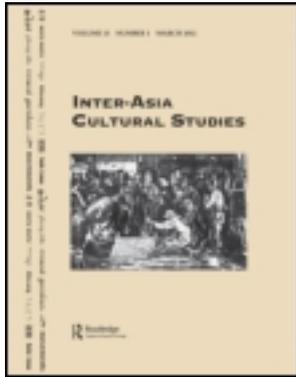


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## Young precariat at the forefront: anti-nuclear rallies in post-Fukushima Japan

Akihiro OGAWA

**ABSTRACT** Japan suffered a catastrophic disaster on March 11, 2011. The earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear radiation leakage from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant devastated the northeastern part of the country and threatened the entire country and beyond with the risk of radiation. Nowadays, movements against nuclear power plants are emerging across the country. The crisis indeed provides a chance for Japan to forge a new energy policy. However, the activists' claims are not narrowly limited to such energy issues. They call for a fundamentally fairer society and propose alternative ways of life, regarding nuclear power plants as symbols supporting the economic development that Japan enjoyed over the post-Second World War period. As an ethnography, this paper documents the 60,000-citizen Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants (Sayonara Genpatsu) rally that mobilized in central Tokyo on September 19, 2011, as well as the Occupy Tokyo action on October 15, 2011, presenting the real voices of the rally participants against nuclear power. In particular, I will focus on the voices of young precariat participants, the major actors in the anti-nuclear rally who were generated from and revealed as the negative result of Japan's neoliberal economic policy, held since the 2000s. Further, I argue that their mounting anger might be a trigger for new post-neoliberal politics in post-Fukushima Japan.

**KEYWORDS:** Precariat, anti-nuclear rallies, voices, post-neoliberal politics, post-Fukushima Japan

### “No more nukes”: the shouts of the young Japanese precariat

On March 20, 2011, a young man stood in front of the headquarters of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), shouting, “*Genpatsu iranai! No more nuclear plants!*” Japan had suffered a catastrophic disaster on March 11, 2011, when a magnitude-9 earthquake and subsequent tsunami occurred. Since then, nuclear radiation leakage at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant operated by TEPCO has devastated the northeastern part of the country. In fact, the disaster—the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl—has infected the entire country and beyond with the threat of radiation. Nearly 60,000 residents in Fukushima have been evacuated from their homes, according to a recent news report (*Mainichi Shimbun*,

December 10, 2011). The young man shouting in front of TEPCO claimed primarily that the electric company should take the responsibility for ending the ongoing nuclear crisis; according to him, we do not need the nuclear power plants any more.<sup>1</sup>

His name is Ryota Sono, a 30-year-old member of the *precariat* (Standing 2011)—a newly emerging social class characterized by insecurity and uncertainty that stems from a global trend toward creating a flexible workforce. The word *precariat* is a neologism that combines the meaning of the adjective *precarious* and the noun *proletariat*. Globally, the precariat has been generated by and revealed as the negative result of neoliberal economic policies, which have primarily featured deregulation and labor market liberalization. As Guy Standing (2011)

demonstrates in his recent book, the precariat has access only to poorly paid short-term or part-time jobs, with no employment security. Wages are often so little better than social security, and marginal tax rates so penal, that there is little motivation to look for work. People in this situation see no prospect of change for the better and are becoming dispirited and disaffected.

Japanese society was once described as a generally middle-class, or “90 percent middle-class” society, prevalent since the 1960s (Economic Planning Agency 1967). However, the increasing socioeconomic divide, which is nowadays popularly termed *kakusa*, has produced the new social class (cf. Tachibanaki 2004). The neoliberal politics engineered by Junichiro Koizumi’s administration of the Liberal Democratic Party in the early 2000s has systematically produced the precariat. Recent statistics show that 38.7% of workers (MHLW 2011)—more than one-third of Japanese workers—have become part of the flexible or non-regular workforce. Many youths fall into this category. The Japanese population is nowadays experiencing a completely new aspect of social and economic life.

Now that ten months have passed since the great earthquake, I observe that one of the major conflicts in Japan is over the nuclear energy policy. The country is fiercely divided—pro-nuclear advocates led by the state and TEPCO are pitted against the anti-nuclear dynamism generated by grassroots citizens. Even though the country is at grave risk, Japanese politicians have not shown any strong intention to close the nuclear power plants, claiming that nuclear energy is the cheapest source of energy and that it is necessary to sustain the current economic growth. There are 54 nuclear plants in Japan, which is one of the most seismically active countries in the world, Fukushima Daiichi being one of the plants. Currently (as of December 26, 2011), only six out of 54 reactors are running normally. All of them will go offline for regular maintenance checks before May 2012.

A Japanese grassroots movement is now developing and extending anti-nuclear

rallies and demonstrations across the country. Indeed, since the early post-Second World War period, Japan has had a rich history of anti-nuclear social movements led by peace activists within key umbrella organizations, such as *Gensuikin* (Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs) and *Gensuikyo* (Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs) after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, as Avenell (2012) claims, their major point of contention was not so much the fear of radiation pollution but compensation for relinquished land holdings and fishing rights. Japan waited until 1975, when the *Genshiryoku shiryō johoshitsu* (Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center) was established, to experience an active development at the grassroots level in terms of questioning the safety of nuclear plants.

Sono’s direct action consequently ignited a series of rallies against the nuclear energy policy, in which participants asked for the abolition of all nuclear plants and the development of such alternative energy sources as solar, wind, and liquid natural gas. Indeed, this crisis provides a chance to forge a new energy policy. However, the activists’ claims are not narrowly limited to such energy issues. The rallies call for a fundamentally fairer society and propose alternative ways of life, looking at nuclear power plants as symbols supporting the economic development that Japan enjoyed over the post-Second World War period. For the precariat, such economic prosperity is based on the sacrifice of their right to decent employment, even, in fact, of their own lives.

The current developments against nuclear power plants in Japan have renewed anti-nuclear interest, but they have several noble aspects not present before, including diversified participants, patterns of behaviors and appeals, and expression of values and beliefs. In this paper, my particular focus is on young precariat participants such as Ryota Sono, a new actor in the ongoing anti-nuclear rally. I argue that the young precariat is creating a new flow of energy for making changes in contemporary

Japanese society, which has been persistently sluggish over the past 20 years. Based on my intensive ethnographic fieldwork on the anti-nuclear rallies in Tokyo in the fall of 2011, the following sections first document as background my observations of a major rally, Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants (*Sayonara Genpatsu*), which developed in central Tokyo on 19 September 2011. The number of people participating in the rally set a record high in terms of anti-nuclear demonstrations in Japan. Second, I argue that the recent rallies, characterized by the emergence of young people—in particular, the young precariat—are contributing to the discourse on social movements in Japan. Third, I place my accounts of events in the context of developing solidarity in a framework of transnational activism, envisaging a new drive to make a change in the world. The final section explores the implications of this emerging social movement in contemporary Japanese society and politics.

### Rallies for no more nukes

September 19, 2011, was an unseasonably hot and humid afternoon. A crowd of demonstrators gathered in Meiji Park, central Tokyo, for the previously mentioned anti-nuclear public event called Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants (*Sayonara Genpatsu*). The scale was impressive—one of the largest anti-nuclear rallies in Japanese history. The organizers put the turnout at around 60,000, although police estimated the crowd at 20,000. One of the organizers was Kenzaburo Oe, a Nobel laureate in literature. Hisae Sawachi, a female author, was also there. Both are leading figures of the Article 9 Association (*9 jo no kai*), a peace movement entity. I saw Satoshi Kamata, a well-known author/journalist, who has extensively covered issues on Japan's nuclear industry for over four decades, and Keiko Ochiai, an author and popular disk jockey. Nine prominent public intellectuals played a key role in launching this anti-nuclear event.

Oe, an organizer, informed the crowd of the rationale for the demonstration, citing a case from Italy where people held a national

referendum on nuclear power and voted the prospect of building new reactors.

What is now clear is this: in Italy, human life will not be threatened by nuclear energy anymore. We Japanese, however, must continue to live under the fear of nuclear disaster. We have a will to resist. We need to let leaders of political parties, as well as leaders of the Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*), know our strong will. What we can do is have democratic public meeting and demonstrations.

Kamata also shouted, "They can't do politics while ignoring the voices of residents." The website calling for action (<http://sayonaranukes.org/yobikake/>) presents the strength of their will as follows:

We are determined to take actions for a "peaceful and sustainable society," reconsidering our lifestyles that exploit nature and waste limitless energy, and focusing on natural energy. ... We will achieve these goals in order to save our own lives, and fulfill our responsibilities to future children.

Ultimately, the organizers aim to collect 10 million signatures from people who favor cutting Japan's dependence on nuclear power through ceasing to build new atomic plants and by decommissioning existing ones in a planned manner.

Most of the rally participants were armed with colorful signs calling for "No More Nukes!" Their clothing also expressed anti-nuclear messages. I heard a speech by a middle-aged woman from Fukushima. The woman, who actually describes herself as a *hibakusha*, took the stage and talked to the crowd about her daily life:

Since March 11, the people in Fukushima have had to make decisions every day on matters ranging from whether to evacuate or not, eat or not, and force children to wear masks for such mundane tasks as drying laundry outside and plowing their fields, and whether to say something against [keeping nuclear power] or not.

She continued against the state and TEPCO:

Now that six months have passed, we are starting to see things a bit clearer now. We now know that the facts have not been revealed properly, and we now know that the government does not protect us, the people. The Fukushima accident is still ongoing, and people in Fukushima will become material for a nuclear experiment. Yet in this country there are people who still want to promote nuclear power.

Her fear reminded me of the work of Satoshi Kamata, one of the event's organizers. In his works (see Kamata 2001, for example), Kamata has pointed out that over the post-Second World War period, the Japanese government promoted nuclear energy as a favorable thing, and local communities received financial benefits for accepting nuclear power plants. A couple of days after the rally, I read an article about an interview with Kamata (*Asia Times*, September 21, 2011), which offers an interesting analogy of the relationship between the government and local communities that accept nuclear plants.

The nuclear industry is like the big bad wolf from the fairy tale [Little Red Riding Hood]. Grandma won't open the door to let him in the house. But when she looks under it, she thinks it is not the wolf but her granddaughter. So she opens the door and the wolf eats her. The house is Japan, and grandma is the local communities.

Under Japan's Three Power Source Development Laws (*Dengen sanpo*), a tremendous amount of money flows into such regions, which are already suffering from depopulation in the marginal areas of Japan, and providing hope that the regional economies will be revived. The mayor of Tsuruga in Fukui Prefecture, where nuclear power plants are concentrated, said that 14% of the annual budget in fiscal year 2010, nearly 8 billion yen, came from nuclear-related businesses; out of a population of 69,000, roughly 5000 people are employed by the nuclear power plants, and an additional 5000 people work

for businesses related to nuclear plants; furthermore, the municipality has now asked to build two more nuclear plants, which will bring 14.5 billion yen to the marginal municipality (*Asahi Shimbun*, October 26, 2011). Meanwhile, Kamata (2001) documented his stories in which he told how all of the areas that now have nuclear plants are regions that once had active anti-nuclear movements. Electric power companies bought them out with cash. The nuclear energy market, which represents the vested interests, monopolized and organized the so-called "nuclear power village" (*genshiryoku mura*) using several means: the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; power-unit producers such as Toshiba, Hitachi, and Mitsubishi, all of which are key actors in Japan's Keidanren, a business lobby; placing a lot of money into the hands of local people through the implementation of the above-mentioned laws; and by means of pronuclear academic scholars and the media, both of which are under the government's thumb. Further, it is relevant to mention here that more than 50 former state bureaucrats are currently working at TEPCO after having retired from the ministries (*Mainichi Shimbun*, September 25, 2011). This is part of *amakudari*, or descent from heaven, a heavily criticized institutional practice that generates unfair bonding between public and private institutions.

Nuclear energy has played a significant role in contributing to economic prosperity. The government has also been propagating nuclear sources using the discourse concerning global warming. Some media and academics have joined the governmental voices. However, the Fukushima disaster has made people realize clearly the huge risks and uncertainty they face in their everyday lives, even though it was too late to prevent the crisis.

*Genpatsu iranai!* (No more nuclear plants!)

*Kodomo wo mamore!* (Protect children from radiation!)

*Shizen wo mamore!* (Protect nature from radiation!)

*Umi wo mamore!* (Protect the ocean from radiation!)

Chanting slogans and waving banners, the people began their march against nuclear power in central Tokyo from Meiji Park in the Aoyama and Omotesando districts, toward Yoyogi Park.

### The old and new in Japan's social movements

The present movement, which I have been describing here, shares many characteristics with older social movements in Japan. During the post-Second World War period, Japan had a rich history of social movements. In particular, the Japanese developed a series of active social movements in the 1960s—for example, the ANPO or anti US–Japan security treaty movement. First, during that time, public intellectuals played a significant role in leading the general public. Second, just as now, women were a dominant figure in the rally as they were leading Japanese social movements, including environmental and consumers' movements in the early post-Second World War era. Third, a certain number of the participants were apparently mobilized through labor unions—which are key actors in Japan's current social movement: I saw many labor union flags (mostly red) at the rally site. I saw the flags of such political parties as Social Democrats and Communists, which also mobilized people. Fourth, as usual, the police forced the rally participants to pass strictly through a narrow street, a historical tactic in street demonstrations in Japan. This has been how Japanese demonstrations against authority are managed, quite different from their European and American counterparts. Fifth, I found out that the secretariat of the Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants rally is located at the headquarters of *Gensuikin*, which was also active in Japan's anti-nuclear movements in the early postwar era, indicating some overlapping with the previous social movements. Another anti-nuclear rally scheduled in early 2012 was also based at the secretariat of Peace Boat, a

major peace NGO (nongovernmental organization), in Tokyo. As Charles Tilly (2004, 53) points out, the ongoing anti-nuclear movement in contemporary Japan is indeed a conflation of “old” and “new” social movements that share many commonalities in organizing efforts and claims in a campaign, in repertoires of political action, and in seeking to constitute recognizable constituencies with stable conceptions of unity and commitment.

On the other hand, there are several new aspects. There were many “rally beginners”, who had never before participated in a political demonstration rally in order to express their will; several people with whom I spoke said that they were coming to this kind of rally for the first time. In fact, the organizers distributed an advice leaflet instructing activists to drink water properly since they would be walking for an hour (the weather was hot), wear comfortable shoes, wear hats, and follow the instructions of the staff. Furthermore, although I mentioned that members of labor unions could frequently be seen in Japan's demonstrations, I saw that the Japan Trade Union Confederation, or Rengo, was participating in an anti-nuclear rally for the first time since its establishment in 1989. The 6.8-million strong federation of labor unions has never demonstrated against nuclear power because many members are nuclear industry employees. However, the trade union, an important backer of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, froze its promotion of nuclear energy three months after the Fukushima disaster, and its stance was finalized at the meeting of representatives from member labor unions in Tokyo in October 2011 (*Mainichi Shimbun*, October 4, 2011).

The most distinctive phenomenon was the participation of young people in Japanese social movements. Since April 2011, Tokyoites have often, mostly on a monthly basis, come to see the anti-nuclear rallies in the central Tokyo districts, such as Shibuya and Shinjuku, ignited by Sono's action on March 20 (see also Kindstrand 2011 for the movement's development during the initial

three months, until June 2011). The series of demonstrations against nuclear plants has attracted thousands of young people. Apparently, however, they are not a mobilized force. Instead, they spontaneously came to the rally sites after watching Ustream, which was broadcast live from the site. They were also receiving messages from such social networking media as Twitter. "I came to know through Twitter that something interesting seems to be happening. That's why I came here. I just want to change present-day Japan," said one young woman who was walking next to me. One of the rally organizers, Keiko Ochiai, commented later that she herself was impressed with the rally participants who came to the site after they had collected information for themselves and had decided on their own whether to participate or not (*Asahi Shinbun*, October 20, 2011). The members of the younger generation who are familiar with such social networking devices were able to find out what was actually going on in grassroots Japan, although the major Japanese media, including the state-run broadcaster NHK, have totally ignored the demonstrations. Not a single word about the demonstrations was said in the 7:00 p. m. national news program on the rally day, September 19, even though the rally ended its march in Yoyogi Park, right next to the NHK headquarters. Jeff Kingston (2011) commented on this: "It is this sort of media 'unhappening' that raises alarms about the power it has over framing public discourse, because ... the domestic mainstream media were more lapdog than watchdog in covering the nuclear crisis...". The new social media are very adept at connecting people, however, and the ongoing anti-nuclear rallies take advantage of the ease such media offer in delivering messages to the general public.

Further, I could see that the young precariat is becoming a key actor in the ongoing anti-nuclear rally. Sono explained his rationale in an interview that was circulated on YouTube (Sono 2011b). The interview was recorded in early October of 2011 shortly after he was released from jail. He

had been arrested on September 23 during the demonstration rally that was anti-discrimination and anti-exclusion. An interviewer asked him why he participated in such a rally, which seemed not to be directly related to anti-nuclear issues.

Yes, actually, everything is connected. Think about that: nuclear plants are always built in rural, marginal, coastal countryside. Nuclear plants are never built in Tokyo. The contamination does not happen equally to everybody. People who do not have work in the rural areas and then will [have no choice but to] work at nuclear power plants [if they want a job at all] will be the first target of radiation exposure. ... Thus, I believe nuclear plants are based on discrimination. My actions are connected in a straight line.

Indeed, the very physical setting of nuclear power plants is based on structural discrimination. The marginality means that the locations of the power plants serve as convenient suppliers of energy for keeping the quality of life for people living in urban areas. TEPCO, headquartered in Tokyo, provides electricity—an inevitable component of economic growth—that is generated by nuclear plants. In fact, 30 of Japan's 54 nuclear reactors are concentrated in Fukushima, Fukui, and Niigata—all marginal prefectures. The economic affluence that Japanese people enjoy is based on the sacrifice of people living in rural, marginal areas. This highly dualistic structure can also be projected onto the emergence of the socioeconomic divide or *kakusa* in Japanese society, which is described as winners (*kachigumi*) vs. losers (*makegumi*). Apparently, many youth nowadays fall into the loser category, also categorized as the precariat. For them, the current economic prosperity is based on the sacrifice (actually, some of my interviewees used the term *sakushu* or exploitation) of their right to have decent work. With mounting anger, they are now coming, finally, to the forefront of society through the ongoing anti-nuclear movement.

The emerging demonstration is not just an anti-nuclear energy movement; it is the beginning of a large-scale protest by ordinary people against the dominant politico-economic discourse—namely, neoliberalism. In fact, Japan's emerging precariat is a product of the political engineering of the late 1990s. The Japan Federation of Employers' Associations (*Nikkeiren*), a Japanese business lobby that was highly influential with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party at that time, proposed a strategic human resources policy to increase firm competitiveness in the global market (JFEA 1995). They advocated the generation of a flexible workforce in the Japanese labor market, allowing firms to adjust labor costs conveniently. This proposal suggested three types of employment statuses: (1) long-term employees at the organization's core; (2) highly specialized professional employees with limited-term employment contracts; and (3) a flexible workforce involved in simple and routine work. On the basis of this proposal, Japan's labor market was deregulated. About 15 years later, this proposal was realized, as I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. In 2010, more than one-third of Japanese workers became part of the flexible workforce or the precariat.

### The link to the global occupy movements

Nowadays the "global consciousness" (Robertson 2011) against the global discourse of neoliberalism, which is shared beyond national borders, is becoming key in the drive to change the world, and the angry young precariat is at the center of the trend. Japan's anti-nuclear movements are now linked to the global Occupy Movement.

The Tokyo action was first called on October 2, 2011, through Twitter as well on Facebook, by a Brazilian who had been living in Japan for two years. This person was asking for help from somebody who could speak Japanese, and from the responses to his message, the Tokyo action was gradually generated. An *Asahi Shimbun* reporter described on October 13, 2011, the

action as seeming not to have any solid leaders. People who came to know each other virtually through social media then got together physically through their common belief that something is wrong in this society. I myself received several Twitter messages on this action: at Mikawadai Park, a small park in Roppongi, a trendy district of Tokyo, more than 100 people got together on October 15, the day of the global action Occupy Together, a social justice movement started from Occupy Wall Street in September 2011.

In the park, I observed the participants freely expressing themselves; some sang songs with guitars, and some were drumming, whistling, and dancing. Even a plastic water bottle became a drum there, making a rhythm that contributed to an active atmosphere. Karin Amamiya, a major critic and author covering the ongoing precariat issues, appeared at the action site. She told the participants that her major motivation for being there was that she had seen the action in New York City and had realized that what they were talking about was the same situation the Japanese precariat face. I also saw a well-known human-rights NGO activist there. She is apparently behind the Occupy Tokyo action, and she spoke to the participants:

The problem is not just that we don't have [decent] jobs. The problem is that if we don't have them, we would not be treated properly as human beings. We are surviving in such a society. It is really difficult. We have several ways to solve the situation we face, including appealing to politicians. However, I believe, as the first step, it is extremely important to raise our own individual voices.

Each of the participants then had a chance to make his or her demands. Someone mentioned that the socioeconomic divide stemming from income disparity continues to worsen; and some expressed concern over radiation contamination from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. A woman who is an anchor of Internet TV specializing in

labor issues helped raise the participants' voices. Her comment was interesting because she said that usually "we are mobilized for this kind of action, for example, by labor unions; but, today, we didn't have it [mobilization]." One man who appeared to be in his early 30s stood up and began to talk:

I am angry against globalism and economic growth. People who believe neoliberalism said it is good, but I don't think so. Such economic growth exploits us, and we don't need such economic growth. Indeed we need some money to survive, but why don't we stop this kind of life that depends on money? I am angry!

Another man in his late 20s, who actually came from Fukushima, said to the participants,

I just wanted to tell [you] that one of my relatives died last week. She was recovering until March; but she was overwhelmed, obviously, by nuclear radiation. Lots of anxiety [implying that it arose from the radiation influence], I believe, obviously, sent her to her death.

One woman in her late 20s claimed,

What I want is a society for the 99 percent. Such society [should] protect us, the 99 percent. I don't [want] police [to] protect the 1 percent.

She was actually addressing her comments to the police surrounding the park. Indeed, a number of police, as well as public safety agents, surrounded the park, but the Roppongi action members were strong and persistent in claiming their opinions and messages. The *Asahi*, which I cited previously (October 13, 2011), reported that the demonstrators were told by police that the very term *Tokyo senkyo* or Occupy Tokyo is too radical, and that was the major reason that they avoided using it. They used the term in the real march, however. Following the rally in the park, they started a march in central Tokyo, shouting, their voices echoing among Tokyo's skyscrapers:

*Genpatsu iranai!* (No more nuclear plants!)

*Kakusa wo nakuse!* (Eliminate socioeconomic divide!)

*99 percent wo mamore!* (Protect the 99 percent!)

*1 percent wa iranai* (No more 1 percent!)

One labor union leader wrote to me in a personal email that it would be significantly important to locate this Tokyo action within the global movement against neoliberalism. The Roppongi action indeed received a solidarity message from Occupy Seoul and interacted with the members of Occupy Washington, DC, via Skype. The union leader emphasized that this action is just a starting point and that the Japanese people need to reflect seriously on what direction they desire for their society.

Later I found out that Sono, who stood against the headquarters of TEPCO in March, was participating in another Occupy Tokyo action developed in Shinjuku. I was able to observe the Shinjuku action uploaded on YouTube (Occupy Tokyo 2011). At the front of the march, Sono shouted:

*Fukushima rentai!* (We are with the people in Fukushima.)

*Ikareru mono wa tatakauso!* (The angry people are going to fight!)

*Sekai kodo ni rentai suruzo!* (We are going to join the world action!)

*Kokkyo koete rentai suruzo!* (We are going to make solidarity beyond borders!)

*Sakushu wo yamero!* (Do not exploit!)

*Kirisute yamero!* (No thanks to lay-off!)

*Shakai haijo wo yurusanai* (We will not tolerate social exclusion!)

*Tokyo senkyo!* (Occupy Tokyo!)

Their shouts were never ending. The Tokyo action developed into a march by thousands of people. Meanwhile, police again tried to regulate the march participants by maneuvering them into only the narrow left-hand roadside. The police made a line, somewhat oppressively. However, police efforts looked relatively weak, compared with the emerging dynamism in which I participated

and which I observed in front of me. Simply put, the anger of the ordinary people is strong, in particular on the part of the young precariat, who cannot get decent jobs and lives as human beings. Their anger was a great motivation in compelling them to join the rally, and they have now started to raise their voices for change.

### A possible step for a post-neoliberal politics

I have noticed that the recent development of anti-nuclear rallies in Japan has given birth to an expanding grassroots dynamism, which may reshape the country's conventional civil-society landscape wherein the state plays a strong role in molding civil society—something that Susan Pharr calls the “activist state” (Pharr 2003). The current anti-nuclear dynamism may be a product of strong frustration and disagreements at the grassroots level against the state-led institutionalization of civil society. Under the NPO Law, the Japanese NPOs play a simple role as administrative arms in the context of the devolution of social services—a key feature of neoliberal governmentality. According to regulations, they must be apolitical; they are not allowed to be involved with any political activities, a restriction that apparently oppresses “voices” (Couldry 2010). Nick Couldry powerfully argues in his recent book that “[n]eoliberalism is a rationality that denies voice and operates with a view of human life that is incoherent” (Couldry 2010, 133). What I have documented in this paper is the voices of the young precariat, such as Sono Ryota and residents in Fukushima—both of whom are victims of neoliberalism—as well as voices of woman and the elderly, whose positions are marginal in current politics. They have now taken a position at the forefront. I am seeing a huge explosion of voices through the anti-nuclear rallies and demonstrations, and this might be a starting point for post-neoliberal politics, which will “more adequately embod[y] the value of voice”

(Couldry 2010, 15). Japan is now experiencing a historic movement toward change.

In a more practical sense, the ongoing crisis after March 11 has indeed given the country the opportunity to formulate a new energy policy. Nuclear energy has been described as “safe, clean, and cheap”. However, on July 13, 2011, the former Prime Minister, Naoto Kan, announced his vision of gradually phasing out nuclear energy by abandoning current plans to build 14 new reactors by 2030. Recent media polls show that up to 74% of the Japanese favor at least a gradual phasing out of nuclear power (*Mainichi Shimbun*, August 22, 2011). Meanwhile, Japan's nuclear energy market represents the vested interests organized by the so-called Nuclear Village. The pro-nuclear camp, citing an electricity shortage, is still advocating the necessity of nuclear power. Japan, however, has enough reserves of thermal power plants and other types of plants, such as natural gas and coal plants, to power the country adequately. One recently released study from Greenpeace Japan (2011, 3) shows that Japan could phase out nuclear power by the end of 2012 and could generate 43% of its electricity by 2020 from renewable energy. Further, as Helen Caldicott claimed in an *International Herald Tribune Magazine* article on December 2, 2011, true, green, clean, nearly emission-free solutions exist for providing energy; they lie in a combination of conservation and renewable energy source, mainly wind, solar and geo-thermal, hydropower plants, and biomass from algae. Thus, the ongoing anti-nuclear movement is going beyond the discourse on Japan's energy policy. The major efforts are nowadays carried out primarily by eco-entrepreneurs who establish social enterprises—financially independent, non-profit civic bodies with social aims.

*No More Nukes!* This phrase was repeated, even shouted, half a century ago by ordinary people. However, the ongoing crisis is going to be a major challenge for the Japanese people, an invitation to reflect on their own way of life as well as their social structure, both of which depend on nuclear plants, and to consider more means

for creating a new post-Fukushima Japan. The young precariat is at the forefront of this challenge.

### Note

1. He documented his action himself. See Sono (2011a).

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