

## **Deliberative democracy in Japan against the backdrop of democratic challenges**

Momoyo Hüstebeck, IN-EAST, University of Duisburg-Essen

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Like other representative democracies, Japan has been facing a partial crisis of its political system. Democratic challenges have eroded democratic norms such as equality, representation, political accountability and legitimacy. The voter-turnouts for the last Lower House elections, for instance, have been at a record low. They express the decreasing trust in the political elites and the political abstinence of major parts of the society. To counteract the partial crisis of democracy, Japanese national and local governments have implemented new instruments of citizen participation, especially deliberations.

Deliberations are here defined as top-down implemented participatory forums where randomly selected citizens discuss among each other given political topics. After exchanging their arguments and forming their opinions, the participants submit their recommendations for a policy to the government.

This talk aims at scrutinizing the impact of deliberative policy-making processes on the quality of Japanese representative democracy. Therefore, theoretical concepts which deal with the quality of democracy and with deliberations (Diamond and Morlino 2005; Smith 2009) are applied. Two deliberative methods, namely mini-publics and a deliberative poll, serve as cases for evaluating qualitatively the democratic impact. Local mini-publics (*shimin tōgikai* 市民討議会) have been the most frequently implemented deliberative method in Japan. Randomly selected citizens are asked to develop recommendations for a local city planning. The first deliberative poll (*tōrongata yoronchōsa* 討論型世論調査) at the national level was held in Japan in 2012 under the impression of 3/11. A random sample of 285 citizens deliberated national energy strategies until the year 2030. By evaluating these cases conceptually, the presentation highlights the merits and the challenges of improving the quality of a representative democracy.

Momoyo Hüstebeck is a postdoctoral research fellow at the IN-EAST (Univ. of Duisburg-Essen) and the principal investigator for the BMBF-funded research project over the impact of deliberations on Japanese and German democracies. Her current research project combines theories of deliberative and participatory democracy with qualitative empirical case studies of implementing deliberations for understanding their effects on democratic challenges. Her previous research has focused on decentralization, local governments, citizen participation, state-citizen relationships, democratic innovations and political representation of women with an area focus on Japan, Germany and South Korea.