

Democracy without Equality?

Gender Policies in Japan, Germany and South Korea

Conference Report⁽¹⁾

Ludgera LEWERICH (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf)

On November 30, 2017 the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB) hosted the symposium on “Democracy without Equality? Gender Policies in Japan, Germany and South Korea” in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and with the support of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). The purpose of this symposium was to bring together preeminent scholars in the field of gender studies from Germany, Japan and South Korea to present and discuss the state of gender equality in those countries. The title of the symposium “Democracy without Equality” might at first seem contradictory. Democracy is after all built on the ideal that everyone – men and women – is bestowed with equal rights. However, while Germany, Japan and South Korea can certainly be considered modern democratic states, full gender equality is guaranteed in theory but remains contested in practice. The state of gender equality in these states differs as do the policies implemented to guarantee it as well as the activism undertaken by civil society. The presenters at the conference all sought to shed light on different aspects of gender equality in their respective countries and to answer the question: “What is the state of gender equality and why is it so difficult to achieve?”

Opening

The secretary general of the JDZB Dr. Friederike BOSSE first addressed the symposium with an opening remark, welcoming organizers, speakers and the large audience in attendance. Afterwards Michèle AUGA of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and Prof. Dr. KODAIRA Kei'ichi⁽²⁾ of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) also welcomed everyone to the symposium. All three speakers remarked the importance and timeliness of the subject of gender equality and democracy. BOSSE highlighted both the progress already made in all three countries and the problems that still have to be solved – such as the fact that the number of female members of the Bundestag has decreased. AUGA stressed the fact that gender equality is currently a contested issue, under attack by nationalists in all three countries. She further emphasized that the fundamental goal of gender equality is to achieve more participation and thus democratization. Lastly, KODAIRA remarked on the importance of creating international research networks through

1. This report portrays the main line of argument of the conference and it summarizes the presentations and discussions according to the understanding of the author. We therefore ask not to quote single remarks as literal remarks of the speakers.

2. Conventional Japanese and Korean name order is generally followed: FAMILY NAME – given name.

symposia such as this one as they provide the opportunity to shed light on democratic systems of modern societies.



Dr. Friederike Bosse



Michèle Auga



Prof. Dr. KODAIRA Kei'ichi

Introduction

After the opening remarks, Prof. Dr. MAE Michiko from Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, the initiator and organizer of the conference, introduced the topic of the symposium. In her talk “Democracy Through Equal Participation and Diversity” MAE started with a brief account of the history of the Women’s Rights Movement in the USA in 1848. She highlighted the importance of its diverse roots, which included indigenous activists, and African Americans such as Frederick DOUGLAS. MAE then explained the significance of comparing the cases of Germany, Japan and South Korea and gave a short overview of some of the most important aspects in their development of gender equality and gender equality policies. While all three countries have enshrined gender equality constitutionally and made significant progress, the gender gap is still quite large and these days women are increasingly divided among themselves. Noting that Germany influenced the formation of the modern nation-state in Japan, which in turn influenced that of South Korea, she pointed out that the nexus of nation, culture and gender still lies at the core of the nation state. This prevents full gender equality and in light of worldwide nationalistic and anti-democratic movements seems to even be a growing trend. MAE closed the introduction by expressing her hope that the symposium “Democracy without Equality?” will help create a more democratic and equal future by providing opportunities for participation and discussion.



Prof. Dr. MAE Michiko

Keynotes

The introduction was followed by three keynote speeches on “Gender Equality and Participation in Germany, Japan and South Korea: Learning from Each Other?”. The keynote section was chaired by Prof. Dr. Gesine FOLJANTY-JOST of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg who introduced the three speakers.

The first keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Eva HÖGL from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), who has been a member of the German Federal Parliament since 2009. HÖGL first touched upon important milestones in the history of women’s rights in Germany. She mentioned the

Equal Rights Act in 1957 and the recent law change in 2017 legalizing same-sex marriage. She then turned to current subjects that are the focus of her political activities. Some issues she mentioned were the necessity to raise the quota for women in leadership positions, more transparency in wage allocation to fight the gender pay gap and better work-life-balance for working parents. HÖGL closed her speech by stressing the importance of international solidarity to achieve equality in all areas of life.

In the second keynote speech Prof. Dr. KIM Eun-Shil of Ewha Womans University used the currently popular South Korean novel "KIM Ji Young, Born 1982" as the starting point of her discussion on the state of gender equality in South Korea. She compared the biography of the novel's female protagonist to important political advancements such as the Special Law on Domestic Violence in 1995 and the Gender Equality Act of 2014. KIM pointed out both successful implementation of policies to further women's rights and instances of misogynistic pushback directed towards feminist movements. Feminists in South Korea are also divided among themselves. According to KIM the younger generation of feminist activists generally distrusts the more established old-school feminists and female-lawmakers. Thus these new emerging women's voices need to be heard and integrated so as to work together to combat the gender discrimination women still often face in South Korea.



Prof. Dr. KIM Eun-Shil

MAKIYAMA Hiroe, a member of The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and the House of Councilors gave the third and final keynote speech on current gender policies in Japan and the challenges faced today. After a brief history of the development of gender equality policies in Japan, MAKIYAMA pointed out that many laws may have been implemented, but gender equality has not been achieved. She especially noted that many people still neither have a strong awareness of the issue of gender equality, nor do they have an interest in it. MAKIYAMA linked this lack of awareness to an "allergy" for the concept of gender equality, as many people neither know nor understand the term. She stressed the many problems that women still face in the workplace and the lack of social policies to support them. According to her, the DPJ campaigns for implementing social welfare policies will address the wage gap, irregular employment and aim for better work-life-balance. Pointing out that women are often burdened both with work for pay and unpaid household work, she suggested more incentives for childcare leave for fathers, mandatory parental childcare leave and an increase of women's salaries as possible solutions.



MAKIYAMA Hiroe & Dr. Eva HÖGL

The keynote speeches ended with a comment from Prof. Dr. MIURA Mari of Sophia University who noted the importance of critical actors such as politicians who advocate for gender equality. She furthermore acknowledged that while young feminists often have doubts about politics, current issues of violence against women could be a uniting issue, triggering a revival of feminism.



Prof. Dr. MIURA Mari

Panel I

The first panel of the day, "Participation, Diversity and Work in the Global Economy", was chaired by Prof. Dr. Annette SCHAD-SEIFERT from Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf. It opened with a



Prof. Dr. HONG Seung-Ah

presentation by Prof. Dr. HONG Seung-Ah of the Korean Women's Development Institute on "Challenges for Gender Equality in the Family and Work: from the Korean Experience". Like previous speakers, HONG acknowledged the steady progress made in South Korea towards a more gender equal society but also pointed to persisting unequal work opportunities for women in the South Korean labor market. About 48.2 % of women were not economically active in 2015, many of them citing domestic work and childrearing as obstacles. Issues like unequal pay and long working hours exacerbate the problem and

work-life-balance policies remain largely ineffective. Moving on to family structures, HONG shed light on the unequal share of domestic work and care, where women still mostly carry the burden. Persisting gender norms and a work-centered culture prevent men from taking more part in household work and childrearing. Thus, HONG concluded that gender norms inside the family have not significantly changed. She expressed hope that these issues will be tackled by the new administration, so that men will accept a larger role and more responsibility in the family.

In the second presentation Prof. em. Dr. Ilse LENZ of the University of Bochum talked about "Gender and Global Flexibilised Capitalism: Old and New Segmentation Lines in Germany and Japan". She first touched upon the problem of the terminology of "globalization", citing different possible definitions and the parallel processes involved (economic, political, cultural, ecological globalization). Moving on to gendered work in globalization, LENZ pointed out the different forms of paid and unpaid work women are engaged in worldwide. In many occupations women are vulnerable to structural violence and exploitation – such as



Prof. em. Dr. Ilse LENZ

sex work and surrogate pregnancy work. While globally women increasingly participate in the labor market, they are more often part-time or temporary workers compared to men. In institutions that regulate work in the globalized economy – such as polity, enterprises, civil society and the family – women are included to a varying degree. For example only a minority of women are among policy makers in Germany, Japan and Korea. However, they are better represented in civil society as activists and leaders in women's movements. In her closing remarks, LENZ stressed various important

steps necessary for changes at work, such as moving away from heteronormative regulations, an intersectional approach to gender equality and a general respect and recognition for women both at paid and civic work.

Prof. Dr. ŌSAWA Mari from the University of Tōkyō gave the third presentation of the panel, “Japan and Germany have to make a Paradigm Shift to Contribute to World Sustainability”. In her speech she focused on poverty and livelihood security. She shone a light on Japan's recent major crises like the economic crisis in 2008 and the triple disaster of 2011, which left half a million people without basic livelihood security. Due to the gender pay gap women were especially vulnerable. According to her, social vulnerability and class poverty in Japan led to large disaster risks. Globally speaking, an imbalance of current accounts – over-consumption in the US and under-consumption in Japan, Germany and China – are root causes for economic crisis such as the Lehman shock. Moving on to poverty rates in Germany, Japan and Korea ŌSAWA noted that South Korea has shown much improvement in reducing poverty among children in recent years, while the situation seems more stagnant in Germany and Japan. Furthermore, working single parents in Japan face high poverty rates on par with countries like India or China. In her closing statement, she noted the relation between social trust and poverty rates and emphasized the importance of social trust as the basis for economic growth and disaster resilience.



Prof. Dr. ŌSAWA Mari

An introductory statement followed the presentations of the first panel. Dr. TSUJI Yuki from Tōkai University commented on the presentations' analysis of economic processes in both national and global contexts. The following discussion revolved mainly around questions about the gender pay gap, ways to better utilize women's potential and a general discussion of the meaning and usage of the term “gender” in German, Japanese and Korean.



Dr. TSUJI Yuki

Panel II

After a coffee break the symposium continued with the second panel “The Future of Equality and Diversity: Perspectives from Germany, Japan and South Korea”. It was chaired by Prof. Dr. Verena BLECHINGER-TALCOTT from the Freie Universität Berlin and opened with a presentation by Prof. Dr. Ute KLAMMER of the University of Duisburg-Essen. In her paper “The Future of Equality and Diversity – Perspectives from Germany” KLAMMER introduced the findings of the recently published second report on gender equality in Germany. She emphasized the continued gender inequality in the labor market despite the rising employment rate, as women continue to often work part-time. KLAMMER noted the importance of looking at gender inequality through the lens of the life course perspective. Early phases – when women for example take maternity leave or do unpaid



Prof. Dr. Ute KLAMMER

work such as care – often affect later life stages. While norms are changing, the male breadwinner model often prevails after childbirth due to different reasons, such as the low rate of public childcare facilities. This leads to the re-traditionalization of gender arrangements once women become mothers. In addition, the business culture of availability conflicts with family life and middle management often blocks gender equality. Laws enacted to combat inequality in the workforce remain ineffective in many areas. KLAMMER closed her talk with policy recommendations such as an improvement of the infrastructure of childcare, a legal right to return to the same or an equivalent job after parental leave, and the introduction of gender budgeting for the national budget. According to her, persisting gender inequalities are very costly, while equal employment of women would stabilize the social security systems, and as such gender equality is a prerequisite for a modern innovation policy.

Prof. em. Dr. UENO Chizuko of the University of Tōkyō and founder of the Women's Action Network (WAN) gave the second presentation of the panel, "Equal Representation for What?: a Goal or a Tool?". UENO noted that the mobilization of women in the labor force is often an imperative due to the shrinking workforce caused by a low childbirth rate, and as a response to globalization. Nevertheless, as noted by previous speakers, women continue to be marginalized in the labor market. In Japan for example, they are often systematically excluded by



Prof. em. Dr. UENO Chizuko

the Japanese style management system. As more and more women participate in the labor market, societies have to deal with the question of how to transfer the care burden that women took on before. After introducing three options – socialization of care, marketization of care and familialization of care – UENO noted that each option comes at a price: either a high tax burden, underpaid migrants (mostly women) having to shoulder the care work, or (Japanese) women continuing to work without pay if the care stays within the family. UENO raised many different questions on how the goal of gender equality as equal representation can lead also to controversial discussion – such as the inclusion of women in the military. She also characterized care as a deeply human activity from birth until death. It is nonetheless often seen as a dependent activity, thus framing women as dependent once they take on the role of caretaker. Men on the other hand are framed as active and independent. According to her, women do not want to be male clones and the experience of caring can actually serve to learn and practice non-violence. UENO proposed the involvement of men in caring activities as a solution to end sexual harassment and violence and as a way to work towards a better society, friendly to women and social minorities.



Prof. Dr. KIM Kyoung-Hee

The third and last presentation of the panel, "Mismatch between Democracy and Gender Equality in Attitudes in Korea", was given by Prof. Dr. KIM Kyoung-Hee of Chung-Ang University. Comparing South Korea and Japan, KIM noted that both countries are ranked highly in global indexes for levels of democracy but do not do very well in the Global Gender Gap Index. The lack of women's economic participation in South Korea is one reason for the low rating served as the starting point for her research. Looking at survey data on attitudes towards democracy and gender, she focused on two sub-variables: gender role

attitude and sex-related tolerance. While Japan and South Korea show similar attitudes towards gender roles and democracy, a difference in the variable of sex-related tolerance – such as homosexuality or abortion – was noticeable. South Korea showed less tolerance on these issues in the data than Japan. After introducing four different clusters, KIM linked the lower sex-related tolerance to current hot issues in South Korean society, where misogyny continues to be a problem, abortion remains a strongly debated topic and anti-homosexuality activists retain a strong influence. In her conclusion, she pointed out different attitudinal patterns on gender and democracy in Japan and South Korea and proposed that the factors making up those differences need to be considered further.

The subsequent discussion started with an introductory statement given by Dr. SHIN Ki-Young from Ochanomizu University who summarized the important points from all three presentations. SHIN highlighted the general inefficiency of government policies to tackle the problems raised in the talks, as well as the slow progress made towards gender equality. Gender equality needs to be realized in all areas of life, as no gender equality means no true democracy. The subsequent lively discussion revolved around questions of how to better prioritize gender in the political field, ways to fight rising precariousness, and the potential success of recently implemented laws.



Dr. SHIN Ki-Young

Panel Discussion

In the following panel discussion – chaired by MAE – the panelists ŌSAWA, HONG, KLAMMER, UENO and KIM Kyoung-Hee talked about important strategies and means to promote more gender equality, political participation of younger generations and the concept of democracy in general. Comments from the audience raised the issue of different, often contesting feminisms and the need for an intersectional approach, that also looked more closely at issues of class, ethnicity, sexuality etc. All panelists agreed on the importance of such an approach. UENO stressed that if gender equality is achieved on the back of other disenfranchised groups, it is not social justice.

The active participation of the audience in the panel discussion and the high attendance showed a great interest in the topic of gender equality and democracy and the timeliness of the issue. The symposium managed to shed light both on goals achieved and issues still remaining to be resolved. Through the comparison between Germany, South Korea and Japan, many similarities and differences in the social situation of women and policy responses for more equality became apparent. The manifold ways in which societies and governments try to work towards a gender equal and thus, a more democratic society broadened the knowledge of and perspective on the discussed topics. While it became clear that much work still remains to be done in order to achieve gender equality, the symposium served as a great opportunity to bring together scholars from all three countries. It has helped to create the international networks whose importance was stressed in many of the presentations.

