

International Workshop

Transnational Queer Intersections: Rights, Politics and Pop Cultures

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On 25 January 2020, the Department of Modern Japanese Studies at Heinrich Heine University held the international workshop *Transnational, Queer, Intersections: Rights, Politics and Pop Cultures*. The room of the Haus der Universität was packed with the audience - all seats were filled - indicating general interest in East Asian queer issues in Düsseldorf, a city which is famous for being home to one of the biggest Asian communities in Europe.

In this workshop, as the title indicates, three approaches – the transnational, queer, intersections – were discussed in the presentations on sexual politics and representation in Japan and East Asia. Vera Mackie (Wollongong University) presented a paper “Sexual Citizenship and Popular Culture in Japan” discussing sexual citizenship from the viewpoint of cultural representations. Analyzing the novel *Kitchen* by Yoshimoto Banana and its movie adaptations by MORITA Yoshimitsu (1989) and YIM Ho (1997), Mackie showed how queer forms of family, vulnerability, and intimate relations were presented in an East Asian context. She connected and placed cultural forms of queer performances and representations within a broad concept of sexual citizenship in East Asia. In “Changing Sexual Citizenship and the Flexibilization of the Gender Order”, Ilse Lenz (Bochum University) contextualized contemporary LGBTIQ issues within a history of gender studies, offering a wider historical frame of feminist and LGBTIQ discourse. Presenting transnational and postcolonial discussions within the German political and academic context, Lenz argued for continued and inclusive communication within and across different groups and identity politics.

In “Transgender Laws in Japan in a Transnational Framework”, TANIGUCHI Hiroyuki (Kanazawa University) presented problems of Japan’s Gender Identity Disorder Act (2003; revised in 2008) from the viewpoint of international human rights laws. The Act requires transgender people to undergo sterilization in order to have their gender changed in official documents. Taniguchi especially analyzed the judgement on the Gender Identity Disorder Act handed down by Japan’s Supreme Court in 2019 in which the Court decided not to

rule on the unconstitutionality of the Act. In addition, contrasting with the expansion of contemporary transnational human rights movements for LGBTIQ rights, Taniguchi pointed out Japanese general (mis)understandings of the concept of human rights and the legislature's hesitation of implementing international human rights laws.

In "Transnational Connections, Transcultural Solidarities: Queer Memories of 1990s Japan", Mark Pendleton (Sheffield University) discussed how "Dumb Type", a Japanese queer avant-garde performance group founded in 1985 and their leading figure FURUHASHI Teiji who died of AIDS in 1995, are still relevant to us. He emphasized Dumb Type's works as transnational but at the same time also as de-centering within Japan (based in Kyoto, not in the capital of Tokyo), and highlighted their intersectional commitment to the topics of AIDS, gender politics, race, sex work, and disability. Finally, in "Queer East Asia – Decolonizing Discourse – Redrawing Boundaries", Andrea Germer (Düsseldorf University) offered a theoretical frame of transnational East Asian queer studies by connecting this new field to the trajectory of previous and concurrent discussions of "Asian Values". Questioning the categorical East/West division that informs the "Asian Values" debate, Germer traced its lingering ideas in some positions within Asian queer discourse. On the other hand, Germer stressed that the turn to "Asia as Method" (CHEN Kuan-Hsing) and concurrent discussions of "Queer Asia" offer new and non-essentialist epistemological paradigms for inter-referencing within Asia.

The organizers of this workshop, Andrea Germer and Caroline Ruhl (Düsseldorf University), are members of the *Genders & Sexualities: East Asia & Europe Network* (GSN) that was formed in 2018 and hosts a blog at the Website of the Modern Japanese Studies Department of Düsseldorf University. A networking session of GSN preceded the workshop and forged new co-operations in the field of East Asian queer studies and queer activism.