduction to ongoing projects. Of particular interest were presentations juxtaposing different social movements and developments. Man-made and technically improved seawalls were described as being planned in anticipation of future catastrophes as well as trees planted to function as a natural barrier for future tsunamis. People staying and remembering on one side and women, who decided to leave in order to protect their family and children just to be confronted with

stigmatisation, a new hibakusha, were described on the other side. Since, as mentioned, most of these are still ongoing projects, results were yet not quite clear to pin down, but presenters and participants alike were engaged in the discussion of possible conclusions, for example with regard to increased political involvement of hitherto non-political citizens and protest movements.

The afternoon offered two panels on “Food, Science & Nature” and “Representing nature and technology in Japan” each. Here presentations ranged from the construction of soup kitchens in Yokohama, safety standards concerning genetically modified food or sake breweries in Japan to the representation of nature in tsukumogami (a kind of possessed object in Japanese folklore) and a closer look at the meaning of the popularity of moominville in contemporary Japan.

“Food, Science & Nature” presented a final panel on the next day, this time looking at the role of technology in aquaculture, the process of turning fish into functional food and the challenges for the dairy industry in Hokkaido. The second day also saw a return to the human body with two panels: “Medicine & Technology in Japan: Legal, Ethical and Governance Perspectives” and “Technologies of Gender/Sexuality and Problematization of Human Ontology in Japan”. Both panels showed how advancement in technology can be used to overcome failures or perceived failures i.e., socially constructed failures of the natural body as in the case of the universal design that is meant to assist disabled children and integrate them into non-specialised schools. At the same time we have seen that technology, its use and acceptance are always bound to social norms as in the case of the universal design, which, drawing (unwanted) attention to the disability has quite often singled out the children in the eyes of the others instead of integrating them. Other examples for this interaction of social norms and technology were presented through the case of sex-workers and men in Japan. Both groups use technology to improve their bodies according to the imagined ideal of the opposite: the customers in the case of the sex-workers and women in case of the men. This becomes especially relevant against the background of a Japanese society with changing gender roles, sexual stereotypes and a continuously low birthrate. Furthermore we saw how actors in the health sector, including those using and receiving these technologies on the one hand as well as the those entrusted with overseeing and regulating the use of these technologies on the other hand, are struggling with the challenges and risks that the application of technologies pose for the individual, e.g. the patient, as well as for society as a whole.

Parallel to this, “Facing Crisis and Rapid Social Change in Turkey and Japan” took place, spanning several sessions and encompassing topics such as women and the workplace,

rural communities and festivals as well as issues of changing family structures and problems of an ageing society.

The last day saw three final panels: “Sports, Music and Games” which looked at the role of technology in sports, in nature-themed augmented reality apps, and the role of shared housing; “Anthropology & the City” which posed a fresh approach to the phenomenon of Gyarū, and the challenges of nature that a neighbourhood association in Osaka faces while trying to get wisteria trees to bloom; and “State of the Art” with a presentation on Japanese Studies in Japan among others. The afternoon was topped off with a roundtable discussion, where representatives of the Turkish universities discussed the state and the future of Japanese Studies in Turkey.

For the final day the participants of the conference were invited to spend the last evening at a dinner cruise on the Bosphorus. This was not just a pleasant end to a fruitful conference but also offered another opportunity to engage with various scholars, to continue and deepen conversations on topics and themes that came up during the conference, and to discuss future plans concerning joint projects or exchange programmes especially with Turkish colleagues.

New to the conference was a mentoring programme for young scholars, where they were assigned to a more seasoned colleague to talk about their research, presentation or questions concerning fieldwork and publications among others. Since there was no predefined format, the tutoring could be adjusted to the individual needs of the mentee, which made it particularly beneficial. Besides practical tips concerning research methods or critical comments on the paper delivered, the very stimulating conversations also managed to bridge the sometimes rather big gap between the different generations of academics. This kind of programme is definitely something worth keeping and would most certainly be appreciated at other conferences as well.

Thanks to the organisers and the conveners the 26th JAWS conference was yet another wonderful opportunity for scholars concerned with anthropological studies in and around Japan to meet up, connect, reconnect, exchange and discuss their newest research and projects in an inspirational setting.

Conference Report

Michael FACIUS

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Freie Universität Berlin

As someone who has mainly been working on the history of Chinese knowledge in late Edo and Meiji Japan over the last few years, I am very grateful to the conveners of an anthropological conference on technology and nature in contemporary Japan for accepting my amateurish paper proposal on Japanese Augmented Reality (AR) apps for smartphones. I would also like to thank the Toshiba Foundation for the conference grant that allowed me to travel to Istanbul and deliver it.

In my paper, I presented an attempt to understand AR apps as a tool or technology that can enable new kinds of knowledge practices in relation to nature. In addition to the manipulation of smartphones to augment visual or aural cognition, conceptualizations and representations of nature/technology can be understood as vital practices in the construction and transmission of knowledge. The contributions to the conference confirmed my perception that these broadly conceived practices are a point of connection between approaches in the history of knowledge and anthropology.

I learned a lot from the diverse papers presented in Istanbul, from Halide Velioğlu's (Karabuk University) timely analysis of fictitious first-person accounts of the victims of police violence produced in the aftermath of the Gezi park protests of 2013, to Louella Matsunaga's (Oxford Brookes University) comparison of the rationales and procedures of reporting hospital deaths in England and Japan. However, in this brief selective report I will concentrate on the papers that relate more closely to the issue of knowledge/practices in light of the main theme of the conference.

That "nature" and "technology" are not separate and complementary phenomena, but products of a modern conceptual differentiation, is a well-established notion.¹ Many of the papers dealt with the transgression of the boundaries between the two or the production of one through the other. Sport is an arena where these boundaries are particularly tightly enforced and called into question at the same time, as William Kelly (Yale University) succinctly showed. Where does the athlete end and technology begin? With high-tech running shoes? Bow and arrow? The horse? The wheelchair? On what

¹ See e.g. Kirsten Hastrup, ed. (2014). *Anthropology and Nature*. New York: Routledge.

grounds can a trans woman be barred from competing with other, conventionally “woman”-identified persons? How should gender in sports be controlled anyway? Through self-identification? Hormone levels? Chromosomes? From a discussion of these problems, which are simultaneously about ontology, governance, engineering and ethics, Kelly turned to ponder the future of the Olympics. The games in Tokyo in 1964 were the first to bring together the Olympics and Paralympics in one event; the Tokyo campaign for 2020 was won in part thanks to its promise to create a barrier-free city. Will the two competitions merge in the long term and transform professional sports into a more inclusive arena less occupied with bodily difference?

The papers in the panel on technology and sexuality further explored the theme of the creation and definition of “nature” through technology. Yoko Kumada (JSPS Fellow) attended in her paper based on fieldwork in an SM club to technologies used by sex workers to produce and sustain “natural” bodies, from pubic hair removal to breast enlargement and vaginal lubricants. Japanese men, Genaro Castro-Vazquez (Nanyang University) found, are now wooed into undergoing penile surgery by advertisements that promise better relationships and more confidence through a glans enlargement or the insertion of silicon balls into the shaft.

It is worth noting that the phenomena under discussion in these papers are all globally inflected. What is at stake is not primarily “Japaneseness” and culturally specific concepts of gender (even though preferences for pubic hairstyles or penis implants will surely differ across countries), but economic considerations, as illustrated by the Olympic committee, the mushrooming beauty clinics and the sex industry. If not explicitly, the papers seemed to say that the rigid boundaries between able-bodied and disabled, beautiful and ugly, male and female are policed and perpetuated not least by decisions in marketing departments, thus shaping desires, identities, behaviors and career options.²

In contrast to these papers, Fabio Gygi (SOAS) presented a rather Japanese view of nature in his discussion of the *tsukumogami ki* that relates tales of animated household objects. He argued against explaining away the complexity of the narrative by invoking the culturalist trope of Shinto techno-animism, stressing instead practices of “ensouling”: in the story, rituals are a necessary ingredient to animate the tool gods.³

² On this see also the intriguing account by Peggy Orenstein (2011) on the manufacture of “princess culture”, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter: Dispatches from the Frontlines of Girlie-Girl Culture*. New York: Harper.

³ “Ensouling matter” is a concept taken from Victoria Nelson (2001). *The Secret Life of Puppets*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

This resonated, but also gave an interesting twist to a discussion in the panel on robot technology. There, Martin Rathmann (Heidelberg University) referred to the concept of the “play-mode” which tries to explain the curious fact that we interact with robot pets, which are “in reality” inanimate, as if they were actual living beings. It might be instructive from an anthropological perspective to understand this play-mode as a comparable animating practice, just like the AR app relating to the anime series *mushishi* that appeared in my paper, which makes visible – and simultaneously more real – mythical creatures called *mushi*.⁴

As we have seen, issues of “reality” and the limits of enlightenment ontology cropped up repeatedly throughout the conference. That is probably no coincidence, but indicative of a larger paradigmatic shift in the humanities currently underway.⁵ My impression after attending the JAWS conference was that the anthropology of Japan is in an excellent position to propel this conversation forward.

In wrapping this report up, I would like to add that I was particularly impressed by a round table organized by Erdal Küçükyağın (Boğaziçi) that showcased the developments and achievements of Japanese Studies in Turkey. Since the founding of the “veteran” programs at Ankara University and Boğaziçi University in the 1980s, there has been a significant expansion of faculty and programs that deal with Japanese language, culture and society. It was exiting to hear about this from many of the scholars who initiated this boom as well as the next generation who will carry it forward.

⁴ A related argument about “petness” as a relational category is made in Jen Wrye (2009). “Beyond Pets: Exploring Relational Perspectives of Petness.” *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 34(4), pp. 1033–1063.

⁵ Calls for the multiplication of ontologies are voiced from different quarters right now. See e.g. Greg Anderson (2015). “Retrieving the Lost Worlds of the Past: The Case for an Ontological Turn,” *American Historical Review* 120,3, pp. 787–810; Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters (2015). “Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through Oceanic Thinking.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 33, pp 247–264. Cf. also the remark by JAWS member Joy Hendry on current initiatives for a “mutual anthropology” that “does not rely on the thinking of the Enlightenment”: Joy Hendry (2015). “The State of Anthropology in and of Japan: A Review Essay.” *Japan Forum* 27(2), pp. 121–133, here p. 130.

Conference Report

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The opening reception of the 2015 JAWS conference in Istanbul highlighted the beautiful location of the hosting institution, Boğaziçi University, which had an abundance of plants and dozy cats (that would later even take over the speaker's desk on occasion) and an astonishing view over the Bosphorus. This first event set the tone for the rest of the conference, which was marked by an exceptionally open and friendly atmosphere. Being able to enjoy the hospitality of Boğaziçi University and of the Japanese Studies Association in Turkey (JAD) was also very exciting for me as a scholar of both Japanese and Middle Eastern Studies to get to know better the Turkish scene of Japanese Studies.

The events of March 11th 2011 are still very present in the minds of most scholars and not surprisingly also figured in special panels dealing with the aftermath of the 3.11 disasters in Japan. After a number of approaches and initiatives for rebuilding and coping were discussed in the first session, the second session titled "Trauma/memory/analysis/politics: The anthropology of Japan's Triple Disaster, four years on...", chaired by Mitch Sedgwick, presented different perspectives from contested (re)construction measures and politics to industrial technology and disaster in art and literature. Alyne E. Delaney's paper on construction plans for new seawalls after the 2011 tsunami offered interesting insights into the problematic nature of technological fixes, their effects on local livelihoods and social networks, and democratic deficits in the decision making process. It was a great pity that the author was not able to be present in person in order to discuss her findings in depth. Starting from the vantage point of a newly risen fascination for industrial aesthetics, Peter Wynn Kirby then turned to the technological ramifications of the nuclear accident in Fukushima and the insurmountable complexities of containment and decontamination. Maja Vodopivec presented an intriguing analysis of the role of futurity, disaster and contemporary political context in manga and other postmodern cultural works, focusing especially on the 2008 manga *Coppelion* that foreshadowed a nuclear disaster in East Japan. With a view on possible new democratic opportunities of political activism in post-2011 Japan, Phoebe Stella Holdgrün showcased her findings on young – and often times female – newcomers to politics in the Greens Japan party, looking at their perception of risk, their political as well as personal motivations and the relationship between political activism

and subjective happiness. Mitch Sedgwick's commentary drew connections between the different aspects raised in the presentations, with one common theme being the question of (the possibility of) democratic participation, and another asking about the usefulness of the concept of social capital.

The panel "Food, Science & Nature" chaired by Cornelia Reiher was perhaps of most direct relevance to my own research interests and I was glad to present my thoughts on the transformation of fish into high-tech functional food commodities here, and to receive stimulating comments and questions from the audience. Going over three sessions, the panel was exceptionally rich in contributions and well put together. The first session started off with a vivid presentation by Jieun Kim on soup kitchens and homeless activism in the former *yoseba* of Kotobuki in Yokohama. Relating her own experiences of fieldwork in Kotobuki, Kim discussed the changing meanings of the place and of the activism taking place there. In the following paper, Nancy Rosenberger introduced the lifeworlds of young organic farmers in contemporary Japan, painting them as neoliberal folk who creatively and unideologically appropriate technologies, become lay scientists, take entrepreneurial risks and make compromises in order to reconfigure the agrifood system from the inside. She pointed out that in contemporary organic farming discourses, consumers' health and well-being take priority over more fundamental ethical motives such as the protection of natural habitats. Cornelia Reiher noted similar tendencies in her overview of opposition to genetically modified foods in Japan since the 1990s, where food safety is the main concern as well as the subject of fierce contestation by consumer advocacy groups, scientists, bureaucracy, government and the food industries.

The panel "Technologies of Gender/Sexuality and Problematization of Human Ontology in Japan" chaired by Satoshi Tanahashi dealt with technologies of modifying human bodies in different contexts of sexuality and power and generated a lively discussion well beyond the actual session time frame. Genaro Castro-Vázquez' paper on penile cosmetic surgery in Japan introduced several methods of male body modification, mainly drawing on the perspective of practitioners and medical centers that offer such services, indicating that Japanese discourses on 'gender panics' and vanishing masculinity, homosocial feedback and imagined female preferences seem to be important motivating factors to undergo surgery. Yoko Kumada talked about the use of technologies of the self by female sex workers based on very long-term field research with remarkable access to interview partners. She highlighted fascinating tensions between technology, nature and the body as sex workers are employing technologies in order to craft 'naturally splendid bodies' in order to meet different customers' demands. Akitomo Shingae offered interesting insights into new developments in reproductive

medicine and discussed their consequences for homosexual couples, whose legal rights in Japan are especially limited in the areas of marriage and child adoption. If babies could carry the genes of both of their same-sex parents, this might have far-reaching implications for naturalistic definitions of family and parenthood. It was interesting for me to see how Foucault's concept of 'technologies of the self' was being applied in different contexts such as sex workers and agricultural newcomers in the session described above.

Combining a number of rather diverse studies, the panel "Anthropology & the City" chaired by Christoph Brumann brought together different aspects of nature and technology in Japanese cities. Emilie Letouzey presented an in-depth study of a re-cultivation project in Osaka, where a neighbourhood association with mostly housewives is working hard to turn their city district into a flourishing neighbourhood of wisteria. Despite many techniques and efforts employed to make the flowers blossom ideally right in time for the newly invented flower festival, the plants often refuse to abide by this prodding and programming, throwing light on the mixed agency of accomplishing blossoms and on the cultural production of the boundaries of life. Yusuke Arai turned to different urban flowers in his extensive presentation on *gyaru* and *gyaru-o* in Shibuya. Based on long-term and in-depth field work, Arai argued that the popularization of social networking technologies has been an important factor in the transformation of the *gyaru* scene in Tokyo, contributing to its mainstreamization, virtualization and also normalization through surveillance effects. Looking at young Romanian women in Osaka, Adrian Ovidiu Tamas analysed the role of language as a marker of social class in their usage of Japanese and came to the conclusion that most Romanian woman working as hostesses in Japan still tended to be discriminated against in their new environment. Turning to an issue concerning all city dwellers, Rebecca Tompkins mapped out the complex networks of physical, technological and intangible components of the waste management system in Tsukuba city. Tompkins stated that, based on cooperation and coordination of institutional, civil society, private companies as well as individual agencies, this system is very susceptible to errors and disruptions, for example if one agent fails to cooperate or has not been accounted for (such as non-human living beings – mold, crows etc., as one commentator pointed out). This panel was one of the last two sessions of the conference, which was rounded off with a round table on Japanese Studies in Turkey.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the organizers and volunteers from Boğaziçi University and from JAWS, who managed to put together an inspiring program and conference framework. I am also very thankful to the Toshiba Foundation for their financial support, because given my current employment situation participation in this

conference would not have been feasible without it. My private tutorial was especially useful for a discussion of my research focus as well as possible career choices and strategies. It was very helpful for me to receive an experienced scholar's advice with a perspective from a Japanese academic background. The social events such as the reception on the first day, the concluding dinner cruise on the Bosphorus and the numerous coffee breaks were an invaluable occasion to get to know other scholars from various geographical backgrounds working in the same field as well as to meet old acquaintances and friends. They also were the figurative icing on the cake of an overall inspiring and wonderful conference.

Conference Report

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The leafy and cat-strewn campus of Boğaziçi University in Istanbul was the venue for the 26th JAWS Conference, the main theme of which was 'Technology and Nature'. Panels, organized in parallel sessions over three days, explored such topics as robotic technologies in elderly care; issues related to medical technologies and technology and disability; technology, gender and sexuality; the relationship between science and technology and nature and tradition; sports, music and games; and anthropology, the city and Japan following the triple disaster of 11 March 2011. There were also several extended (multi-session) panels organized under the titles, 'Food, Science and Nature'; 'Representing Nature and Technology in Japan'; and a five-session panel, 'Facing Crisis and Rapid Social Change in Turkey and Japan'.

Although, collectively, the papers touched on a wide range of issues relevant to the anthropology of contemporary Japan, my comments are organized around two broad themes which, based on the panels attended, emerged as significant.

First, Japan's demographic dilemma, its social, economic and political implications and prospects for change. Many of the contributions addressed (either directly or indirectly) issues related to Japan's current demographic situation: its low birthrate, falling population and high proportion of citizens over the age of sixty-five; delaying and/or forgoing of marriage and child-rearing by the younger generation; the prospect of labour shortages, particularly acute in professions such as nursing and care for the elderly;

gender roles and gender relationships in both employment and domestic spheres and an emergent (or at least proclaimed) government policy nexus aimed at promoting greater employment opportunities for women, particularly in professional, managerial and executive ranks, whilst at the same time making greater provision for maternity and paternity leave and child-care in order to facilitate and support family life.

Martin Rathman provided a critical assessment of the development of robotics in care-giving in Japan, concluding that, although such technologies had their application in health care provision for the elderly and the infirm, projections of their potential to replace human caregivers were rooted in false estimates of the state of robotic technology and an over-optimistic view of technology in general. Cosima Wagner, in her paper, contrasted the enthusiasm of the Japanese government to develop and integrate robotic technologies in quotidian life in Japan through its well-funded “Robot Revolution Realization” initiative and the concerns of more critical voices to develop a code of ethics for the safe development and application of robots in society. Implicit in both papers was a degree of skepticism about the potential of robots, at least in the short term, to significantly remedy the labour implications of Japan’s population time bomb.

In the third session organized under the title, ‘Facing Crisis and Rapid Social Change in Turkey and Japan’, Muriel Jolivet explored some of, “the fundamental reasons behind the postponement of childbirth” which lay behind an avalanche of government research studies on the topic of the declining birthrate in Japan and banal discourses about the prohibitive cost of raising children, suggesting as a significant issue among young Japanese willing to have children, “hesitance about the compatibility of a professional career with child care”. In accounting for France’s relative success in avoiding the demographic issues affecting many other post-industrial European and Asian nations, Jolivet commented that most French find having and raising children “fun”, perhaps reflecting the importance of collective attitudes in society towards the prospect of child-rearing and family life. Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni focused on changing concepts of fatherhood, as embodied in the term *ikumen* – men who actively participate in raising their children – but also as reflected through images of ‘new fatherhood’ which, “populate Japanese television drama, films, commercials and government campaigns”. In posing the question of whether “new fatherhood” in post-bubble Japan can be regarded as challenging, “the strong legacy of the breadwinner model and the alleged corporate gender contract”, Goldstein-Gidoni’s paper begs the question of whether Japanese society might be in the midst (or on the brink) of a paradigm shift in the articulation of marriage, family life, gender roles and the domestic economy akin to the nuclearization of the family, “invention of the housewife” (Vogel 1963) and emergence

of the so-called breadwinner model which dates to the late 1950s/early 1960s and has persisted for much of the post-war period.

Other contributions which intersected with issues related to demographic circumstances in contemporary Japan included Katsuro Hirofumi's paper on the growing interest in Ruinophilia – the exploration and photographing of abandoned places (factories, mines, theme parks, etc.) – in Post-Industrial Japan (Panel: 'Representing Nature and Technology in Japan 1'); Laura Dales' compelling re-visitation of the concept of *ba* (place) as a site or space for the production of intimate relations among the unmarried/unattached against the backdrop of demographic trends resulting in increasing numbers of Japanese living outside the context of the nuclear reproductive family for longer periods of their lives or, in some cases, for their entire lives; and Caitlin Meagher's exploration of the role of (usually temporary) living in shared housing as a strategy – particularly among young, unmarried and underemployed women – in pursuing their dreams for the future and in thus cultivating hope amidst uncertainty in their personal and professional lives. Whereas Hirofumi's paper focused on abandoned spaces, mostly in rural areas, unlikely to be redeveloped in a climate of acute rural depopulation (as Christoph Brumann pointed out in discussion), Meagher's and Dales' contributions both explored the emergence of alternative, mainly urban/suburban spaces (and institutions), for the articulation of new forms of domestic living and relationship formation (respectively) in a social landscape characterized (drawing on literature cited in Meagher's abstract) by uncertainty, precarity and 'ontological anxiety'.

The second broad theme that emerged is the nature/technology dichotomy and the relationship between the natural and unnatural/technological (OR from Japan shrinks to "Japan Sinks").

In the panel, "The 'Unnatural' in Life and Death", Louella Matsunaga's paper examined the classification of hospital deaths as 'unnatural' or unusual in Japan and the United Kingdom (specifically England and Wales), whilst Jason Danelly, in his exploration of the widespread use of feeding tubes to sustain the lives of dementia patients in Japan, posed the question of "what is natural to or unnatural in life and death". In the lively discussion which followed, the question of whether any hospital deaths today could – in light of the extent of reliance on sophisticated life sustaining technologies – be considered 'natural' was raised.

Several papers considered related themes in various narrative contexts. Alex Jacoby (same panel), in his analysis of Hirokazu Koreeda's film, *Air Doll*, explored how the artificial body of Nozomi (a blow-up doll) serves as, "a metaphor for the inauthenticity and disconnection of lifestyles in the modern city", "a technological solution to a natural

desire”, and as a vehicle for dramatizing, “the way in which the question of what it means to be human has been problematised by modern advances in technology”. In the panel, ‘Representing Nature and Technology in Japan 1’, Fabio Gygi explored the notion of animation and the, “problem of what the ‘nature’ of man-made objects actually is” through his analysis of Shibusawa Tatsuhiko’s essay on *Tsukumogamiki*, whilst Griseldis Kirsch pondered the relationship between natural calamity and technological solutions in Higuchi Shinji’s film, *Sinking of Japan* (2006) [based on the novel by Komatsu Sakyō (1973)], including its particular resonance in the aftermath of the triple disaster of March, 2011.

Papers by both Bill Kelly (Yale) and Bill Kelly (Oxford) invoked (in different panels) Bryan Pfaffenberger’s work on the anthropology of technology, in the former case through a treatment of sport as a, “socio-technical system” in which distinctions between the human (the ‘natural’ body) and the technical – the material accessories and equipment of the sportsperson/athlete (from skis and poles of the elite skier to the artificial limbs of the para-Olympian) – become spurious; and in the latter, through an exploration of the ways in which images illustrating *enka* songs in the context of karaoke (including images reflecting constructions of nature) are organized and projected through technical systems (karaoke machines) which not only mediate social intercourse and human relations in the context of karaoke singing, but also, to some extent, represent the material embodiment of those relations.

Michael Facius (“Delivering Nature in Smart Phones”) conducted a tour through recent augmented reality (AR) applications which, through the enhanced technical capacity of recent generations of smartphones (huge processing power, combined with high resolution cameras), create “visual and aural overlays” which “transform the environment on the screen”. Examples include Penguin Navi (2014), an application in which virtual penguins guide prospective visitors to the Sunshine Aquarium in Tokyo; an application for Starbucks involving animated augmented reality butterflies; ARART, which, “breathes life into objects” and the application, My Day, My Room, a virtual pet application for android.

Finally, Noriya Sumiya provided a fascinating exploration of *monozukuri* (lit. making something tangible from something else, but with the implication in popular discourse of making something in a Japanese way), tracing the multiple discourses of a term which embodies not only elements of technical know-how, but also moral, religious, and cultural dimensions.

Other contributions less directly related to these two themes included Susanne Klien’s analysis of hip hop culture in Hokkaido; Romit Dasgupta’s paper on cultural and

human interactions between Japan and Turkey; Masahi Oguchi's overview of Japanese Studies in Japan and three very interesting and informative contributions on anthropological practice, paradigms and the production of anthropological knowledge by Blai Guarné ("Juxtaposing Sites: the Anthropology of Japan and the Anthropology of the Mediterranean in the Production of Anthropological Knowledge"); Josef Kreiner ("Paradigm Changes in Japanese Anthropology during the 20th Century"); and comments by 'State of the Art' Panel Chair, Akile Gürsoy on the historical development and current state of anthropology in Turkey.

Academic explorations of the relationship between nature and technology were mysteriously enhanced by the omnipresence of cats on the university campus, casually slinking in and out of academic sessions and even disrupting one speaker, Caitlin (or 'Cat'?), by leaping (repeatedly) onto the podium and pacing across her computer keyboard mid-presentation. Other highlights included several wonderful explorations of Istanbul 'after hours', including a near-monumental quest by a dozen or so colleagues for the elusive Olympiad fish restaurant (where patience and perseverance were ultimately rewarded) and an evening dinner cruise on the Bosphorus, in the course of which (following a brief interlude of Arabesk-esque song), the technological prowess of the DJ and natural inclinations and abilities of a number of conference participants converged on the dance floor. Much gratitude to Professor Selcuk Esenbel and her colleagues and students at the Asian Studies Centre at Boğaziçi University and to The Japanese Studies Association in Turkey for so generously hosting the 26th JAWS Conference, to conference organizers, Brigitte Steger, and JAWS, and to the Toshiba Foundation for its financial support.

Conference Report

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The 26th JAWS conference was held on the Faculty of Arts & Sciences of the splendid South Campus of Bosphorus University, from the 1st to the 4th of September 2015. Thanks to the efforts of the organisers, the faculty of Boğaziçi University and the team of volunteers, the conference went on without a hitch. Rather than making the attendees drowsy, the heat seemed to spark lively arguments and exchanges, both in the panel discussions, and in the aisles and outdoors conversations.

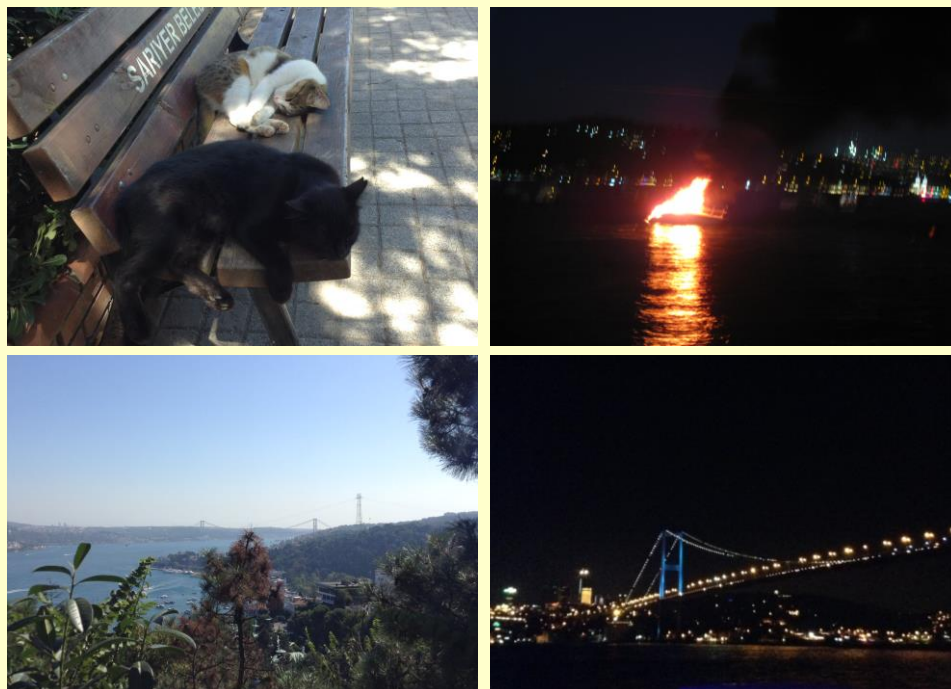


Fig. 1: A few snapshots taken during the conference: cats at the benches in the backyard garden of the faculty (1); a small boat went up in flames while a group of attendees were carrying on the conversation in a bar with a view of the harbour near the South Campus (2); a vista of the Bosphorus from the hills of the university (3); one of the many bridges crossing the Bosphorus Strait, snapped during the dinner cruise (4)

Rather than breezing through the parallel panels, summarizing the already summarized abstracts of the conference program, and throwing the occasional personal remark here and there, I would like to focus this report on just one of the excellent array of panels of this year's JAWS conference. I am selecting this one only because it is the one where I jotted down more notes. All panels were of a consistent quality throughout the conference and this became a repeated remark and observation in aisle conversations.

On Wednesday, Sept. 2nd, the panel «Representing Nature and Technology in Japan» was held from 14:30h, right after lunch, to 18:30h. This was a long panel that encompassed two sessions, with a half hour break at 16h. The panel was organised by Dr. Dolores Martinez (SOAS, University of London; Oxford), who had structured the panel so that paper presentations would not sprawl over a 20 minutes. The panel chair, Dr. Paul Hansen (Hokkaido University), supervised the time management of the sessions, and he made good use of the extra time to allow for exchanges with the audience after each of the presentations. This proved to be a wise decision as the panel comprised seven papers and opening the floor only at the end would have probably

meant that the papers of the first session would have received less feedback. Of the two venues where parallel panels were being held, this one was held in the smaller classroom, which allowed attendees to better hear the questions and comments of fellow audience members. All these factors resulted in a lively panel.

The roster of presentations of the panel was opened by Fabio Gygi (SOAS, University of London) and the paper “Tsukumogamiki: representation and animation.” The paper was focused on the text of the Tsukumogamiki (“Record of tool kami”) of the Muromachi period. The actual definition and understanding of the concept of *tsukumogami* is subject to debate and it was addressed in the presentation. A baseline definition of *tsukumogami* is that they are household objects that acquire a spirit over time (a period of almost 100 years according to the Tsukumogamiki; Noriko Reider’s translation). Many cultural practices and beliefs revolve around this notion. Thus, the paper explored an enshrinement of *tsukumogami* and Shinto practices. The research and analysis proposed an exploration of “animation” as the practice of “ensouling matter,” a concept borrowed from Victoria Nelson (2001). Another interesting theoretical spin on the term “animation” was “recalcitrant animation,” a discontinuous quality of objects that actualises itself when such objects fail us as if following a will of their own.

The thread of abandonment and the elicitation of emotional response in humans by humanly created or altered objects and environments was picked up by the following panellist, Katsuno Hirofumi (Osaka University of Economics), in his paper “Residues of Technological Utopia: The Formation of Ruinophilia in Post-Industrial Japan”. Katsuno’s research consisted of ethnography conducted in *haikyo* (廃墟), ruins, such as the Maya Tourist Hotel, in Kobe (cf. the web Abandoned Kansai). While embedded in organised tours of these abandoned facilities, Katsuno inquired about the reasons driving the informers and their reactions to the places themselves. “Utopian” spaces such as fun parks turned into choral heterotopias; Gukanjima, a heteropia of deviation that made possible the utopian pretensions of empire—they all serve as the heterotopical mirror through which visitors can make out their own countenance. The current nostalgic streak of the ruinophilia (amply shared through new media and social networks) also has a precarious code that negotiates the claims to the locus of *haikyo*. It is not merely an abandoned place that becomes a ruin. Indeed, once abandoned places are “properly” decaying, their aesthetic value goes up. *haikyo* is not just bereavement and isolation, it layers time over that, and time becomes distance, and this mental distance becomes peace of mind. One can admire the scar and remain still; the bleeding wound, on the other hand, demands a reaction that cannot possibly be evaded. When do places that were meant to be inhabited turn into actual fossils? Katsuno is still carrying on with the research, which opens a host of potential lines of analysis.

The presentations continued revealing the anxieties and struggles inherent in the “politics of signification” (Hall 2009:122) of popular culture. Next was Dr. Griseldis Kirsch’s “Technology versus Nature - Life Imitating Art in Higuchi Shinji’s Sinking of Japan (2006)” paper. The analysis of Higuchi’s film was a springboard for a more incisive scrutiny of the “security myth” (安全神話, *ansen shinwa*) that touched upon the national insecurities that Funabiki Takeo summarised in his notion of historical “anxiety” (不安, *fuan*) emerging, or rather, resurfacing in moments of crisis; the both solid and precarious relationship of Japan with the USA; the imaginings and representations of the national collective confronted with catastrophe; the literary/mythical resort to the sacrifice of the one character for the good of the many (a trope present in other disaster films and even Honda’s *Gojira*, 1954). Finally, there is quite a measure of skepticism in many of these films concerning the potential of human ingenuity to overcome Nature’s course.

After the 30 minutes pause, I presented my paper “I am where I think not, naturally” (Artur Lozano-Méndez, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). This paper is an attempt at applying Jacques Lacan’s “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud” (1957, 1966) to the works of director Oshii Mamoru, focusing on the treatment of Nature vi-à-vis technology. The research studies Oshii’s representation of humans’ mediated access to reality under Lacan’s signifying chain’s prism—such mediatedness being reinforced by Oshii in performance, production design, composition, sound, editing... Lacan’s reflections on the metaphorical and metonymical semiotic inexhaustibility, Jeannot’s knife, intersubjectivity, the animal condition, and play—they all illuminate Oshii’s films in new and engaging ways. I will not expand on the content of the paper here because I feel that would be too self-serving.

Next, Dr. Lola Martinez presented her paper “Zombies in the countryside: Okita’s 「キツツキと雨」 (2011)”. Released shortly before the earthquake and tsunami of March 2011 in Japan, the fiction underscores the uneasy coping of the Japanese with modern lifestyles. Thus, the film presents a variety of eco-zombies that embody a retaliation of Nature against the equally zombifying fit all, end all, be all model of modernity. Respecting Romero’s template, though, the film does not depict sentient empathetic zombies such as the ones of *In the Flesh* (the recent BBC drama series). A parallel is drawn between the drifting Japanese youths and the zombies. The zombies, in their lack of empathy, solidarity and self-concern, are presented as an impasse and the film renounces wishful thinking and happy endings. As was the case with Higuchi’s proposal, Okita’s film is also incredulous of leaderships (symbolized by the character of a film director in a metalinguistic play) and the ability of humans when it comes to the containment of Nature.

Dr. Hideko Mitsui (Universidade de Macau, 澳門大學) followed with a paper entitled “Nostalgia for Moominvalley: Commodification and Nature-Friendliness in Contemporary Japan.” The paper analysed the popularity and commercial use in Japan of Moomin, the character created by Finnish writer Tove Jansson (1914–2001). The character was introduced in Japan in the seventies and its popularity peaked during the nineties. Marketing strategies licensing the character exploit its enduring nostalgic association with a harmonic Arcadian nature-friendly way of life. Thus, the character has been used to sell “eco-conscience” in products that are clearly not ecological. Firms marketing technological and lab-designed products, such as Nissan or Shiseido, have used Moomin in past advertising campaigns.

The last paper, by Jutta Teuwsen (Universität Düsseldorf) analysed “The Merging of Technology and Nature in Contemporary Japanese Arts.” The paper analysed not just the representation of Nature and technology in the work of an assortment of Japanese artists, but also the resort to technology in the creative process to aid in the baring of Nature, as in the work of Konoike Tomoko and her illumination of inner parts of the body. Of note also is the use of video and installation by Tabaimo to depict biological and physical processes. In her pictorial output, Aoshima Chiho has proved to be most adept in unveiling the dead, nihilistic aspects that more frothy depictions of modernity tend to downplay, and she does so by subverting that very cheerfulness and forcing it to share the canvas with its very opposite. Finally, Ikeda Manabu’s work adopts a perception, displayed also by other artists analysed in the panel, of a Nature involved with humanities’ preferences or pursuits.

Before concluding, we would be remiss not to stress the mood of congeniality that characterised the conference. Important factors in facilitating this are: the scheduling of breaks between sessions, the fact that the number of participants is not astronomical, and the organisation of parallel activities where researchers can get to know each other beyond the contents of their respective papers. All the organisers, from the scientific committee that examined the panel proposals to the last volunteer, deserve credit for a fabulous conference.

Conference Report

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First, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Toshiba Foundation for allowing me this opportunity. As a doctoral candidate in the final stages (just prior to defense), the conference allowed me to present a paper that was based on my fieldwork data but which would not fit into the thesis. Being able to present these reflections in a paper titled “Alternative Housing as a Hopeful Strategy in the Context of Uncertainty” for constructive criticism at this stage was extremely helpful to me personally. The committee paired my paper with another on the concept of *ba*, and this pairing further helped me to think about and expand my theoretical framework. As I consider my career and future projects, this was a useful exercise in orienting my research interests.

The conference was blessed with many provocative panels and papers, but a few left more lasting impressions and have led to further reflection in the passing weeks. The first panel I attended, organized by Cosima Wagner on the theme of “Robot Technology and Elderly Care in Japan” does not relate directly to my research interests, except to the extent that shared housing has been proposed as a response to the challenges of Japan’s aging society and the vulnerability that comes with social isolation. Nonetheless, the theoretical points presented in the two excellent papers – specifically, that Japan’s use of robotic technology is more limited than depicted in exoticizing narratives popular in the West, even in Western scholarship – has implications beyond the immediate subject of robotic technology. The argument that the Japanese observe a unique ontology that fails to draw a strict distinction between human and non-human actors is one element of a vestigial commitment to Japanese cultural exceptionalism, a subdued version of *nihonjinron*. These two scholars demonstrated with solid ethnographic evidence that those involved in the production (Rathmann) and application (Wagner) of these technologies do not blur the distinction between robots and humans, as often is suggested, nor is their interest in robotic therapies rooted in traditional spirituality.

Another panel slightly closer to my own research interests on “Japanese and Turkish Women” featured three excellent papers by Glenda Roberts, Noriko Fujita (women in Japan); and Basak Can (women in Turkey). What these three very different papers had in common was their focus on women’s agentic action in contexts of uncertainty and

structural vulnerability. Each focused on the strategies (or, perhaps, the tactics) used by women to exert agency over their circumstances in the workplace. I was unfamiliar with the context of Dr. Can's work, the Turkish garment trade, but the structural position of women in the Japanese workforce is well reported: as Miyako Inoue put it, "Before there were *furiitaa*, NEET, or *precariato*, there were women" (Inoue 2013: 197). Ms. Fujita's paper discussed the strategies women and couples use to cope with separation due to forced relocation for work and demonstrated, amongst other things, that one effect of current challenges has been improvisation in the definition and dynamics of the Japanese household. While Dr. Can's paper was less hopeful, it demonstrated the ways young garment workers, subjected to overbearing bosses and various types of harassment and exploitation, cooperate to improve their workplace through gossip and the collective refusal to work late under circumstances, and with supervisors, unacceptable to them.

Finally, the panel on "Family, Ageing, and Elder-Care" continued some of the themes introduced by the panel on women. Professor Jolivet's paper on the (causes of) the declining birthrate and ageing population demonstrated that despite the tendency to lay the declining birthrate at the feet of young women and their unreasonable expectations (often expressed as "selfishness") many young women do wish to marry eventually "*izuremo*". Her very playful look into the proliferation of identity-based marriage introduction services demonstrated the individualization of romance and marriage processes. Professor Goldstein-Gidoni's paper on the rise of discourses about and media portrayals of 'new fathers' *ikumen* provoked an interesting discussion about changing masculinities in Japan, but one which was overwhelmingly sceptical about the extent to which the gendered division of labor in the home was affected by these efforts.

These latter two panels demonstrated the interplay between continuity and social change in Japan. That is, while cultural tradition retains its ideological sway, individuals improvise adjustment within changing structures and existential uncertainties. The persistence of certain cultural forms – the structural vulnerability of women in the workplace and the unequal distribution of household responsibilities between men and women, for example – cannot be spontaneously overcome. However the strategies behind individual practices, particularly with regard to the structuring of their own lives and households, gives hope for Japan's future.

These themes are central to my own work, as they will be to most current scholarship. The atmosphere of uncertainty – what Anne Allison terms "precarity" – in Japan has given rise to considerable innovation and courage in terms of rethinking, critiquing, and adjusting the cultural templates, particularly the domestic templates, available to them.

Thank you again to Toshiba for its generous allocation of funding, making possible my participation in this important conference.

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Conference Report

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As a soon-to-be doctor, I found the 26th JAWS Conference inspiring in many ways.

First and foremost, the chosen theme "Technology and Nature" was the opportunity to gather researchers from various horizons (even beyond the field of anthropology) dealing with a wide range of subjects, and to discuss philosophical, ethical, political and social questions. Questions that emerged included, for example, "what is nature and do we have to cling to the nature/culture dichotomy"; "how should biotechnologies be regulated?"; "what is the relevance of seawalls in tsunami-hit Tohoku?". In addition, a number of panels dealt with gender-related analyses as well as discussions of the stereotype of Japan as a "technology-friendly" society. Organizing such a conference in Istanbul it seemed all the more relevant that five sessions dedicated to Turkish-Japanese comparison were the occasion to get a deeper understanding of the similarities between both countries, especially regarding their relation to "modernity" and to a capricious natural environment.

To me, one of the most fascinating sessions was the panel "Technologies of Gender/Sexuality and Problematization of Human Ontology in Japan", organized by Yoko Kumada and Satoshi Tanahashi. First, Genaro Castro-Vázquez showed the various technologies of penile cosmetic surgery, highlighting the link between the use of these technologies and the quest for social and psychological wellbeing. Improving self-

esteem is the main reason why an increasing number of men engage in such surgical processes, the other purpose being, consequently, to adjust oneself to women's supposed desires. Yoko Kumada then gave a very detailed account of aesthetic (high-tech and low-tech) strategies used by female sex workers in Tokyo. In this case, it appears that interviewees have three different goals: correspond to customers' expressed desires and implicit expectations, improve their own body image, and limit the inconvenience of certain practices. The main point of their interventions seems to be the willingness to "use technology to be more natural", that is, to find a subtle balance between fitting into codes of beauty that shape customers' desires and looking "too artificial". Finally, Akitomo Shingae considered the social implications of the development of reproductive technologies for gay male couples. He especially highlighted the fact that, whereas gay couples are often portrayed (and represent themselves) as champions of an "alternative family model", based on affective relationships rather than blood links, the development of biotechnologies that may, in the future, make possible the creation of ovum and spermatozoon from skin cells (which would theoretically make possible the birth of a baby that would carry the DNA of two fathers), would in fact reinforce the traditional family model based on blood relations and genetic transmission.

Combining these three papers, this session raised several inspiring questions. The first two presentations converged in showing that a significant part of gender-related physical manipulations are conducted not only for oneself, but in order to comply with hypothetical expectations of potential partners of the opposite sex: both papers made visible the part of fantasy and imagination that underpins the use of sex-related technologies. In fact, this is consistent with recent research showing that heterosexuality is often based on homosociality, that is, constructed through information received and discussed with same-sex peers, rather than opposite-sex partners. Moreover, the idea that sex-workers need technology to seem "more natural" was the occasion to discuss how the nature/culture dichotomy should not be a framework for anthropological analyses, as what we call "nature" is often highly culturally constructed. Finally, the analysis of the possibility to genetically create babies carrying the DNA of two fathers left pending the question of the need for a birthmother and of her role and status in the process.

Another session exemplifying the richness and variety of presentations and debates conducted during this conference was the double session that combined "Sports, Music & Game" and "Place and Relationships" panels. First, William Kelly demonstrated, through the example of sport, how our categories of gender and ability are socially constructed: after arguing that sport emphasizes divisions between categories

(men/women, pro/amateurs, able/disabled, our team/other teams etc.), he showed various examples of individuals or situations that stand in the middle of binary categories, questioning their relevance. He then argued that the 2020 Games could set the stage for a convergence of Olympics and Paralympics. Then Susanne Klien gave an account, based on ethnographic research, of hip hop practices in Hokkaido. She analyzed hip hop as a passion that, as opposed to what happens in other countries like the US, is not perceived by performers as a political engagement. She highlighted the paradox of a practice that is experienced as a breakaway from mainstream society and, at the same time, reproduces in its social form the structure of mainstream relationships, especially the culture of seniority. In the following presentation, Michael Facius examined how augmented-reality smartphone apps challenge (or not) the relation of Japanese people to nature. He argued that, far from being a merely consumerist practice, the use of these apps is in fact deeply rooted in Japanese traditional beliefs and pertains to the idea of an environment shared by humans and non-human beings. This first panel was followed by Laura Dales' presentation of the case of an Italian restaurant in Western Japan playing a structuring social role for the local lesbian community. Considering the etymology of the Japanese term "*basho*", she showed that this shared space is a place where relationships, friendships and, through them, social identities emerge. She argued that, even though this restaurant and this community also have significant online activity, the physical place remains central in the building of these relationships. Finally, Caitlin Meager explored social relationships between young women in a sharehouse: she analyzed how this place plays the role of a shelter for these women, a place where they can become their desired selves and be considered by others in compliance with their fantasies (especially fantasies about their dream jobs, while they are facing employment precarity).

In spite of the undeniable variety of subjects dealt with in this session, some converging points emerged. First, several of these papers made visible the fact that technology, rather than being a brand new object, is deeply anchored in the preexisting cultural background, though this can be challenged by letting the complexity of categorical divisions appear. Moreover, even though technology affects the way people interact, it is often a prolongation of relationships constructed in a physical place and, as opposed to a widespread cliché, people do not need to get online to build a community based on their fantasized selves. In this respect, technology appears more as a catalyst of the mechanisms of culture and human relations than as a radical game-changer.

This conference was not only the stage of formal scientific discussion. It took place in a very friendly atmosphere, to which the welcome cocktail on the first day and the Bosphorus cruise greatly contributed. These were times of informal discussions,

exchanges of academic “tips” and building of new relations as well as reinforcement of former ones. As a new member of JAWS, I enjoyed very much the opportunity to meet again people that I knew from last year’s EAJIS conference and to make new acquaintances among young scholars as well as more experienced researchers. I especially appreciated the fact that the organizers of my panel were strongly committed to giving us detailed individual feedback on our papers and encouraged us to meet before the session, especially by organizing a panel dinner on the first day. As the other members of my panel were all experienced researchers, coming from various fields and various countries, it was extremely enriching for me. Finally, this conference had a very beneficial material outcome for me, since my panel organizers asked me to join a publication project in Germany. I did not take part in the tutorial activity, but considering all the friendly feedback and advice I received I have a feeling that I was given the opportunity to benefit a lot from the experience of senior researchers.

Conference Report

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The 26th JAWS Conference took place at Boğaziçi University (Istanbul, Turkey) from the 1st to the 4th of September, organized by JAWS in collaboration with the Japanese Studies Association in Turkey (JAD) and the Asian Studies Centre at Boğaziçi University. Most panels were held in the Faculty of Arts and Science, a faculty surrounded with greenery and with a view of the Bosphorus.

This year the conference’s main topic was “Technology and Nature”, and assembled scholars came not only from anthropology, but also from other disciplines. This made it possible to have a closer look at a variety of topics, including current philosophical and ethical issues, social change, gender, elderly care, medicine and food. This diversity led to a better overall understanding of the field of science, technology and nature, but also its limitations, failures and influence on society, which became even more relevant after the triple disasters of March 2011.

The 1st September included tutorial meetings by senior colleagues and the opening reception in a restaurant on the Boğaziçi University campus. Due to the traffic situation in Istanbul I was not able to attend the reception or the tutorial meeting. Hence, I

worried if I would be able to catch up with the other scholars. However, already on the morning of the 2nd conference day I got to know what afterwards had been mentioned several times, and is one of the strength of JAWS conference, is the family-like character and the openness of the community to include new members.

Instead of discussing the conference schedule, which you will also find in the conference program and the abstracts, and only explaining the panels' content, I would like to write about my personal impressions and experience during the conference, as well as discussing two panels in detail. Nevertheless the diversity of the panels, the quality of the sessions, as well as the intensity of the subsequent discussions were outstanding.

I was the one to open the panel on "Robot Technology and Elderly Care in Japan" with my paper "Technology and Demographic Change, with Visions and Concepts for Future Technology". This paper was an attempt to present my research project and current developments of the use of robots in health care to a wider audience. My research interest is on the expectation gap between the public and developers of care robots. The current development of the Japanese government promoting robotic technology as the solution for issues arising from the demographic transition, i.e. a labour shortage in health care and increasing need for care due an over-aging society was discussed. Until the Tokyo Olympics in 2020 the government has set the goal to realise the development of autonomous care robots and through interviews with engineers it can be discovered whether this is feasible or what kind of robotic technology might be in use then.

The second paper by Cosima Wagner was on "Elderly Care, Robot Technology, and the Quest for a Japanese 'Roboethics'" and discussed the impact of the "robot revolution" strategy by the Abe cabinet and the "robotcare" initiative for establishing a roboethics discourse in Japan. In contrast to the optimistic assumptions of the government, that is seeing robotics as the miracle cure for demographic problems that will furthermore make it possible to avoid foreign labour, there are also critical voices on the use of robot technologies in Japan. The current discourse on the implementation is mostly one-sided and retro-perspectival driven, but should be proactive with treating social and ethical problems as well as addressing the issue of responsibility. One point is that most of the surveys on acceptance of robots have interviewed younger persons, which is not representative of the people who will be using them, which questions the often mentioned addiction to robots. This ultimately means that there might be a gap between the governmental and public assumptions. This suggests that there is a need to pick up social and ethical issues that are challenging the governmental activities in relation to robots.

After both papers and due to the fact that this panel consisted of only two papers there was plenty of time to connect my micro-level research with the engineers with Wagner's macro-level research on robot policies in Japan. Both papers came to the conclusion that there is firstly the tendency to explain the acceptance of robots in Japan within a "specific" cultural framework, which quickly leads us into a *nihonjinron* discussion. Secondly, it is clear that there is a gap between the public sphere, the government and media with optimistic thinking on development goals in contrast to the more realistic views of engineers.

After the lunch break the rest of the day was spent with two double panel sessions. Panel session I was titled "Food, Science and Nature I" and was organised as one of three panels on this field. The first paper was on "Lifeworlds of Nature and Technology: Young Organic Farmers in Japan" by Nancy Rosenberger. Here Rosenberger contrasted the organic farmers in Japan to western ones through information she got via interviews. In Japan organic food seems to be sold as something that is delicious rather than using the organic "brand" which is not as appealing. Additionally the organic movement in Japan is not a political one and the reasons for eating organic food is not motivated by concerns about the environment but rather is premised on healthiness.

The second paper was titled "Genetically Modified Food in Japan: Food Safety Standards, Technology and Governance" by Cornelia Reiher and it was in some way a good extension of the previous one. Prof. Reiher showed that not only is food a complex topic, but also that through genetically modified food several issues are coming together. Reactions to genetically modified food are primarily about safety concerns and less about health or environmental issues. This tendency might have been accelerated by the triple disaster in March 2011.

The third paper was on "Soup Kitchen (Taki-dashi) as a Social Experiment: Homeless Activism in Yokohama" by Jieun Kim. The information on soup kitchens was gained through a long-term investigation at a soup kitchen in Yokohama. The Japanese government implemented the park design law which allowed jungle gyms, but also regimented space for the construction of welfare facilities like shelters in public parks. Soup kitchens avoid problems with the law through their registration as disaster prevention centres. In reality these soup kitchens help the homeless and the lower social classes, which is also known by the government, but by condoning them it is possible to keep the homeless problem local. Rather than food and technology, the impact of policies on welfare became clear.

The common thread of all three papers was their connection to food studies and food in the context of social interaction or movement. Differences to the western understandings

of organic farming and genetically modified food illustrated how the interpretation of technologies can change geographically. Additionally all three papers included fieldwork in Japan, which inspired me for my upcoming fieldwork.

After three conference days and listening to a thematically broad variety of papers the end of the 4th day and the conference culminated with the dinner cruise on the Bosphorus. The event had been only possible through the generous support from the Toshiba Foundation, the Japan Foundation, JAD as well as the local organizer Boğaziçi University. Aside from having dinner while seeing the scenery of the Bosphorus at night, this was an excellent framework to end the conference with a final discussion with other scholars, exchanging impressions and not just personally saying goodbye to all, but also to use it as an occasion to build a “bridge” for joint activities in the future. My “bridge” is the participation in the activities of German and Japanese scholars on establishing an international robot research network.

Finally, I want to thank the Toshiba Foundation for their financial support without which I would not have been able to attend the conference.

As a doctoral candidate at the beginning of his research project on technology and aging in Japan, the conference allowed me not only to present my first research outline, receiving feedback from a professional audience, but also to get to know about other aspects of technology, a broad variety of methods for fieldwork and the chance to get to know other scholars and their research projects. For me this conference was very useful for several reasons. I was able to gain ground in the so-called academic world by connecting to the family-like network of JAWS and it encouraged me, by delivering insights into the empirical work of other scholars, for my upcoming fieldwork in Japan. Last but not least, I not only learned a lot, but also enjoyed the conference a lot. This is the result of the devotional efforts of the organizers, student volunteers and the open-hearted JAWS “family”.

Conference Report

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The Ljubljana conference was the first time a separate section on Media Studies was organized at an EAJS conference, so in many ways this section was exploratory and

groundbreaking. I think it very convincingly managed to carve out a position for Media Studies as a separate EAJIS section: it was quite clear from the composition of panels and the topics and discussions covered by the section that a large number of subfields and specializations in Japanese Studies felt at home under this new heading, having perhaps until then experienced a certain amount of "homelessness" in the other sections. For the same reason, the section covered a large range of topics and, overall, seemed to focus broadly and inclusively rather than thematically or in depth. This seemed to be a very appropriate and fitting approach, and a successful way of launching a whole new EAJIS section.

Given the breadth and scope of the different panels and discussions, it makes sense in this brief report to outline the proceedings under two main categories: a) popular culture, and b) media forms and history. "Media Studies" as handled and approached in Ljubljana was in many ways a coming-together of these two rather different types of interests and specializations, united under the common feature of being preoccupied with *mediation* in one form or another.

Iwabuchi Koichi delivered the section keynote address, focusing on the issue of an emerging paradigm in media culture with a special emphasis on representation, mobilization of repressed groups and the possibilities of rethinking the roles and functions of both new and conventional media.

The section's first and third day featured single panels, while the format split into parallel sessions on the second day. Disregarding a number of overlaps, the panels roughly spanned the two overall main categories in the following way:

Popular culture, manga and mass-mediated entertainment:

- a. Usami, Gössmann, and Hayashi on television dramas,
- b. Nagata and Saladin on gender roles in mass media,
- c. Yoshioka & Germer, Hansen, Grace and Thorsen Vilslev on gender normativity in various mediated forms,
- d. Kirsch, Armendariz, Weingärtner and Aira on postcolonial and post-imperialist issues in television, comedy and cinema, and
- e. Figal, Kameda and Wolf on the fantastic in various media

Media history, news coverage and media forms:

- a. Kimura, Monnet, Takagi and Nakagawa on 3.11 documentaries and cinema,
- b. Orbaugh, Havranek and Magyar on propaganda and censorship,

- c. Hall, Sejrup and Istenič on media and politics
- d. Coates, Fedorova, Haukamp and Gonzalez on mid-20th century cinema,
- e. Thornton, Park, Formanek, Bučar, Oikawa, Mikhailova, Linhart and Löffler on the history and various aspects of postcards (2 panels), and
- f. Yasar, Nordström, Şahin and Nozawa on mediated voice.

In addition, a panel of individual papers (Hasegawa, Broinowski and Unser-Schutz) addressed both categories. The split into parallel sessions primarily affected the second category, while most panels in the first category took place without parallel panels in session. This meant that the popular culture-oriented panels enjoyed comparatively more exposure and a larger interface with the average section participant. Given the sheer size of that field, the convenors' choice to design the program this way seemed reasonable enough, albeit arguably preferential of popular-culture aspects of media studies over various others.

The Media Studies section successfully managed to bring together two overall categories of papers that would otherwise likely end up in very different ends of the conference. Very roughly speaking, the first category of papers tended more towards humanities sections like modern literature, visual arts and performing arts, while the second category was more related to the history section on the one hand and the social science sections of politics & international relations and anthropology & sociology on the other. Despite these two different general orientations, however, all panels shared an overarching primary concern with mediation and representation, a fact that gave structure and coherence to the Media Studies section and would probably have made most of the panels seem out of place in other EAJIS sections.

The dual-category nature of the section naturally meant that somewhat different types of discussions were pursued in the two different categories. However, this feature did not take away from the pleasure and interest of participating in the section, and it was very enjoyable to experience the spirit of curiosity and mutual interests that generally characterized the sessions and discussions during those three days. Overall, the section was a very stimulating and rewarding initiative, especially as it brought together different types of media and representation specialists at EAJIS in this new and innovative section.

Conference Report

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The Faculty of Arts and Sciences where the Conference was Held

First of all, I wish to acknowledge the fund from the Toshiba Foundation for providing the great opportunity that allowed me to attend the 26th conference of JAWS, which was held at Boğaziçi Üniversitesi in Istanbul 1st – 4th of September 2015. I joined JAWS a few months before and the 26th conference was the first JAWS event that I have attended. More than ninety researchers from all over the world were involved in this meeting and presented topics that were mostly based on extensive research conducted in Japan. The presented papers covered research topics from anthropological approaches to various aspects of life and contemporary issues in Japan to paradigm changes in Japanese anthropology. Some of them inspired me to reconsider my research from different angles as well as opened new possibilities for my future research interests. On the first day, tutoring sessions for graduate students were organized and the welcoming reception for all participants was held. I did not have a tutoring session because I am an

intellectual historian rather than anthropologist and therefore my research did not match the tutor's. Nevertheless I had many chances to discuss my academic interests with other research fellows during the conference. I also appreciated the very congenial atmosphere of the pre-conference reception for all participants and conveners held at nightfall next to the Bosphorus. Social networking with others encouraged me to share my ideas on research topics and exchange information with more experienced colleagues who are based in Japan.



Day 1: Reception for the conference participants: Networking in progress

In the following lines, I would like to go through the sessions and panels that I found the most intriguing and share my impressions. On the third conference day, sessions comparing social issues in Turkey and Japan focused on women and rural communities. Among two parallel panels, I personally found one of the most intriguing and compelling to be Paul Hansen's presentation titled: "Land of Milk and Honey: Hokkaido Dairy Farm Industrialization, Japan's Other 'Natural' Disaster". Paul Hansen from Hokkaido University presented long-term field research on dairy farming as a core agricultural industry in Hokkaido, which unfavorably impacts the natural environment in respective areas. The speech was accompanied with visuals of promotion pamphlets depicting Hokkaido as a land of natural bounty which symbolized a hopeful utopia that was in stark contrast to the reality of regions such as the national park in Tokachi. Attending this speech I realized that in the Czech Republic, my homeland, there are also

landscape parks with similarly utopian media images that are in fact severely exploited under the guise of “organic agriculture” driven by a powerful “bio” lobby.



Day 2: Cats literally occupied room TB310

On the last day of the conference, the panels “Sports, Music and Games” and “Facing Crisis and Rapid Social Change in Turkey and Japan V” were joined together. Among the presented papers, I would like to take a closer look at two of them in particular. The first one is Michael Facius’s paper entitled “Discovering Nature in Smartphones – A Stroll Around Japanese Nature-Themed Augmented Reality Apps”. Michael put a very good effort into introducing and examining applications that play with the non-human and transform the environment on the screen. After an overview of selected AR apps,



Day 4: Prof. Joseph Kreiner’s presentation

Michael introduced the app Mushishi kamera as tapping into various ideas and tropes about nature in Japan, its relation to yōkai. He analysed mushi as pre-modern entities located in modern times, that are rooted in Japanese perceptions of nature as a milieu where humanity and non-human creatures coexist.

Michael pointed out that the app creatures, such as mushi, created by means of the AR apps, actually gain a certain “ontological status”. I think that this notion would serve as a starting point for examining the AR apps in terms of epistemological issues. After Michael’s presentation, Laura Dales continued with her presentation “A Place for Friends: Ba and Friendship Practice in Contemporary Japan” which was particularly intriguing because she defined the concept of basho as not merely a shared space, but also as a basis for intimate relationships that help to determine the “self” of persons involved. Illustrated by the example of a café that served as a meeting place for local lesbians, Laura’s arguments about the significant role that basho plays as a physical space in terms of social inter-connection made me re-consider the manner I perceived the concept of basho in Japanese culture and human beings contextualized by subjective spatiality in general. Introducing basho as representing a certain framework for the expression of subjective spatiality (e.g. interpersonal relationships and relationships to the supernatural in everyday living) provides us with considerable knowledge about selfhood as well as the relationship to technical amenities that facilitate people’s lives. Recently, technology tends to be perceived as influencing people’s lives and interaction with others in various rather undesirable ways. I assume that, in the spirit of Michael’s paper, it could also be considered as a means of transforming physical basho, which is inevitably rooted in social and cultural background, into an open world-like virtual setting with a myriad of options that provides our perception of space with an entirely new dimension. It in fact “augments” our perception so that we can relate to the aspects of natural environment normally hidden to our senses which is symbolized by the supernatural in the apps. Moreover, in the spirit of Laura’s paper, despite the demonizing tendencies of some groups of people, technology does not appear to gain

more importance than that of physical space when it comes to creating intimate interpersonal structures such as friendships.

Another presentation from the last conference day I would like to give particular attention to in this report is Émilie Letouzey’s. To review her exceptional paper briefly, Émilie brought an anthropological perspective to the re-cultivation of Wisterias



Day 4: Dinner cruise on the Bosphorus was an exquisite social event

in an Osaka ward called Fukushima. The Wisterias became extinct in the area during WWII and a local organization Noda Fujikai (野田藤会) whose purpose is to keep the Wisterias blooming regularly, developed various methods to bring the flowers to bloom. Émilie focused mainly on the aspect of “programming plants to bloom” by means of horticultural strategies created by social networks operating in Fukushima ward. This multi-faceted research based on extensive fieldwork, which also problematized human attempts to control the vital processes of plants as living things, inspired me to consider directions where the future study of related topics could be oriented. In my point of view, to a certain extent, Émilie’s paper contributes to the above mentioned concept of basho, which is represented by the Fukushima ward in Osaka where the social networks cooperate in order to make the Wisterias bloom and enhance the ward’s prestige. Here, basho is a place where people strategize their collaboration to contribute to common welfare symbolized by blooming flowers. I assume that in the sense of an approach to ethics as principles of nakama (rinri 倫理) extended to the relationship between human beings and nature, this concrete representation of basho brings the ethical implications to the forefront of discussion.

Overall, although I specialize in the intellectual history of Japan and my current research focuses on interwar Japanese thought, the sessions that I have attended had a beneficial influence on my academic pursuit. Not only was I able to interact with many great researchers, I also found new inspiration for my future research in Japan. The anthropological research findings of my colleagues cast new light on the conceptual frame of human interaction that I am interested in and serves as a solid basis for the examination of its philosophical background. Once again, I would like to thank the convenors very much for inviting me to present my research in Istanbul. I appreciate what I learned from this memorable academic event and I hope that I will be able to participate in JAWS conferences to come.

Conference Report

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In my report on the 26th JAWS conference 2015 in Istanbul I would like to comment from three different perspectives: as a program convenor, as a panel organizer and from a participant point of view.



As a rather new member of JAWS I was very excited to be asked to develop a concept for the call for papers together with my colleague Cornelia Reiher (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany). For the main topic of the conference we chose the title “Technology and Nature in Japan” because we are both convinced that the progress of science and technology, with their potential but also their limits and

failures – especially their impact on nature and society – is one of the most controversial debated subjects in contemporary Japan, reaching a new tragic and urgent dimension after the triple disasters of March 2011.

As described in detail in the call for papers, it is often said that optimism about the ability of technology to offer solutions for challenges faced by society – from environmental pollution to demographic change – is rather high in Japan. However, there have always been voices critical of the hegemonic industrialised lifestyle with large protest movements by ordinary citizens, as in the case of “Minamata disease” or the siting of nuclear power stations in rural areas. Recently, the triple disasters of March 2011 undermined people’s faith in the power of technology to master the natural world and drew attention to its impact on people’s lives and the environment. The safety of nuclear power was particularly called into question. As a result, a growing number of people today are longing for “the natural” that they believe has almost vanished from their lives.

Therefore, our aim for the conference was to explore in which ways the concepts of nature and the visions for the development and use of future technologies are socially and culturally embedded. By analysing agency and the network of actors involved in producing knowledge about science, technology and nature and by investigating how such knowledge is sold, promoted or possibly discarded in everyday life in Japan, we particularly aimed at stimulating discussions on the following questions:

1. How are (concepts of) technology and nature constructed, negotiated and translated into practices, and how is the relationship between the two imagined, discussed and challenged in Japan?
2. What can anthropological research on nature and technology contribute to our understanding of Japan?

Although we had hoped that the topic would attract the interest of JAWS members, we were quite overwhelmed to receive such a large number of excellent panel & paper proposals, and consequently planned two parallel sections for all the three conference days. While 10 Panels with 47 papers touched upon the main topic of “nature and technology” from a wide range of perspectives, two further panels with 20 papers touched upon other subjects, grouped in panels on “Anthropology and the City” and the large section on “Facing Crisis and Rapid Social Change in Turkey and Japan” organized by the local host Selcuk Esenbel (Bogazici University) and Tolga Özsen (Canakkale University). Thanks to the generous support of Japan Foundation, another panel organized by the local hosts on “State of the Art of Anthropology in Japan” with guest speakers from Japan (Oguchi, Masashi; Sumihara, Noriya) and Germany (Josef Kreiner) could be included into the final program as well.

Within the framework of this short report, it is not possible to summarize all aspects of the many papers which contributed to the discussion of the above questions. But in the following I would like to summarize three papers from two panels, which took up the question of how technology futures are constructed and how this can be studied with an anthropological – especially participant observation – research design.

In his paper on “Residues of Technological Utopia: The Formation of Ruinophilia in Post-Industrial Japan” (Panel on “Representing Nature and Technology in Japan”, organized by Lola Martinez, SOAS, University of London) Katsuno Hirofumi (Osaka University of Economics) reported on his fieldwork with the NPO group “I-heritage” and their efforts to document remains of Japan’s “glorious industrial revolution”, a most famous example being the newly assigned UNESCO world heritage site Gunkanjima (Hashima coal mine island) 15 km off the coast of Nagasaki prefecture. He situated the

so called haikyo-boom (廃墟ブーム) of gazing, photographing and documenting abandoned ruins of modernity all over Japan within the “heterotopia” concept of Michel Foucault, referring to the differing layers of meaning which spaces like these ruins can obtain. According to Katsuno, by glimpsing the remains of 20th centuries’ aspirations of modernity and symbols of Japan’s rise to a hyper modern consumer society (i.e. exemplified through sites of abandoned theme parks like Kejonuma Leisure Land/Miyagi prefecture), members of the J-heritage group gain senses of adventure, fear (from “horror-like” experiences in dangerous ruins) but also comfort (iyashi) when they see nature recapturing the derelict technologized places.

In this way, the “ruinophilia” movement not only shows how former concepts of technology futures were once put into practices which are preserved in these industrial heritage relicts, but also how these futures can become outdated and markers for societal change in Japan. Katsuno concluded that by discussing which industrial ruin has to be commemorated groups like the J-heritage team not only contribute to the history of Japan’s rise as a high-technology nation, but also shape expectations for prospective visions of a technology-empowered society of the future.

Prospective visions of a robot technology assisted future were the focus of a panel on “Robot Technology and Elderly Care in Japan”, organized by myself. The panel addressed agency and networks of actors involved in promoting robot technology for elderly care in Japan from a cultural anthropology perspective. Here, technology development was viewed not as a “neutral” or “rational” process, but as a process in which different social actors with different visions and ethical values investigate concepts of mechanization as a premise. During this process, models of use are inscribed into the design of the new technological products (service robots) and communicated through government strategy papers, advertising, instruction manuals, and so on.

The first paper on “Technology and Demographic Change, with Visions and Concepts for Future Technology (e.g. a “robot-assisted society”)” by Martin Rathmann (Heidelberg University) illustrated the background for recent government activity to develop a future robot technology market as a solution for demands caused by the demographic transition of the Japanese society. In order to contrast political strategy planning with actual activities and mindsets of robotics researchers, Rathmann introduced results of his fieldwork with the Technical Committee on Robot Assisted Therapy (RAT) of the Society of Instrument and Control Engineers (SICE), who are conducting research on therapeutic applications of robot technology in nursing homes in Tokyo. In his PhD-project Rathmann plans to conduct semi-structured interviews with robotics experts who are working on the development of robots for elderly care. His

main question is whether the high expectations of the government (and also the media) can be matched with actual technology development and how robotics experts respond to these challenges (e.g. the mindset of engineers and their expectations for developing care robots). In his talk Rathmann presented results of a preliminary study with four engineers showing an expectation gap of what roboticists expect to be feasible and what the government and media promote as visions. In the next steps Rathmann will continue with the interviews and focus on the influencing factors for the development of market-ready elderly care robots, the visions which drive the engineers, and their view on the usefulness of robots for Japan's ageing society.

In my own talk I introduced the concept of "technology futures" as a methodological foundation for analyzing discourses on future technology development. Technology futures are notions of future developments where technology plays an important role. They are present in research and development, are part of our notions of a sustainable society, characterize current debates about science and technology and raise questions about the future of man and society. Technology futures and the communication about it may decide about success or failure of development processes (Grunwald 2012: 23).

For the methodological analysis of technology futures it is necessary to undertake a "vision assessment", where the specific contents and premises as well as fears and expectations underlying these technology futures are uncovered (Grunwald 2012:138). By applying this concept to the "Robot Revolution Initiative" (*robotto kakumei inishatibu*) since 2014/2015 of the Abe cabinet, the "technology push" character and the economic focus of the state visions for a robot assisted society could be shown. Although the development of care robots is proposed to rely on "actual needs" of elderly people, a participatory innovation process is not enacted. Therefore, critical voices like the research group for an "applied roboethics" are calling for the development of a Japanese Roboethics Charta in order to contribute to a prospective technology assessment. The lack of empirical research on the needs of elderly people and the allegedly, but not yet empirically proven, (high) acceptance of robots in Japan in general was a final point of discussion.

In a third talk Jennifer Robertson (University of Michigan Ann Arbor) had planned to elaborate on "Robo-Sexism in Japan", but unfortunately could not come to Istanbul. Based on recent fieldwork and in preparation for a new book on the subject, she would have illustrated the gender bias in recent robotics promotion and would have argued "that robots are being gendered and deployed by interconnected agents and agencies to reproduce and reinforce a perniciously sexist division of labor and space together with the traditional patriarchal extended family system (*ie*)".

As program convenor, participant of the conference and panel organizer I can conclude that anthropological research on technology and nature is indeed giving substantial insights into the development and state of the Japanese society. In fact, it is only through fieldwork with individuals that practices of handling technology in everyday life or discarding it, of turning to “alternative” sustainable lifestyles or acting as “citizen scientists” can be observed. This can also contribute to a more differentiated analysis of the allegedly high influence of Shinto-belief on technology acceptance, which was a point of discussion on the conference as well.

Here, a lack of anthropological research on technology has already been criticized by Science & Technology Studies (STS) researchers in Japan. In 2012 Itō stated: “Until recently, very few trained in sociology or anthropology participated in STS research in Japan, and many of those trained in the history of science tended to work on pre-modern or early modern European science, often focussing on intellectual history rather than social history” (Itō 2012: 552). Therefore I hope that there will be other opportunities within the JAWS-framework to present further research findings and continue discussions started in Istanbul!

In the end the Istanbul conference left me with many deep impressions: the fascinating city on the Bosphorus, the wonderful university campus with its beautiful fauna and buildings, the great hospitality of the local hosts and their perfect organisation, and especially the openness and kindness of the JAWS research community. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Toshiba Foundation for supporting my conference participation, which not only enabled me to get a multitude of inspirations for further research on the topic, but also for building new research networks by getting into personal contact with many researchers I had previously only known by name from their publications. Together with Katsuno Hirofumi we even inaugurated an “anthropology of robotics” research group, which will keep-up with Japan’s “Robot Revolution” through more case studies and vision assessments. I am looking forward to our next meetings!

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OPEN JAWS

JAWS Business Meeting Minutes (as of 1 October 2016)

Kobe, 25 September 2016

Brigitte STEGER

Members present: Christian Goehlert, David Lewis, Yvonne Siemann, Emma Cook, Peter Szalay, Noriko Fujita, Wolfram Manzenreiter, Alina Radulescu, Adrian Tamas, Lynne Nakano, Greg Poole, Yusuke Arai, Robert Croker, Noriya Sumihara, Jennifer McGuire, Sebastien Boret, Richard Ronald, Andrea De Antoni, Michael Shackleton, Yuki Imoto, Carmen Tamas, Natasa Visocnik, Brigitte Steger (SG).

1) The Minutes from the last business meeting in Istanbul, 4 September 2015 were accepted

2) Matters arising and for report

2.1 The SG reported that the past conference in Istanbul had been very successful, and the Turkish members had been working on the launch of their new Journal which would be called *Global Perspectives on Japan* instead of *AJIA* as had been planned before. However, due to the difficult political situation not least at the university, the colleagues at Bogacizi University had to struggle to get everyday business going. Nevertheless, they were working hard to get the first edition of their journal ready within the next academic year. They plan to launch the journal in Turkey in spring 2017 and present it globally at the EAJS/JAWS conference.

The meeting agreed that JAWS would be hosting a journal launch and small reception at EAJS conference in Lisbon to promote the journal as well as JAWS among EAJS members.

2.2 The SG reminded members that EAJS council elections would take place before the EAJS conference next year. It was important to have a JAWS member on the council to act as EAJS-JAWS liaison officer and promote JAWS interests within the EAJS. She encouraged the members to let themselves nominate for election. JAWS members should be supportive of that nomination.

3) The Financial report submitted by Treasurer Anne Mette Fisker-Nielson (in absence) was accepted. It was pointed out that the financial situation was healthy, but that spending for young researchers' travel/accommodation and dinner at the JAWS conference in Istanbul,

the language editing as well as the wonderful dinner cruise for about 100 people had only been possible due to generous funding from the Toshiba International Foundation. Regular income through royalties and membership fees were slightly under £500 in the past year. Nevertheless, the fund should be used to actively promote Japan Anthropology. The Toshiba International Foundation could be approached again in the future, but it should mainly be used to promote young scholars in countries where there was not much funding available.

Financial report

Current Membership: ca. 250

	Cash in	Cash out
Interest	£0.00	
Commission		£4.00
Royalties (books)	£273.72	
Membership fees	£215.69	
Language editing		£1,800.00
Funding Toshiba Foundation	£8,000.00	
JAWS conference reimbursement		£3,249.00
JAWS conference dinner		£3,245.41
Correction	£0.00	
Total	£8,489.41	£8,298.41

Opening balance	21/08/2015	£14,877.47
Closing balance	18/08/2016	£15,068.47

For the dinner I paid ¥ 141,480 - ¥ 40,000 (membership fees) = ¥ 101,480 (ca. £800)

4) The SG and all the JAWS members thanked Carmen Tamas for organising a fantastic Anthropology section at the EAJS conference and also for the dinner with a drag performance that was to follow.

5) The SG said that it was possible to become JAWS member now and to pay her directly.

6) Future activities:

6.1 Conferences/Workshops:

August 2017: Lisbon (EAJS conference);

Convenors: Andrea De Antoni and Emma Cook (section 5a),

Blai Guarne and Ronald Saladin (section 5b)

The calls for papers are already out and available on the EAJS website and would be on the JAWS website shortly.

Andrea raised a question concerning funding for the keynote speaker at the EAJS/JAWS conference in Lisbon. The convenors had two potential speakers in mind: Margaret Lock or Kitanaka Junko (Keio). The SG explained that in the past EAJS had made a separate funding application for keynote speakers to the Japan Foundation. And one problem was that the outcome of the funding application was known rather late, which made it often rather awkward to invite a scholar. As far as she remembers, only Japanese scholars could be invited. It was up to the convenors to make the decision on the speaker, and they should contact the EAJS Office, Treasurer Prof Verena Blechinger for more information and to express their interest.

March/April 2019 (date TBC): Arhus, Denmark (Anemone Platz)

Richard Ronald (Amsterdam) and Carmen Tamas (Bucharest) also indicated their interest in organising future events.

6.2 JAWS Newsletter (Andrea de Antoni/Emma Cook)

As editors of the JAWS newsletter, Andrea and Emma informed the meeting that they were very busy and unable to publish two newsletters each year. It would be necessary to either find new editors or reduce the number of newsletters to one per year. It was a lot of work to chase contributors and some contributions required considerable editing work.

The meeting thanked the editors for their hard work and agreed that one newsletter per year was sufficient, since there was also the option to send out more urgent announcements through the mailing list. Jennifer McGuire and Alina Radulescu said that they would be

interested in helping with the editing work, and all JAWS members should encourage and support their PhD students to write for the sections on “Tomorrows Researchers Today” etc.

Robert Croker suggested that it might be good to change the name of the newsletter to raise the profile. This suggestion was welcomed.

The following suggestions for a title of the journal were made: *Japan Anthropology Journal*; *Japan Anthropology News*; *Japan Anthropology Report*; *J Anthro News*, *Bulletin of the Japan Anthropology Workshop*; of these the first two got strong support among the members. The SG said that she would look into the legal issues and requirements related to changing the journal's title and then put the question to all the members via the mailing list.

6.2 Spending JAWS funds

The SG explained that applications should be sent to her and that she would forward the articles to the language editor who was paid directly by JAWS. Currently the upper limit was 15 hours per article, which was generally enough. She said that there were not enough funds to finance language editing of entire books, but that JAWS members contributing to a book could apply individually. The meeting decided that this support should be continued.

The meeting also decided that support for emerging scholars in the form of small grants for conference participation (travel/accommodation) should be made available for the upcoming EAJIS/JAWS conference in Lisbon.

The meeting felt that members should be asked to pay for JAWS dinners themselves, but that the organisers would be backed up by JAWS.

7. AOB/Announcements

Wolfram Manzenreiter announced that the publication based on the JAWS section in Ljubljana and some other contributions on Happiness would be published in the Routledge JAWS series in March 2017: Wolfram Manzenreiter and Barbara Holthus, eds. *Happiness and the Good Life in Japan*. London/New York: Routledge 2017 (JAWS Series; xx); a second publication on happiness would also be published with Routledge around the same time: Barbara Holthus and Wolfram Manzenreiter, eds. *Life Course, Happiness and Well-being in Japan*. London/New York: Routledge 2017 (Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series; 100)

28th JAWS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

Call for Papers and Panels

Concurrent with sections 5a and 5b of the 15th International Conference of the EAJIS that will be held at Universidade NOVA in Lisbon, 30 August to 2 September 2017. **Abstracts and panel proposals should be submitted no later than 14 December 2016**. For more detailed information on the two sections, including contact details of conveners and information on how to submit a panel proposal, please, see: <http://www.nomadit.co.uk/eajs/eajs2017/cfpan.shtml>

Call for Papers, Social and Cultural Anthropology and Sociology (Section 5a):

Conveners: Andrea De Antoni and Emma Cook

Feeling (in) Japan: Affective, Sensory and Material Entanglements in the Field

In the last decades, anthropological scholarship has recognized corporeity as a condition of human experience and the body as the “existential ground of culture and self” (Csordas 1994). The lived body moving in the world is considered a source of perception, a bearer of practical knowledge and skills, developed through practice, with which we dwell in the world (Ingold 2000). This approach points at the necessity of looking “beyond the body proper” (Lock and Farquhar 2007), by investigating the body from the perspective of its perceptions, which originate in its interaction with the material environment.

The so-called “affective turn” in the Humanities and Social Sciences has shed light on the (inter-)subjective intensity and dynamics immanent to bodily perceptions and matter in general (e.g. Massumi 2002). Similarly, research on the senses has stressed their centrality in the shaping of social practice and culture (e.g. Geurts 2002, Howes 2004), calling for a focus on perception in processes of doing ethnography (e.g. Pink 2009). Furthermore, Ingold’s work (2000, 2013) has pointed at the need to highlight the creative processes in social practice and anthropology in the making, as engagements and correspondences with materials and the environment, in which skills of perception and action emerge alongside with ontologies. In addition, anthropological works have also emphasized the important role matter plays in developing sensorial skills and in bearing or affording specific affects (e.g. Durham 2011, Navaro-Yashin 2012). A common thread among these studies is that they point at the need to go beyond symbols and representations, meaning making processes, cognition, or belief. In other words, they suggest new research

directions to go beyond overly simplified conceptions of “culture”. On the other hand, however, recent research sheds light on the danger of leaving cultural differences aside, by, for example, excessively focusing on concepts – such as suffering or trauma – which rely on the assumption that they transcend culture, being human universals (e.g. Robbins 2013).

While focusing on these debates, this section aims to explore the possibilities for new perspectives that doing fieldwork in Japan can provide. We aim to address such questions as:

- In what ways can the anthropology and sociology of Japan contribute to the development of theories on affect, the senses and materiality?
- Can a focus on affect and the senses provide new tools for the understanding of communication in a society where it is often argued that people are (allegedly and ideologically) generally socialized as not outspoken and where what is left as implicit is supposed to play a major role?
- How can a focus on affect and the senses in Japan shed light on, and complicate, perceptions, understandings, and materialities of “Japanese culture”?
- What is the role of body politics and discourse in the learning of bodily skills?
- How are affective and sensory skills trained through practice in, for example, sports, leisure activities, (religious) rituals, festivals, education, labour, or through the production and consumption of food?
- What is the role of the ethnographer’s bodily and sensorial perceptions in doing fieldwork in Japan?

Call for Papers, in Media Studies and Popular Culture (Section 5b):

Conveners: Blai Guarné and Ronald Saladin

We would like to cordially invite researchers working in the field of Japanese media and popular culture to submit any proposal dealing with various media in Japan, stretching from print to audiovisual media and from manga to TV series and movies.

We would particularly encourage submission of thematically coordinated panels, but individual submissions will also be considered.

Sessions will normally be 90 minutes long, leaving 15 to 20 minutes per paper plus 10 minutes of discussion per paper. There may be up to three individual papers, or if it is a panel, three papers and a discussant’s comment in the 90-minute session.

JAWS FROM THE DEEP

Laura DALES and Aline HENNINGER Interview William KELLY

This is the second of a series of interviews we offer to JAWS members. The idea for this series originated at the JAWS dinner at the European Association of Japanese Studies in Ljubljana. We envisage this series as a dialogue between junior and senior scholars in the field, a way to address questions of generational difference and changes in the theories and practice of the anthropology of Japan.

William W. Kelly

William W. Kelly is Professor of Anthropology and the Sumitomo Professor of Japanese Studies and is chair of the Department of Anthropology at Yale University. He has served as chair of the Council on East Asian Studies (1988-1991) and was chair of the Department of Anthropology in 1995-2000 and 2005-2010. A noted authority on the social and historical anthropology of Japan, Kelly focused much of his research for two decades on regional society in Japan, based on extensive fieldwork in the Shōnai area of Yamagata Prefecture. Among his publications from this project are books on Water Control in Tokugawa Japan and Deference and Defiance in 19th-Century Japan. He has also written widely on the broader dynamics of class formation in Japanese society.

At the same time, much of his research for the past two decades has explored sport and body culture and their significance in modern Japan. From 1996 to 2003, he conducted field research in the Kansai area of Japan on the patterns of professional baseball in the cities of Osaka and Kobe. He has published many articles in English and Japanese on this work and is now finishing a book on one of the Kansai clubs, the Hanshin Tigers, titled *The Hanshin Tigers and the Practices of Professional Baseball in Modern Japan*. His research on sport then broadened to growing influence of soccer and the Olympic Movement in reshaping notions of ethnicity, gender, and citizenship in Japan and East Asia. His publications include *Fanning the Flames: Fandoms and Consumer Culture in Contemporary Japan* (Edited, SUNY Press, 2004), *This Sporting Life: Sports and Body Culture in Modern Japan* (Edited, Yale Council on East Asian Studies Occasional Monograph Series, 2007), and *The Olympics in East Asia: The Crucible of Localism, Nationalism, Regionalism, and Globalism* (Edited with Susan Brownell, Yale Council on East Asian Studies Occasional Monograph Series, 2010), and *The New Geopolitics of Sport in East Asia* (Edited with J. A. Mangan, Routledge, 2014). He is presently writing a book on the history of Japan anthropology and its importance for Japan studies and for sociocultural anthropology.

We interviewed Professor William Kelly during the JAWS conference, on the 5th of September 2015, at Istanbul Bogazici University



1) How did you come to study Japan?

Actually I'm not sure that my personal origin story is very interesting, but like many of my colleagues, I came to the study of Japan in a very circumstantial way. I entered my PhD program (at Brandeis, outside of Boston) after several years of teaching high school anthropology and history, and I intended to study Nepal and Tibetans in Nepal. But my girlfriend at the time was beginning to study Japanese art history, and it seemed like the relationship would not go very far if I started to study Nepali and she began Japanese language, so I switched my focus to study Japan with her. By then I was finishing my second year in the program and had completed all of my coursework, so I've actually never taken a class in any subject to do with Japan (there was nothing on Japan anyway in my PhD program!). Of course it took several years of intensive Japanese language study before I could begin my dissertation project, but I still feel like something of a fraud in never having taken a course on Japan. Nonetheless, that girlfriend is now my wife of forty years, so I certainly made the right choice, for personal if not for intellectual reasons!

I was very much an outsider to the existing centres of Japan studies at the time in the U.S, particularly at Michigan, Cornell, Harvard, Pittsburgh, and Stanford. But I found most of the senior people of that generation to be very accepting. As an outsider, it was certainly difficult to get research funding, and it took a couple times before I got sufficient grants to complete my dissertation. But I found the Japan anthropology community in the United States to be very supportive, and it remains so today.

After returning from my doctoral research in Japan, I moved to Ann Arbor because my wife was entering the Ph.D. program at the University of Michigan and I wrote my dissertation there. Again, Richard Beardsley, the eminent Japan anthropologist and then director of its Centre for Japanese Studies, was very welcoming and provided a stimulating place to be writing. When I finished, Robert J. Smith of Cornell very kindly agreed to serve as external examiner and has ever since been a source of inspiration and support.

2) What have been your significant influences? Either the theoretical and academic ones or personal ones?

I am of course much indebted to my sempai scholars of Japan anthropology—those above as well as Ron Dore, Takie Lebra, Tom Rohlen, Keith Brown, Dave Plath, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, and others. When I went to Japan to begin my dissertation research, the anthropologist Yoneyama Toshinao agreed to be my sponsor; he was very helpful to many young foreign anthropologists at the time. He had been one of the first Japanese anthropologists to come to the US with the Fulbright Programme, along with the psychologist Sumiko Iwao. At the last minute, he had to leave for research in Africa as I arrived and he passed me on to Iinuma Jirō, a Japanese agricultural historian, a noted scholar of Japanese Christianity, and a dedicated activist who had been the Kyoto head of Beiheiren, the Anti-Vietnam War movement. Despite his Christian social activism, he was on the US State Department's no-entry list. I always regret that I was unable to correct that gross injustice despite many years of petitioning on his behalf. He too was very supportive of my research plans and got me started on a line of contacts that eventually led to my two years of field research in Shonai Plain in Yamagata.

Apart from periodic reports back to Iinuma-sensei, my only scholarly experience was to present a brief paper at the annual Tōhō Gakkai meetings at the University of Tokyo. When I arrived, I discovered that the discussant for our session was none other than Nakane Chie, who had a rather fierce reputation. I was still in the midst of fieldwork, still unsure of what I was doing and where it was going, and my topic—on irrigation, agricultural, and social organization—was something Nakane-sensei herself had a

written a book about, so I was quite terrified. In fact, she was very helpful and offered lots of critical feedback, and I came away with very warm feelings towards her. Of course some of her broad commentaries on Japanese society were already roundly criticized, but I think people don't appreciate two things. First, she developed a comparative framework of India, China and Japan at a time everybody was fixated on comparing Japan to the US. Also, she did really fine-grained historical ethnography with some noted historians and sociologists. Her monograph published in the LSE series (Kinship and Economic Organization in Rural Japan) is, I think, the best work she's ever done and I still go back to it, though not many people ever read it.

The same is true for Richard Beardsley's "Village Japan", which was one of my influences in Japan. Again it's infrequently read now and was much criticized as a small-bore community study but in fact in American anthropology it was quite important. This was a team of four major scholars – an historian, a geographer, a political scientist, and an anthropologist—who did long term fieldwork in a village, but they were placing it in a very large geographical and historical context. What they actually showed was you can only do local studies in Japan if you have a sufficiently broad geographical and historical framework. And this was done in the 1950s, and with work by Eric Wolf, Sidney Mintz, Clifford Geertz (his Javanese and Balinese village work) and others, Village Japan actually showed the discipline how to get beyond the "community study." It's an example of ways in which the anthropology of Japan has more often been a pioneer not a backwater.

The rubric for analysis that many of us were using in the 1980s, when I started teaching, was the intersections of culture and political economy. We were influenced by Wolf on the one hand and Geertz on the others, and our focus was how formations of culture and political economy formed the historical dynamics for a particular area.

Perhaps not surprisingly then, two of my other influences were the British cultural Marxist scholars, E.P Thomson and Raymond Williams. Also important were strands of historical sociology – especially Charles Tilly in the US and Peter Burke in England, who showed how an anthropologist doing fieldwork at a contemporary moment can use the archives and local history to embed that moment into the forces that produced it. And that's what we were trying to do.

3) Has there been anything that has unexpectedly or significantly shifted your trajectory or taken you on a different course to what you planned?

Well, you know, I think for most of us our career, like our life, is largely serendipitous and serpentine. You reach an age where you retrospectively imagine a logic to your career, but then you admit that there really was no logic to its enfolding. I began with an interest in the historical dynamics of the Shōnai region, but I realised that to my host families and colleagues in Kyoto and Tokyo, rural Yamagata in the 1970s and 80s was but the backward countryside to their modern metropolitan lives. However, over the 2 years that I lived with several farm families, I ended up more impressed with the similarities than the differences in metropolitan and regional lifeways. That led me to trying to tease out the notion of *chūryū ishiki*, or mainstream consciousness, which seemed to have more ideological potency than just bland sloganeering in shaping (and disguising) class sensibilities.

Perhaps a more radical shift was my research interest in sports, which started in the mid- 1990s. The motivation here was not some personal fascination with sports, but rather in response to my experience in teaching about Japan in the U.S in the 1980s, a decade of American fear and awe of Japan Inc. and Japan-bashing, etc. Most of my students were coming to my courses with this Orientalist binary, and many of them had read *The Chrysanthemum and the Bat*, a 1977 book on baseball by the American writer Robert Whiting. Whiting had gone to Japan in the late 1960s (and is still living and writing from there). He is a fine stylist and deeply knowledgeable about Japanese baseball, but his many books and articles over the decades have perpetuated a radical, Orientalist divide between Japanese baseball, conservative and self-sacrificing, and US baseball, independent and creative. For him, it has been a metonym for the United States and Japan.

As an anthropologist, such a sharp binary was easy to criticize in class and one could look quite sophisticated in taking apart his writings, but I realised I actually knew nothing about Japanese baseball, so I ended up doing some long-term fieldwork with professional teams in Osaka and Kobe. That, in turn, led to further work on soccer (football), sumo and the Olympic movement. So Robert Whiting remains quite stimulating to me and quite irritating (as I to him)! We tend to think of influences as positive, but irritants can be equally important for academics and particularly for anthropologists. Also, I suppose we're not like other social scientists – being committed to the open-endedness of fieldwork, we're closer to historians, who get into archives and what they find can lead them in unexpected directions. Our influences are always as much the people we encounter in the course of the research as the original intellectual stimulus.

4) How did you come to be involved with JAWS?

I knew about it when it started, and I've been a dues-paying member for many years. I don't often get to the meetings, which is to say we American members can't often come. Their timing, frequently in September, makes it hard for us because our academic year begins earlier than in the UK and Europe. Also, we do feel committed to going to the American Anthropological Association, and the Association for Asian Studies, and our universities typically will not fund a third conference. I sometimes sense that some of my JAWS colleagues feel that we Americans look down on JAWS, but this isn't true. From my American perspective, JAWS is another example of a pioneer. There is nothing else in anthropology that brings together scholars from so many countries who are focused on a particular world region. It is a model for global scholarly exchange before that was a buzzword. JAWS is another way in which Japanese anthropology is distinctive, and I think many of my American colleagues feel the same way

Will AAS, JAWS, and other associations continue in the same way as now? I'm not sure. I think the challenge for younger scholars is to rethink what these linkages might most efficiently be. You can't just use 20th-century organizations; they're probably not going to serve your needs. There have to be ways for scholarly communication to be enabled by new technologies. There have been some initial uses of digital and virtual communication that have been problematic, but it certainly has enormous advantages and potential for real academic exchange. I think it's up to younger scholars to explore some of those prospects for best practices.

5) What other challenges do you see for new researchers?

I'm impressed with the language abilities of recent younger students and scholars. Some of the undergraduate students are entering university with three years of Japanese already. Our problem is increasing the levels of language instruction to keep up with the abilities of our undergraduates. More of them now are going to Japan for study abroad and coming back with even higher demands for Japanese language, and the JET program has certainly brought in a whole group of potential PhD students. And the level of language ability for our incoming PhD students is certainly higher than it was ten years ago. I find younger scholars very impressive in their spoken and written Japanese.

To me the real challenge now is not language skills but rather the overwhelming volume of scholarship one is faced with. When I was in graduate school in the 1970s, I could spend a semester and read everything that there was to read about Japan in English at

least – it took me longer for Japanese. At this point there have been upwards of 400 PhDs (and their dissertations!) in Japan anthropology, just in English language. There's no way that a graduate student can read a fraction of those dissertations or the monographs or articles. And yet you need to begin to get a handle on the literature that's going to help you or irritate you or stimulate you. To me that is the real challenge – and it's a challenge for teachers as well as for PhD students. How do I teach? It's easy for me to give them a list and say "read this", but that's of no help. How does one develop in the 21st century a way of bringing new scholars into anthropology generally, into the anthropology of Japan, whatever theoretical fields that interest them. It is our joint responsibility to figure out a pedagogy of professional instruction that addresses that.

6) Do you think that the label "Japanese studies" or "Asian/Oriental studies" has helped to promote anthropology of Japan, or on the contrary, has it reinforced the isolation of Japanese specialists?

I have never felt isolated! This is an American answer perhaps, but "Japanese studies" or "East Asian studies" in the United States can refer to an undergraduate major and it can refer to a master's degree; there is dissertation and research funding for Japan, so there are ways that this is a rubric for teaching and getting money. However, there are virtually no PhD programs in East Asian studies or Japanese studies. Our silos are disciplinary silos, not regional silos so most of us have never felt particularly isolated from fellow anthropologists. Virtually all PhDs come from anthropology departments, and Japanese anthropology (and anthropologists) have played significant roles in major anthropology departments.

If there is arrogance among American and other native English speaking scholars, it is unintentional, albeit still regrettable, and it concerns language. English is the lingua franca of Japan anthropology; odd, unfortunate, but still giving us and our journals an immediate and unfair advantage. European scholars seem to impressively and easily work in at least two languages beyond their own – English and Japanese. More disadvantaged are Japanese scholars themselves; even if they go to the AJJ they will often speak in English rather than in Japanese.

We haven't resolved but must confront this language issue in an equitable way. As Gordon Matthews and others have argued, another dimension is the hegemony of American and British journals. I don't entirely agree with him but he has done an extraordinary job in publicizing the issue and seeking solutions. It is an issue that JAWS itself might assume some leadership as well.

7) Do you think the anthropology of Japan is sufficiently outward-looking?

This has certainly been much debated. There are too many anthropologists of Japan who do feel we're too inward-looking, too parochial. My view is different. Japan anthropology, from a U.S perspective, is well connected in three different directions. We are a part of the discipline of anthropology and we speak to and write for other anthropologists. But Japan studies, much more than most other regional fields is densely multidisciplinary, and we engage political scientists and historians and film scholars and others—both Japanese and foreign—who are working on Japan. Many parts of the world don't have the advantage of a sophisticated and longstanding indigenous scholarly tradition of relevance to social science like Japan. Thirdly, especially for us in the U.S, there is the public interest for Japan. So many people want to talk about Japan and learn about Japan (sometimes with entrenched stereotypes), and we are always having to figure out ways of translating anthropology to the general audience that is responsible and effective.

And you have to balance time you spend in dialogue with anthropologists, with other scholars, with the general public. That leads me to the view I've always had, that if anything we are too connected. Perhaps people feel we are inward looking because we're so busy doing these other things as well.

Of course, the American perspective is coloured by the 1980s, when Japan loomed so large in American fears and fascination. I started teaching in 1980 and by the mid 1980s I was teaching around 125 undergraduates and half of them wanted to become investment bankers and go to Wall Street and make a lot of money working with the Japanese. That ended and then there was a lull in interest, a story played out in many parts of the world. Then we faced the anime/ manga/ pop culture boom that drew in other sorts of students. I was not particularly interested in business and economic organisation in the 1980s, nor in manga and anime in the 1990s but we must take the students who walk into the classroom, and develop teaching strategies and teaching curricula that challenge them and grow them. We've seen much fluctuation in student numbers over the years, not a steady rise or fall but periodic ups and downs. It's unpredictable, although generally Japanese language numbers have been steady in the United States.

8) What are the major changes you see beyond JAWS, in the general context of the anthropology of Japan?

I don't have an answer for that. I've been wrong too many times! In the 1980s and 90's, I'm not sure that I'd have anticipated the topics that people then went on to develop for Japan. It's hard for me to anticipate because it's not only our individual research that stimulates

further research. It's also what happens to Japan. We take our cue from what we think is happening in Japan, so it's difficult to anticipate ten years down the road. And we also take our cue from the larger discipline, and it's even harder to anticipate where that's going.

9) Why is sport important?

Well, this depends on what you're asking - sport is important for what? If for Japan, to take a small example, most of the urban transport in Tokyo and Kansai in the early 20th century were private rail-lines, competing fiercely to extend their lines and increase their ridership. Together with the new newspapers, trying to raise readership, they saw mass leisure and entertainment as a key promotional strategy. So not only baseball tournaments and baseball stadiums, but other sports facilities and events were pushed competitively for readers of newspapers and riders of trains. In that sense, sports and physical recreation were a real stimulus for the particular patterns of political economy that shaped both Kansai and Kanto.

To take another example, Japan probably has the most developed corporate sports system in the world. Japan's success in the Olympics depends almost entirely on corporate sports—significantly for women as well as men. Or you can analyse the explosive growth of FIFA (the world soccer body) in East Asia and its geopolitics. One reason that soccer is becoming more important in the region and may well overtake baseball in Japan is that soccer is the one sport that East Asia nations can fight about on fairly equal terrain; it's the one sport that can provoke the kinds of rivalries and antagonisms. Through soccer, Japan can reimagine its global connections, to Europe, to Africa, to South America. So there are ways in which sport has an economic power and a geopolitical significance. For anthropology, there's a lot that sport can contribute to STS studies. I've always found it intriguing analytically to think about sports – because they are set up to define and defend absolute binaries, but in doing sports you end up transgressing binaries. In fact sports is a tangle of the mind and the spirit and the body.

10) What do you think are the greatest challenges for our institutions?

Senior scholars have the luxury of reflecting upon this, while junior scholars actually must confront these challenges, with quite serious consequences for survival and advancement. The casualization of academic labor, the shrinking of funding, the rise of audit regimes—these are pressing—and depressing—trends. To single out one by example, the demands of institutional review boards have special impact on anthropologists, especially at American universities but now elsewhere as well. In principle, it is appropriate that we

should deal with and through IRB to insure responsible research. But IRB in practice has been quite problematic for us because it emerged in the medical sciences and then it moved to more quantitative and lab fields. It's still very difficult for IRB to understand and to develop standards for long-term qualitative fieldwork. My fear is that PhD students, in formulating their research, will feel increasingly pressured to shape their projects to what will get through the human subjects committee. Younger scholars are coming into a social science that is now subject to such scepticism and review.

If IRB affects our research, bibliometrics are coming to affect the outcomes. I find this trend deeply dangerous, affecting departments, universities, and the fate of individual scholars. And it's largely bogus in all sorts of ways. Bibliometrics are spurious numbers, used to quantify the wrong things, and then applied to scholars in misleading ways.

Yet another distressing development, which may be particular to the US, is the ever-widening inequality between a few very rich and over-privileged universities with huge endowments (such as the one I teach at), and everyone else. This is not an inequality of faculty or students—scholarly brilliance and productivity definitely does not map on to this resource distribution—which makes it even more distressing that the differences are so unwarranted.

To add just one thing, I would say that among junior scholars there seems to be a theory anxiety, and among senior scholars a theory defensiveness—the anxiety and defensiveness that anthropology of Japan is all about thick description and has never been willing or able to contribute to something called “theory.” To me that's gravely mistaken because it is a persistent elision of theory and analysis. What we do best as anthropologists is to analyse social life, whether through interpretation or explanation. For us, theory is a method. We use theory to help us understand something important about human social experience, and to represent that fairly and to analyse that in a useful way. Most of us don't find our mission in using our social life or human experience to build abstract social theory—it is to offer meaningful analysis.

For over 70 years, Japan anthropology has built up the largest ethnographic archive of modernity in the world. There is much to exploit and discover in this archive that we've built up. The kind of perspective and analysis that an anthropologist does at the moment can have a lot of historical depth but it doesn't have future projections. When you line up the books and monographs of the last 70 years you have something that doesn't exist anywhere else in the discipline. If you really want to understand the modern condition, it seems to me that the anthropology of Japan is the first and best place to go.

TOMORROW'S RESEARCHERS TODAY

Being and Landscape

An Ontological Inquiry in a Japanese Rural Community

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My ongoing project focuses on landscape perception in rural Japan. Works on landscape tend to separate man from landscape, objectifying the latter by means of theoretical accounts. Martin Heidegger has coined *being-in-the-world* to show the fundamental position human beings occupy in this world – a position that rejects accounts based on the assumption that man stands in opposition to a world *out there*. Hence, when dealing with something as a *landscape*, one should never refer to it separated from *being* – from its inhabitants. In the last two decades, the Non-Representational Theory has been freely used as a useful platform for landscape studies by focusing on the acts of interaction with it, rather than on symbolic or historic accounts.

In Japanese studies, works with rural landscape as its subject have been focusing on the notions of *furusato* or *genfūkei* and their nationalistic and nostalgic origins, when approaching it from an anthropological or sociological perspectives; or on the notion of *satoyama*, when dealing with environmental and sustainability issues. Culturally speaking, all these notions – regardless of their origin – show a clear and marked affection and concern for landscape in Japan, especially the rural landscape. Taking this key aspect as a motivation for inquiry, I intend to show that by transcending the political and historical meanings of such notions, valuable ontological insights can be found in the intimate and affectionate relation that rural inhabitants have with their landscapes – which are no more than the form that the world discloses itself to them.

For that, my fieldwork will focus on one rural community and the way their relation with the landscape is processed daily. The ultimate aim is not just to engage on a description of that same perception of landscape. Rather, within a cultural background where landscape is of the most importance and by turning to a more primary status of the 'being-landscape' relationship (the rural community), I want to search for insightful ethical hints on an ontological condition that we all experience: *being* in the landscape.

I would appreciate any comments, advices or feedback via e-mail. Thank you.

RESEARCH REPORTS

People, Plants and Life Stance

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My research is about practices and conceptions of plants as living things in Japan, and I have been doing my fieldwork among amateurs and professionals of domestic plants' cultivation in urban Kansai area (esp. Ōsaka, Amagasaki, Ikeda), paying much attention to horticultural techniques. So far I have been spending about 2 years in Japan, including 15 months of fieldwork.

After exploring some aspects of the historical background of horticulture in Japan, and the actual horticultural context in Kansai area, I started my fieldwork with ordinary city gardeners, who cultivate plants at home or in shared kitchen gardens. Then I met with flowering associations and amateurs' clubs (azalea, chrysanthemum, bonsai...) thanks to whom I could observe numerous cultivation techniques. Moreover, these groups enabled me to push the doors of the city hall: the stories I heard there contributed to reconsider my approach of the plants-as-living-things topic. It is indeed known that city employees have to deal with various claims concerning the handling of urban "wildlife" – both plants and animals – or urban "natural processes".

The multiple problems raised by the co-habitation of humans and some species have been described and analysed by scholars such as Knight (2003) or Kirby (2011), revealing interesting views on the conceptions of nature in contemporary Japan. In a similar way, what stroke me at the city hall is that the conceptions of the "natural beings" never appear so clearly as when they become a problem, or when they don't evolve the way we want them to: 'hence, I thought, I should focus on bothered cultivators' stories'.

At the same time, I was doing a parallel fieldwork about four re-cultivation projects of emblematic plant species in Hanshin area, among which is a wisteria, cultivated by an Ōsaka ward's association whose purpose is to make the plant bloom, as part of a classic urban *machiokoshi* project. It happens that in spite of the careful attention paid by the volunteers, and their creative handling, a lot of wisterias don't bloom: as a result, beyond the local social and identity stakes, the associations' enthusiast members work hard on the plant itself, trying to understand the way it "functions", in order to reverse the non-blooming state by diverse technical measures.

I chose to concentrate on this association, who will be given a large place in my thesis, while I continued my fieldwork with horticulture professionals.

Observing the technical dimension of people-plant relationship, I emphasize on processes such as production, shaping, or the handling of affections – that are both vital processes (in the plant) and technical processes (performed by a person). So it is about both the way people deal with plants themselves, but also with the plant-environment (biotic and abiotic) interactions – that is all the more important as most of the plants here are *woody* plants. I plan to do a complementary fieldwork in spring 2016, about the handling of a viral disease that infected trees in some Kansai's areas.

Of course, I also pay much attention on the social interactions concerning plants, which are connected to technical practices, for that there is no horticultural practice that is not *social* in the first place – even “individual” home gardening itself is a highly social activity. At the group scale, in the same way, every technical choice is first a social choice: for example, the tendency I noticed in some flowering associations to over-subdivide the (rather simple) cultural process concerning seasonal flowers in order to increase the occasions of gathering together.

But I also pay a careful attention to the individual, intimate scale of the people-plant relationship, and to the inferences that are expressed by the persons about plants and living things/beings in general. An important part of the “horticultural relationship” takes place in moments that are difficult to grasp, for example between the direct observation of such aspect of the plant and the resulting technical action – whatever the initial project (often some collective task) may have been. As the technical and social dimensions, the individual and the collective scales are also closely linked.

By resting on concrete, small-scale examples, this research aims to contribute to the study of the conceptions of life and the living in Japan, sometimes designated by *seimeikan* (literally “view [on the] living/life”). Even though giving many examples, it seems that the studies about Japanese *seimeikan* are often guided by a deductive approach, based on a very general assumption (for example: Okada & al. 2013). This incites one to adopt an opposite, bottom-up approach.

Besides, in many cases researches dealing with *seimei* or with the very complex notion of *inochi* (いのち／命／生命) are concerned about the handling of the death of beings or the end of things: reversely, it seems to me that dealing with the vital phenomenon itself is indispensable, like Kawai is doing about persons, in the field of body and kinship anthropology (Kawai 2009).

More generally speaking, I want this thesis to be located in the frame of anthropology of the living, or anthropology of life, as it is becoming a distinct field of investigation and reflection – Kohn (2007), Kawai (2009), Ingold (2011) or Pitrou (2015) appeal, in their own ways, to develop such a subfield.

If you had any comment, critic or suggestion, your email would be more than welcome. Furthermore, I would be very happy if this short report could be an occasion of getting in touch with persons working around similar concerns: please feel free to contact me so that we can maybe work together in the future.

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