

KIP活動報告書

KIP ANNUAL REPORT

2024.4 – 2025.3

(社) KIP知日派国際人育成プログラム

Knowledge Investment Programs

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1. Forum(Links to HP) (Titles as of the lecture date)

1.1. April Forum

"Is Japan a barbaric country? Culture and environmental protection"

Ms. Rina Keboushi, The University of Tokyo, Faculty of Agriculture, 4th year

1.2. May Forum

"Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'"

Mr. Noriyuki Shikata, Cabinet Secretary for Public Affairs

1.3. June Forum

"'Political and Economic Situation in Hong Kong and Asia' & 'Working Abroad'"

Mr. Hidenori Yui, a portfolio manager for Japanese equities, KIP alumnus

1.4. July Forum

"Emergency medical care in real life and how remote medicine should be"

Mr. Toshio Chiba, the medical doctor, specially-appointed professor at Juntendo University, the Board chairman at Medical Innovation Consortium

1.5. August Forum

"Mathematical Models of Infectious Diseases and Pandemics"

Mr. Akira Endo, the medical doctor, KIP alumnus

1.6. September Forum

"Energy Geopolitics in a Pacific Century: The Trilemma framework and Japan's path forward"

Mr. Hunter McDonald, the Country Manager for Korea and Investment Specialist at Shizen Energy Group

1.7. October Forum

"Future International Situation through the Ukraine-Russia War: What Japan Can Do"

Mr. Hiroshi Hashimoto, a Former Ambassador and the Diplomatic Affairs Officer

1.8. November Forum

"Behind the Scenes: The Future of Entertainment"

Ms.Urmila Venugopalan, Executive Vice President of Strategy & Global Operations of the MPA(Motion Picture Association Inc.)

1.9. [Shiwasukai Conference](#)

1.10. [January Forum](#)

"SNS and Youth: The Merits and Demerits of SNS from the 2024 Elections"

1.11. [February Forum](#)

"Digital Government in Other Countries and Japan's Efforts"

**Ms. Aiko Matsuo, Global Intelligence, Public Policy Supervisory Department at Rakuten,
KIP alumna**

1.12. [March Forum](#)

"The burden of medical expenses in an aging society with a declining birthrate"

Mr. Hiroyuki Shimazu, Wellness Business Unit, MITSUI & CO., LTD., KIP alumnus

2. Regional Study

2.1. The Background and The Purpose

As the regional study for FY2024, President Packard and a total of 10 members including students and working members visited Sasebo City and Hasami City, Nagasaki Prefecture, for three days from September 13 to 15. This regional study was made possible by Mr. Fumimasa Kubo, a KIP's alumnus, and his alma mater, Sasebo National College of Technology. We would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Kubo for his cooperation.

This was the first time for KIP to visit a national college of technology for regional study, but I felt that this was in line with KIP's regional training program, which involves talking directly with high school students to hear their opinions, and to see the industries of the region we visit with our own eyes. This is because technical colleges provide practical education to foster engineers in each region, and the local industries influence the specialized fields taught at these colleges. I think that this regional study provided an opportunity to think about local industries from the viewpoint of young people by visiting local companies and listening to the voices of technical college students who may one day work at these companies.

Shutaro Fujimoto



2.2. Visit Companies and Facilities

2.2.1. Ceramic Research Center of NAGASAKI

Mr. Hideki Yosida, Vice-Director

Kana Matsuya

Hasami ware and Mikawachi ware in Nagasaki have a history of approximately 400 years and have been instrumental in the local economy. These ceramics are highly regarded both within and outside of the prefecture, and as local industries in Nagasaki, they have contributed greatly to the development of the local economy. Supporting this tradition and its technology is the Ceramic Research Center of NAGASAKI, established in 1930. The center is engaged in technological support and research and development for the promotion of the ceramic industry.



The center also strives to create new industries in cooperation with companies, universities, and public testing institutes. It also provides a wide range of technical support, including technical consultation, commissioned testing, provision of information, and human resource development. One of its initiatives is “Haritsuki Support,” in which it visits 50 nearby ceramic studios once a year to interview them about their conscious, thereby strengthening ties with the local community.

3D printing technology is a technology that allows direct molding of ceramic materials, greatly expanding the possibilities for ceramic products with excellent heat and rust resistance. Static mixing technology also makes it possible to manufacture products with more complex structures. However, it is difficult to optimize raw materials to achieve both flowability and shape retention. In terms of its relationship with National Institute of Technology, Sasebo College, the company does not conduct joint research, but continues to cooperate with the college through internships. Last year, a voluntary group of students from NIT, Sasebo College of Technology's Department of Materials Science and Engineering, “Nagasaki Tsunagood”, they jointly developed a Hasami-ware tea censer.

According to Mr. Yoshida, at the time of his employment in 1995, Hasami ware was not well known and there was little demand for antibacterial coated tableware. In recent years, however, donations from hometown taxpayers have increased, reaching 16.7 billion yen last fiscal year, second only to Sasebo City. In addition to this, the increased demand for antimicrobial coating after the Corona has created new opportunities for growth in the ceramic industry. In addition, Hasami ware is now being purchased by a younger generation, especially by women, couples, families, and other diverse groups. Furthermore, marketing using SNS is progressing, and based on the results of surveys and interviews, product development is shifting to the user's point of view. In addition to tableware, the company is also expanding into other fields, such as collaborations with jewelry, to add value to its existing products.

It was a very meaningful time for me to give an opportunity not only about learning traditional craftsmanship, but also about how to deal with work through the lively work of these people.

2.2.2. KYUSHU TEN LIMITED

Mr. Osamu Kaise, Operating Officer, Quality Assurance Division General Manager

Kotaro Ahiko

We visited Kyushu Ten Limited. Based mostly in the Kyushu area, Kyushu Ten has evolved into a one-stop shop offering services for the development, upkeep, and repair of gear and software for wireless communication.



We were given a brief introduction to the organization and its offerings during the visit, and then we took a tour of the facilities. During the company briefing, we were shown multiple instances of how Kyushu Ten supplies the core technology that enables services for large enterprises. These included dashcams essential for a safe and secure automotive society, IoT-based equipment management systems for factories and hospitals, and network communication base stations that support the information society. We sometimes associate particular goods or services with the large corporations that provide them, but I came to realize how important businesses like Kyushu Ten, with their cutting-edge technology, support various industries throughout Japan. I felt that my understanding of how industries across the nation are supported had significantly deepened.

Having spent three years at Kyushu Ten, Mr. Kaise, said the technological capabilities of the company are comparable to the large corporation he used to work for. He added that, in comparison to larger organizations, Kyushu Ten's smaller size and well-thought-out organizational structure enable faster decision-making and execution. Their enthusiastic explanation of the value of advancing a project while the excitement is still fresh and how individual effort directly leads to tangible results left a strong impression on me.

On the other hand, we discovered that hiring engineers has grown more challenging recently. In addition to the declining birthrate and population outflow to urban areas, Mr. Kaise mentioned another factor contributing to this challenge: the advent of remote work, which allows people to work for companies outside the prefecture. This made the unanticipated disadvantages of greater convenience more apparent to me.

Kyushu Ten is determined to actively pursue new challenges in the future by leveraging the wireless and IoT technologies it has developed over time to address new requirements. Their knowledge of IoT and wireless communication is crucial for the advancement of numerous cutting-edge technologies. I intend to keep a careful eye on how communication technology will

help this nation in the future. It was an interesting experience because the visit not only gave me the chance to learn about industries but also got me thinking about revitalizing regional areas.

2.2.3. Maritime Self Defence Force Sasebo Museum “Sail Tower”

Juken Igarashi

The city Sasebo were with the military seaports. Since the very day of the establishment of the Sasebo Naval Station, the city has been contributing to the system protecting the order of the seas of Japan by providing fuel, rest and mechanical services to the vessels. As of today, the City of Sasebo hosts three of bases or a camp each for the Japan Maritime Self Defence Force



(JMSDF), The U.S. Navy and the Japan Ground Self Defence Force; Sasebo remains its status of geopolitically significant for Japan.

In the morning of the 2nd day of this study trip, seeking an opportunity to gain knowledge on the Navy and the JMSDF which cannot be separated with the City of Sasebo as said above, we have visited the Maritime Self Defence Force Sasebo Museum, so called “Sail Tower”. The museum which a part of the building has served as the Imperial Japanese Navy Sasebo Suiko-Sha (=Navy Officers’ Club) is now constituted also with a 7-story modern building. The exhibition starts with how Nagasaki and Sasebo were becoming major bases for the navy and introduces the footprint of the Imperial Navy during the wars, followed by stepping into the detail of the history and current activities of the modernised JMSDF. From a numbers of exhibition, I would like to pick the most impressive: the actual wills written by some of the Kamikazes to their family, and the exhibits of the Escort Vessel “JS Kurama”. The wills let you recognise how the soldiers including Kamikazes were human beings exactly the same as we are as they showed they were born to have morality and something to pass on to future generations. The latter one, JS Kurama is a retired escort ship of the JMSDF which was mainly based in Sasebo during its service. The museum displayed its anchor and a replica of the bridge with used equipment, and these presentations provided us knowledges and perspectives of which you cannot easily get even if you live in a city with a military port.

This visit as become more than a precious opportunity to re-recognise what we are facing today, after acknowledging “History”.

2.3. Visiting National Institute of Technology (Sasebo Kosen)

2.3.1. Experiences' Talks for Kosen Students

Nano Nishimura

In the afternoon of the second day, after having Sasebo Burgers for lunch, we went to The National Institute of Technology, Sasebo College (NITS, Sasebo Kosen, hereinafter, “Kosen”). The two-day exchange program with the Kosen students began with a session titled “Experiences' Talks by University students.” The purpose was to share our choices of going to university, everyday university life, and academic major fields to provide Kosen students further understanding of university education.



The presenters were:

1. Shutaro Fujimoto, Jichi Medical University, School of Medicine, 2nd-year
2. Kurumi Ashida, Japan Women's University, Faculty of Science, 1st-year
3. Tatsuaki Kato, The University of Tokyo, Department of Physics, Master's Program, 2nd-year
4. Kotaro Ahiko, Tohoku University, School of Engineering, 2nd-year
5. Yui Kuze, The University of Tokyo, Faculty of Agriculture, 3rd-year

After the presentations, we were divided into small groups, where KIP members and Kosen students rotated between tables for Q&A and open discussions. In addition to the presenting STEM students, liberal arts students and a working adult from KIP also participated to enjoy meaningful exchanges with Kosen students.

As for me, I was paired with Kotaro Ahiko and visited every table. We discussed departments and student life at Sasebo Kosen, shared our exam struggles, and explored Ahiko's topic on “thermoelectric conversion materials.” I, as a humanities student, also shared my English literature studies, the upcoming job-hunting process, and extracurricular activities such as KIP and other clubs.

These casual exchanges allowed me to hear local students' views on Sasebo and Nagasaki, which was a valuable experience. What stood out most was hearing about their plans after graduation. Many were considering not only employment but also a two-year advanced course at the Kosen or transferring to universities. The wide range of participants, from 1st- to 5th-year students, from those with job offers or internships to those still deciding between further education or employment, allowed for diverse perspectives to be shared.

2.3.2. Lecture by Mr.Kubo, KIP alumnus

Shutaro Fujimoto

Following the talks by KIP students, Mr. Fumimasa Kubo, a KIP alumnus and a Sasebo Technical College of Technology graduate, gave us a lecture on his experiences. Mr. Kubo, who has experience of transferring to a university after graduating from a technical college, finding a job, and then returning to the world of academia, talked about what he is currently researching, what criteria he used when



choosing his career path, and how he thinks about career choices so that not only students of technical colleges but also university students can see them as their own experiences. He also talked about the criteria he used when choosing his career. I was very impressed by the diagram of “purpose in life” presented at the seminar. The diagram shows that a person's purpose in life can be fulfilled when the four elements of “what one likes,” “what one is good at,” “what makes money,” and “what the world needs” are combined, I had been vaguely concerned about whether I would be able to make good decisions on the spot, but now I could verbalize my purpose in life, I was able to clarify some of my concerns, and I felt that I had found the criteria for my decision making. I was also impressed by Mr. Kubo's words that he values his intuition when making important life decisions, such as choosing a career path, even though it may seem reckless at first glance. He said that intuition is an expression of one's honest feelings and that it is worth trusting because it reflects one's accumulated experience, knowledge, and what they thought. The lecture concluded with the message that to strengthen one's intuition, it is important to challenge various things and find out what one wants to do. It was a valuable experience for the participants to hear about the experiences of KIP's seniors as they are still in the process of making major career choices. This regional study was made possible by the cooperation of Mr. Kubo. Once again, we would like to thank Mr. Kubo for his efforts.

2.3.3. Research presentation by students from NIT, Sasebo College

Kurumi Ashida

On the last day of the trip, students from NIT, Sasebo College of Technology gave research presentations. From these presentations, we learned that technical colleges work with the local community and focus on practical learning. There were six presentations: "Nagasaki Tsunagood," "SKY Lab," "NAR - Nagasaki AR," "Diorama and 3D Model of Ikeshima Coal Mine Ruins," "AI for Animal Image Recognition by Morikirara," and "Marine Debris

Monitoring System in the Tsushima Current."

The presentations that showed a strong connection with the local community were "Nagasaki Tsunagood," "NAR - Nagasaki AR," "Diorama and 3D Model of Ikeshima Coal Mine Ruins," and "Marine Debris Monitoring System in the Tsushima Current."



First, "Nagasaki Tsunagood" is a group made up of students from the Department of Materials Engineering. Their activity is to plan and sell products using local goods from Nagasaki. According to the presentation, they explained how they decide which companies to ask for product development, what age groups will buy the products, whether there are similar products, and how they use marketing like social media. They also said that many local people buy their products, and I think that the community supported the students' products. By working with companies from a young age, they can learn about society in a practical way, not just in their own fields. Second, "NAR - Nagasaki AR" and "Diorama and 3D Model of Ikeshima Coal Mine Ruins" are projects to help Nagasaki's tourism industry using AR technology. They are planning to let people take AR videos and photos at tourist spots by using QR codes. The reason for this project is that Nagasaki is not high in tourism rankings, and they want to make the area more lively. Their strong desire to let more people know about this region came through in the presentation. Lastly, "Marine Debris Monitoring System in the Tsushima Current" is a project with the company CAPPA in Tsushima. It aims to solve the problem of marine debris, which is a big issue in Tsushima, by creating a system that can automatically detect trash in the ocean. They are working with the company to decide what technology to use, and they went to the site to do monitoring surveys. This presentation seemed to need the most technical skill, and I felt that this kind of technical activity is possible because of the practical learning environment at the technical college.

2.3.4. Discussions with “Kosen” Students

Yui Kuze

We visited National Institute of Technology, Sasebo College (hereafter referred to as "Sasebo Kosen") and had discussions with the students. We had two discussions, one on the theme of voting and the other on digital divide. This article will report how the former discussion went.

The discussion theme was "Should the age for candidacy be lowered? Should the age for candidacy have an upper limit?"



Students from Sasebo Kosen and KIP members formed mixed groups to debate this topic. With the Tokyo Governor’s Election, the LDP presidential election, and the U.S. presidential election attracting our attention this year, we had an active discussion as we shared our thoughts on politics.

The reason for choosing the theme "Should the age for candidacy be lowered? Should the age for candidacy have an upper limit?" was that there were ongoing discussions about the age for candidacy remaining 25 or older, while the voting age has been lowered to 18. Since many of the students were close to the voting age, it made it easier for them to engage in the discussion. In the group discussions, supporters of lowering the age argued that the change could attract young people's interest towards politics and allow politicians to build a political career earlier. They also argued that it was natural for ambitious and knowledgeable young individuals under 25 to run for election. Opposition sides, on the other hand, expressed concerns about the criticism candidates under 25 might face, the potential inequality caused by young candidates with higher income being able to afford the millions of yen required for the deposit, while others not. They also expressed doubts about whether individuals with limited real-world experiences could relate to the public.

After the group discussions, students from each group presented their opinions. Some argued that the aptitude for politicians should not be measured by age, emphasizing that practical life experience, such as working and paying taxes, is more important. Others supported the idea of setting an upper limit on candidacy age, because this could lead to a lowering of the average age of politicians over the long term.

Some Sasebo Kosen students were concerned about the issues revealed by the Tokyo Governor's Election. It seems that both Sasebo Kosen and KIP students, who usually study different subjects, learned a lot through the meaningful discussion on the common topic of politics.

2.3.5. Digital Divide Discussion with “Kosen” students

Tatsuaki Kato

At the Sasebo National College of Technology, a debate was held on “How to eliminate the digital divide between the young and the elderly”. On the day, the participants were divided into three groups with a mixture of technical college students and KIP members, and each group made a presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session.



After an explanation by the moderator, Ms. Kuze, we first had a 30-minute group discussion. I participated in the discussion of the “I-group”. In the middle of the discussion, to develop our opinions further, we focused on elderly individuals who were interested in digital technology but have little opportunity to learn about it. We narrowed the discussion to two ways of approaching the elderly: using intuitive design and providing them machines. Then the discussion moved on to concrete measures to create a space in the library where elderly individuals could come into contact with digital devices. It was impressive that many open opinions came from the viewpoints of the younger generation. The discussion consisted of a series of realistic opinions, not only from a technical perspective but also from the perspective of social constraints.

After the discussion, each group presented its own ideas.

“A-group” proposed opening digital classrooms and making the education system available to the elderly, referring to the actual terakoya (temple school, which incorporate peer teaching) system. They also suggested that AR and large screens should be widely used to simplify the operation of such systems.

“B-group” argued that simplicity of functionality and convenience is good for interest, that devices should be utilized to make teaching easier, and that teaching should be about necessary matters, such as procedures at hospitals and government offices.

“C-group” stressed the importance of balancing digital and analog devices. This is because in

Japan, where there are frequent disasters, it is difficult to use only digital devices (in case devices are unavailable). They suggested that smartphone vendors should talk directly to the elderly about the convenience of smartphones to avoid their sense of resistance and anxiety. A question-and-answer session followed. The participants said, “I think it would be easier to get the message across if we went out and visited them rather than creating a class to teach them about digital.” “We don’t have enough human resources, so a visit is not a realistic measure.” The discussion was grounded as described above. One technical college student shared his experiences during his internship as an example of intuitive operability: there was a situation where Mixed Reality (MR) was utilized, and when he touched the machine, he was given an explanation of its operation.

The discussion session was a good demonstration of the advantages of both Kosen students and KIP members. Although most of the participants were students, they actually ranged in age by about 10 years, and the experience of bringing together opinions from various ages must have been very significant.

2.4. Through the Study Tour

Shutaro Fujimoto

Through the three days of regional study, I think we heard many things about Sasebo and Hasami’s local industries and the Sasebo National College of Technology that we would not have been able to understand without actually going there. Here I would like to introduce some of the particularly impressive things. First of all, I felt that the connection between the National College of



Technology and the local community, including local industries, was stronger than I had expected. I was given a presentation on extracurricular activities conducted by technical college students, and I felt that many of them are working to rediscover local attractions and solve local problems. In addition, some people actually bought products because local technical college students made them and there were also people from local companies who taught them manners that they should pay attention to when collaborating with others. I think that such a deep connection between local people and technical college students is good.

Also, through actual conversations and discussions, I felt that technical college students are

thinking about various things on a daily basis and have their own opinions, perhaps because they are choosing their career paths at the early stage of their lives at 15 years old. I believe that they are realizing what they want to do and their pride for their hometown in the form of extracurricular activities they are engaged in.

Thus, through this regional study, I felt that the challenges of young local people, such as technical college students, may serve as a catalyst to stimulate the community. I thought it would be interesting to visit a technical college in another region in the future.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Kubo, who provided us the opportunity to visit Sasebo City, to Mr. Kaetsu for his great cooperation in organizing the program at the technical college, to all the people who cooperated in organizing this regional study, and to President Packard, who assisted in all stages of the regional study, from preparation to post-program activities.

3. Project

3.1. Background and Objectives

Yui Kuze

The 2024 KIP project was launched by members who raised concerns about the lack of discussion about social issues and politics among youth.

In recent years, young people's detachment from politics and declining political interest are frequently highlighted. However, a survey conducted

by Japan Research Institute in 2022

revealed that around 13% and 39% of

young respondents answered, "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" respectively to the

question, "Do you want to contribute to solving environmental or social issues?" (Figure 1) As

youth, KIP project members too, were far from being called "detached" from politics.

These suggest that, including our project members, there are still some young people who are interested in politics and social issues.

Nonetheless, many project members were

frustrated that they lacked opportunities to discuss politics and social issues with those around them, despite the fact that they somewhat cared about the issues.

Furthermore, in a survey conducted by the Saitama City Election Management Committee, when asked whether they discuss political matters with those

around them, 41% said "not much," and 26% answered "hardly ever." (Figure 2)

According to Toyama et al. (2022), general tendencies observed among Japanese people include "fear and contempt for politics," "aversion to conflict," and "self-seclusion." Those with higher levels of these tendencies are more likely to avoid political participation and discussions. Based on our personal experiences and research findings, we sought to analyze the causes for young people's tendency to avoid discussions on politics and social issues. As a first step, we decided to engage in discussions ourselves.

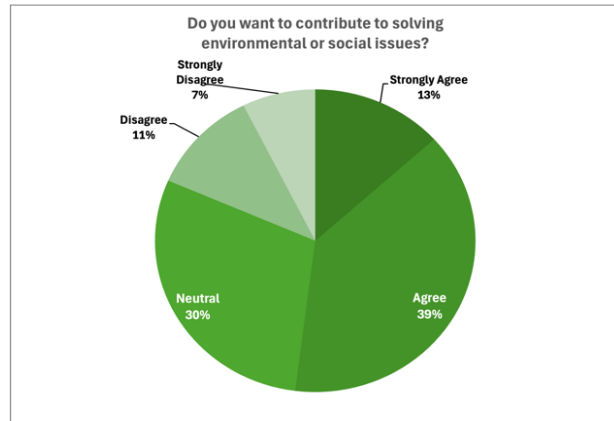


Figure 1 Willingness to solve social problems

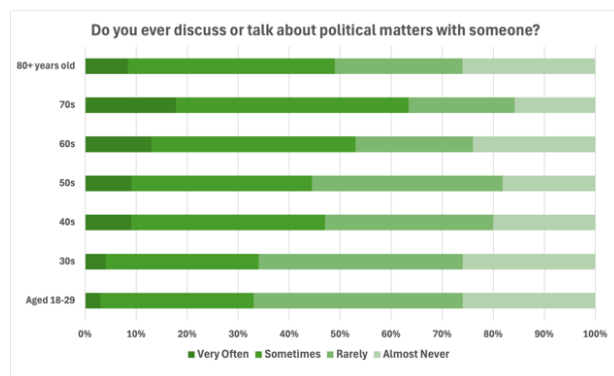


Figure 2 Frequency of political discussions

This year's project members came from medicine, physics, biology, agriculture, international relations, literature, and design backgrounds. Through this project, the members experienced some significant changes in the attitudes and perspectives toward politics. We hope that our findings from this study will help foster political conversations among a wider audience.

Reference: K.Toyama et al. (2022) "A Study on the Psychological Factors Hindering Active Political Participation Among Japanese People," *Journal of the Society of Civil Engineers*, Japan, D3, Vol. 78, No. 6, II_574-II_591, https://doi.org/10.2208/jscejipm.77.5_1_213.

3.2. Research Method

Kurumi Ashida

In this project (PJ), the issue was identified that young people interested in social issues lack places to discuss political issues. To address this, we, the PJ members (interested in social issues), decided to create and experiment with a discussion platform by proactively constructing a space for political dialogue ourselves. The specific method involved conducting debate sessions during each meeting, focusing on political themes set by the PJ



members. To promote a multifaceted understanding of politics, the debate topics were designed with a consistent storyline. The themes were composed of five topics: elections, politicians, finance, media, and education, with each topic serving as a connection to the next. The process began with discussing questions about elections. This led to debates on issues concerning politicians elected through election. Considering the importance of financial aspects in politics, we also discussed whether Japan should increase fiscal stimulus or not. In the last parts of these discussions, we explored the relationship between media, education, and politics, an area we are deeply related to. Ensuring active involvement from all members, they brought their debate topics for each session and also served as the facilitator, rotating this role among participants. Facilitators were responsible for organizing the debate topic, discussion points, and reference materials, which they shared with the PJ members before the meeting. Additionally, facilitators managed the discussions during the meetings themselves. In preparation for the sessions, all members gathered resources related to the discussion topic and shared them with the group

before the meeting. One week after each session, all members wrote a one-page report in Word summarizing their reflections, which was then shared with the group. These regular meetings were held twice a month, with one session conducted in person and the other online. The meetings began with reviewing and providing feedback on the previous debate session's report. This primarily involved reflecting on the content of the previous discussion and sharing both the positive aspects and areas for improvement in how to debate. Following this, we held a debate session, and at the end, what we learned from that day's session was shared, focusing on both the content and techniques of discussion.

3.3. Our insights against the main concern

Kotaro Ahiko

In the previous section, we identified our main concern: while many young people are interested in social issues, they often lack firm opinions on them and have limited opportunities to deepen their thoughts through discussion. Barriers include physical distance to discussion venues, lack of awareness of their existence, aversion to being labeled "overly serious," and anxiety about effective communication in debates. In this section, we will reflect on the insights and lessons our project members gained through participating in eight political discussion sessions.



During the feedback process with members regarding these discussion sessions, three main insights emerged in response to our identified concerns.

The first was that engaging in discussions heightened participants' interest in politics and made them recognize the value of thinking critically about these issues. For example, one participant noted, "I had a sense of resignation about politics, but researching and debating topics like compulsory adherence to a party decision and direct election of the Prime Minister gave me hope that even small changes in the system could lead to improvements." Another participant remarked, "I became aware of the aspects of politics I didn't understand or know about, which motivated me to learn more."

The second insight was the realization that the mental barriers to discussing political topics might be easier to overcome than initially imagined. Some participants shared comments like, "Even when differences in opinion arose, I found we could discuss them in a more neutral tone than I expected," and One participant said, "I was afraid of what people would think of me, but

through these discussions, my fears have diminished."

On the other hand, the third insight emphasized the need for not only knowledge but also specific techniques for effective discussions on political topics. Given the large-scale and potentially contentious nature of many political issues, participants noted that it is crucial to find ways to respect differing perspectives and maintain a comfortable and well-paced conversation, especially when opinions clash. These insights, along with concrete examples from our discussions, will serve as the foundation for proposing specific solutions in the subsequent sections.

After completing the eight sessions, many participants reported a significant reduction in their resistance to talking about politics. Several members also shared that they had more opportunities to discuss political topics with friends and family. These weren't necessarily deep, structured conversations but rather casual mentions of politics in everyday life, something that isn't as difficult as it might seem. I hope to continue shifting the perception, both for myself and others, that discussing politics is challenging or intimidating.

3.4. Discussions regarding politics

3.4.1. "Should teachers express their political opinions during class?"

Kaede Matsumoto

We discussed whether teachers should express their political opinions during class, with the following definitions:

- In public elementary to high schools.
- Political opinions are concrete, such as criticism of the policies of individual political parties.
- In political classes such as social studies and political economy.

I chose this topic because we thought it would be easier to discuss it concretely since it is something we have experienced up until now.

In the discussion, those in favor of it said that when teachers talk about politics, even if they introduce various positions, there will be a bias toward the direction that the teacher supports, so it is better to explain to students which political party they support before explaining it, which would avoid leading students to think differently. There were also stories of teachers who do not express their own opinions and only explain generalities, which will not cultivate students' interest in politics, and stories of experiences of having their interest in social issues increased by teachers who expressed political opinions. The opposing side raised the following points: teachers always have authority over students, so expressing their opinions may affect students' opinions; a debate-centered curriculum is possible without introducing real political parties; etc.

In the middle of the discussion, it was confirmed that there are three ways for teachers to be involved in classes: 1) being neutral, 2) expressing the minority's opinion with the aim of balancing opinions, and 3) explicitly expressing one's own opinion. It became clear that there were two opinions, 2 and 3, among those in favor. The conclusion of the discussion was that everyone agreed that teachers should not express their opinions in elementary and junior high schools because students do not have sufficient judgment skills, and in high schools, the majority were in favor, although there were differences of opinion.

Overall, we tried to decide on the definition of the theme in advance, but there were times during the discussion when people had different understandings of the word "class," whether it was a lecture format or a discussion format, and I felt that we should have sorted it out and decided on it at the point when we noticed it during the discussion.

In the reflection sessions and reports following the discussion, many participants said that they found it easy to speak concretely about the topic based on their own experiences, and that even if the topic had been more abstract, they would have liked to dig deeper and discuss it in a similar way, by relating it to opinions and experiences that were familiar to them.

* Refer to the reference materials for the flow of the discussion.

Before the debate: 6 in favor, 4 against.

First, we asked the proponents and opponents for their opinions

pros

- Teachers should also express their opinions as role models who have opinions.

cons

- Other methods such as discussion are possible without the teacher having to speak.
- Fear of the teacher's influence.

Among those in favor, there are two opinions: one is to say it actively, and the other is to say it when necessary. (These are expressed by adding (situation) and (active) at the beginning.)

- (active) It would be better for the teacher to state his/her position as this would trigger a discussion.

From a teacher's perspective, there are three options: completely neutral, balanced (in response to students' opinions), or explicitly expressing one's own opinion.

- (active) On the condition that a relative perspective is presented Agree
- (active) Teachers can be encouraged to express their views without expressing explicit political opinions.

- Not everyone can interpret the words of teachers in a relative manner, so it is dangerous to have a situation where there is no legal regulation.
- Concerns about parental resistance and possible intervention by the Board of Education out of fear of parental resistance
- When teachers express their opinions, it opens the door to political interference.

- We need to consider the magnitude of the impact. There are some things that can be improved through systems, but there seems to be a limit to what can be done for elementary and junior high school students.
- I think it is not necessary to express opinions in elementary and junior high schools, but it is okay to express opinions in high schools.

Since no one in elementary or junior high school thought that they should express their opinions, we decided to limit the discussion to high school topics.

- (situation) When students are unable to exchange opinions smoothly, you should offer your opinion and provide support.

- It doesn't have to be the teacher who expresses opinions; it can be between students.
- It is possible to make in-depth statements about systems, not ideologies, and this should be promoted.

After the debate: 5 in favor, 5 against (regarding high school)

"Should teachers express their political opinions during class?" – Debate Flow

3.4.2. Should the Binding Party Discipline on Members of the Diet Be Relaxed?

Nano Nishimura

Binding party discipline refers to the practice where political parties decide the stance on legislative bills, budgets, treaties, and other matters, requiring their members to vote accordingly in parliament. Actions against this stance are called “rebellious votes” and are often met with penalties, such as expulsion, recommendations to leave the party, suspension from party positions, or warnings. While binding party discipline is seen as contributing to smooth governance in a parliamentary cabinet system, it has also been criticized for potentially formalizing debates in parliament.



In September 2024, during the LDP presidential election, candidate Shinjiro Koizumi stated that no binding party discipline would be imposed on the bill for the introduction of selective surnames for married couples. He described it as an issue concerning values and family perspectives. This statement remains fresh in the memory of many. While binding party discipline is crucial for understanding the roles of political parties, legislators, and the legislative process, it is also a topic that many, including myself, find challenging to fully comprehend. Therefore, in early October, as part of a project, we conducted a debate on the topic of, “Should the Binding Party Discipline on Members of the Diet Be Relaxed?” to deepen our understanding.

In the debate, the proponents of relaxing the discipline argued that the current penalties are too harsh and that focusing more on individual politicians rather than political parties could increase young people’s interest in politics. On the other hand, opponents argued that it is difficult for individual legislators to propose policies effectively, and that managing policies at the party level ensures both efficiency and quality in national politics. Initially, the group was evenly divided, with five members supporting and five opposing the relaxation of binding party discipline. However, by the end of the debate, three members shifted their stance, resulting in a majority of eight opposing the relaxation and only two supporting it.

The discussion included comparisons with the United States, which does not have a parliamentary cabinet system. Additionally, opinions reflecting the voters’ perspectives were exchanged. For example, some argued, “When voting, I focus more on the political party than the individual politician,” or “It is unrealistic for voters to evaluate politicians individually.” These points led to opposing the relaxation of party discipline. Personally, I was particularly impressed by the suggestive opinion that “if the process of policy decision-making within

parties becomes a sufficient factor for voters to consider in elections, parties will have greater incentives to improve their decision-making processes.”

3.4.3. Debate on “What is the best electoral system for Japan?”

Tatsuaki Kato

I chose this theme because I had a strong desire to discuss the electoral system, which defines the behavior of politicians and political parties and has a significant impact on politics.

Although the debate was held on the first day, the participants had an interesting discussion even when they were previously unfamiliar with the subject.

In preparation for the debate, I prepared assignment materials and a preliminary assignment.

The assignment materials I prepared comprise the first half, which explained the characteristics of the general election system, and the second half, which explained the election system adopted in Japan. In addition, the participants were asked to provide answers to six sub-questions that I had devised, such as “Have you ever voted with the electoral system in mind?”

On the day of the debate, I began with the answers to the sub-questions as an introduction similar to a chat to make it easier for the participants to talk, and then proceeded to the discussion. To keep the discussion brief, instead of asking about Japan’s ideal electoral system as an open question, I reduced the discussion to two choices: single-seat constituency or proportional representation. Those in favor of proportional representation remained in majority before and after the debate. The advantages of proportional representation and single-seat constituency systems were “the ability to bring diverse and minority voices to the Diet” and “a sense of stability in government and the ability to implement policies,” respectively. It is interesting to note that the proponents of the single-seat constituency system argue that the process of political compromise in proportional representation is left to negotiations between political parties, whereas in the single-seat constituency system, people can be involved in the process through strategic voting. In the end, the merits of the proportional representation system were emphasized, as it is easier to reflect diverse voices with fewer wasted votes in the current low voter turnout among young people in Japan.

After the debate, each participant reflected on the discussion in a report. Many participants stated that they had simply voted based on the arguments of candidates and parties and had never considered the advantages and disadvantages of the electoral system. Many comment that they felt a lack of knowledge and experience in the discussion, perhaps because the topic required particularly abstract political knowledge. Some participants also self-analyzed that their difficulty in talking about politics was due to their limited knowledge of politics and difficulty in dealing with even a single term. There were also some motivated reflections such as wanting to speak with specific examples as future challenges and wanting to incorporate their

knowledge to speak more concisely.

Although few participants seemed to have changed their opinions on whether to vote in the proportional representation or primary election, as a moderator, I can say that I encountered opinions that I had not expected and gained experience only from the face-to-face debate.

3.5. Proposing Solutions and Future Perspectives

Haruka Inokuchi, Nagi Matsuyama

This year's project was based on the issue that young people interested in politics often lack opportunities to actually talk about it. By having project participants engage in "debate" themselves, we sought to identify ways to reduce the barriers to discussing politics. Based on the insights gained through these discussions, we propose two solutions to enable us, the younger generation, to talk more actively about politics: 1) designing new spaces for political discussions, and 2) offering tips on how to make it easier to discuss politics within the communities we already belong to.

Proposals for Creating New Spaces for Political Discussions

These spaces would target people interested in social issues and politics. Participants would not need to have broad or detailed knowledge of politics beforehand; they could learn through participating.

Participants should prepare in advance. On the day of the discussion, the session would begin with a collective review of the relevant knowledge, followed by a confirmation of participants' positions (pro or con) on the topic. Then, discussions would start, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for everyone to express their opinions, even for those not accustomed to discussing politics. Discussions would be held in small groups of about six people, where participants exchange ideas before sharing their group's thoughts with the entire assembly. Participation in such spaces is expected to yield the following outcomes: First, participants would have opportunities to reflect on social and political issues and organize their thoughts. Additionally, by attending these sessions regularly, they could better understand the connections between politics and social issues, recognizing politics as an effective tool for addressing societal challenges. This is expected to increase their interest in politics as well.

Tips for Making It Easier to Discuss Politics in Existing Communities

In general, people may feel psychological barriers to discussing politics due to uncertainty about how to approach political communication or fears of disagreement. To overcome these barriers and enable political discussions in current communities, preparation and shared guidelines for

conversations are essential. By taking these steps and starting with approachable topics, political discussions could become easier.

Preparation

Keep up with news regularly to some extent.

Prepare ways to halt or redirect discussions that may become one-sided or turn into arguments due to differences in knowledge or opinions.

Assess in advance the level of political discussion that is appropriate based on your relationship with others.

Guidelines

Recognize that perspectives and values on politics differ among individuals and that differing views do not equate to personal attacks.

Understand that changing opinions during a discussion is not a negative outcome.

Acknowledge that discussing politics allows participants to share knowledge and refine critical and judgment skills through exposure to diverse views.

Recognize that, as sovereign citizens shaping democracy, discussing politics is a necessary activity.

Discussion Topics

Avoid starting with difficult topics. Instead, choose issues closely related to everyday life and with clear political relevance.

By enabling us, the younger generation, to engage more actively in discussions about politics—whether in dedicated spaces or in everyday life—we can foster greater awareness not only of social issues but also of politics as a means to address those challenges. Through sharing knowledge and exchanging opinions, we can refine and expand our understanding, ultimately becoming more informed voters capable of making better decisions. Encouraging young people to take a greater interest in and actively participate in politics may, in turn, lead to politics being more attuned to the voices of the younger generation. We hope that the solutions proposed in this study will serve as a step toward realizing such a society.

3.6. Summary

Shutaro Fujimoto

This year's PJ began with the PJ members' awareness of the problem that young people who are interested in social issues may not have a forum where they can talk constructively or have easy access to it. This awareness was based on a shared sense among the PJ members that unless

young people are able to talk together, they will not be able to form better opinions, and that politics is rarely seen by young people as a means of solving social problems, and that under such circumstances, society will



not be a better place for young people. As a way to explore the causes of these problems, we first tried to find clues to solving the problems that currently exist, based on what we, the PJ members, actually felt during the discussions. The main themes of the discussions were politics as a means to solve social problems, such as the election system in Japan, the party system, and teachers expressing their political opinions in class, etc. The two causes of the problems that emerged were a lack of opportunities to discuss social and political issues, and a psychological hurdle to participation in discussions due to a lack of communication skills and a fear of conflict when discussing social and political issues. As a solution to these causes, we decided to propose the creation of new venues for talking about politics, and the tips and tricks of young people to feel comfortable talking about politics within their current communities. The details of our proposals can be found in the previous section, but what we were reminded of in the course of our discussions was the importance of being informed about social issues on a regular basis and having one's own opinions, and that constructive discussion while respecting the opinions of others can lead to a better understanding of oneself as a participant, and as a group of discussion. And I felt that we can make better decisions and choices than before the discussion. We hope that this year's project, which began with our own daily questions and awareness of the issues, and was compiled as a proposal based on what we have learned through our actual debate experience, will encourage readers to become more active in discussing social issues and politics with others.

Finally, we would like to once again thank President Packard and the Directors for their great efforts in managing this project, as well as the members of society who gave us advice.

4. Voice of Graduates

Although I was not able to participate in many activities of KIP due to field trips on my research in master course, I often recalled what I had learned in KIP. During KIP activities I attended when I was an undergraduate student, I had heard the opinion that “it is same wherever we live in Japan,” and I had thought so too. However, in some places on the edge of Hokkaido that I visited for my research, I realized how different these areas were from Tokyo and other urban areas. In the doctoral course, I will continue my research always thinking about what impact my research will have on the areas.

Momoka Suzuki (Joined in 2020)



Mai Ogawa (Joined in 2021)



During the COVID-19 pandemic, when club activities were restricted, I wanted to take on a new challenge. So, I joined KIP in my third year of university and participated for three and a half years. Through forums, projects, and working as a leader in the Kochi Study Trip, I exchanged honest opinions with people of various backgrounds, gaining new perspectives and hands-on experience.

This taught me the importance of learning with both humility and curiosity, as well as thinking with a broad perspective. I will keep in mind them throughout my career, and I sincerely appreciate KIP President Packard and everyone who gave me these valuable opportunities.

Binze Han (Joined in 2021)

To truly understand Japan from a well-rounded perspective, I felt it was important to engage directly with regional industries and local cultures. This led me to join KIP in the fall of my sophomore year. In addition to participating in policy forums, I took part in field programs in Kushiro and Yamagata. In Kushiro, I gained firsthand insight into a range of regional



revitalization efforts driven by collaboration between government, academia, and the private sector. In Yamagata, I led the team from initial planning through on-site coordination and operations, while exploring the role young people can play in preserving traditional food culture. My time with KIP taught me the value of taking ownership of social issues and acting with a strong sense of responsibility. I hope to become a lawyer who helps bridge nations, and after graduation, I plan to focus on earning my legal qualifications. The lessons I've learned continue to shape my outlook, and I remain committed to giving back to society. I look forward to the day I can share positive updates on that journey.

Kana Matsuya (Joined in 2023)



I joined the association in the summer of my junior year of college when I realized that I had been perceiving social issues as somewhat of a stranger and felt embarrassed. As I exchanged opinions with people of different generations and affiliations through forums, regional training, and committee activities, I encountered perspectives I had never imagined and became acutely aware of how narrow my thinking was. I learned that someone's efforts and thoughts are

behind the food I used to casually eat or the events I used to participate in, and I gained a perspective to question the obvious. Even when I become a member of society, I will not forget the ways of dealing with things I learned at KIP, and I will do my best with sincerity.

Tatsuaki Kato (Joined in 2024)

I joined KIP in the winter of my first year as a master's student and participated in the forums, a project, and a regional study in Nagasaki. In the forums, I was stimulated by active learning and deepened my knowledge. During the project, I learned how to work with younger students and faced challenges, precisely because the theme was politics, a field I am particularly interested in. This experience helped me develop my interpersonal skills and a flexible attitude. In Nagasaki, I had discussions with students from the Sasebo Kosen and visited local companies. These valuable experiences were something I could not have gained elsewhere. Starting next month, I will begin working in a field that requires skills different from research, and I hope to apply what I learned at KIP moving forward.



List of Collaborations

(Titles as of the lecture date, without honorifics, random order)

Forum

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| • Rina Keboushi | KIP member, The University of Tokyo, Faculty of Agriculture, 4th year |
| • Noriyuki Shikata | Cabinet Secretary for Public Affairs |
| • Hidenori Yui | Portfolio manager for Japanese equities, KIP alumnus |
| • Toshio Chiba | Medical doctor, the Board Chairman at Medical Innovation Consortium |
| • Akira Endo | Medical doctor, KIP alumnus |
| • Hunter McDonald | The Country Manager for Korea and Investment Specialist at Shizen Energy Group |
| • Hiroshi Hashimoto | Former Ambassador and the Diplomatic Affairs Officer |
| • Urmila Venugopalan | Executive Vice President of Strategy & Global Operations of the MPA (Motion Picture Association Inc.) |
| • Aiko Matsuo | Global Intelligence, Public Policy Supervisory Department at Rakuten, KIP alumna |
| • Hiroyuki Shimazu | Wellness Business Unit, MITSUI & CO., LTD., KIP alumnus |

Regional Studies in Nagasaki

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| • Hideki Yoshida | Vice-Director at Ceramic Research Center of NAGASAKI |
| • Osamu Kaise | Operating Officer, Quality Assurance Division General Manager at KYUSHU TEN LIMITED |
| • Fumimasa Kubo | Doctoral student at Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, KIP alumnus |
| • Katsuhiro Kaetsu | Assistant Professor at KOSEN, Sasebo College |

Editorial Note

We are pleased to announce the completion of the 2024 Annual Activity Report (April 2024 – March 2025). Since its inception, the report has been distributed in print format; however, starting this year, it is available digitally on our website. We appreciate your continued support and engagement.

In 2024, our activities centered around forums and a regional study, with significant contributions from our project teams. As part of the project, we visited Sasebo National College of Technology, where participants exchanged research insights and engaged in discussions on the digital divide, fostering meaningful connections. We are delighted that one of the fifth-year students from Sasebo, who will be relocating to the Tokyo area for employment, has joined KIP as a professional member this spring—a testament to the fruitful exchanges facilitated by our programs.

This year reaffirmed the value of interdisciplinary learning and dialogue. We remain committed to cultivating an environment where such enriching discussions can thrive.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who supported KIP activities throughout the year.

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