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Yonezu Tomoko and the *ūman ribu* movement:
The intersection of radical feminism and the disability movement in Japan from the
1970s until 1996



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Word count: 50,045

PhD Japanese Studies

School of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures (LLC)

University of Edinburgh

2022

Abstract

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Lay Abstract
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This thesis investigates the life and work of Yonezu Tomoko, a prominent female disabled activist in Japan whose work spanned both the radical women's liberation (*ūman ribu*) and disability movements from the 1970s to 1996. So far *ribu* has been examined by scholars as primarily a women's movement, and historiography has focused on the key figure of Tanaka Mitsu and the short-lived (1971-1977) activities connected to the Ribu Shinjuku Centre. While this work has been important in documenting *ribu's* activities, it does not account for how *ribu* theory and practice influenced other fields of social activism. To address this gap in extant scholarship, I reassess *ribu's* theoretical position as fundamentally intersectional, arguing that it embraced a politics of difference and resistance to state interventions into bodily autonomy that transcended gender alone. With this framework established, I then trace how Yonezu Tomoko, took *ribu's* ideas into the field of disability activism and reproductive justice through organisations such as SOSHIREN and the DPI *Josei shōgaisha network*. Following Yonezu's life and work, I show how *ribu* thought provided a platform for new forms of intersectional activist groups to challenge productivity as the predominant measure of human value in Japan into the 1990s. In doing so the thesis provides an analysis of post-war Japanese reproduction discourse and addresses how the presence, participation, and contributions of disabled activists pushed the debate beyond bodily autonomy based on gender and sexuality.

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Front matter

Notes on Style

Throughout this thesis, Japanese names are given with the surname first and the first name second, as it is custom in Japanese. The Hepburn system is used for the romanisation of Japanese terms and names.

All translations from Japanese to English are my own unless otherwise indicated in the text.

Already published materials included in this thesis

Parts of Chapter 3 have been published as a book chapter entitled “Reassessing Japanese Radical Feminism from the Vantage Point of Dis/ability” in Lee, M., Cooper, F.R. and Reeve, P. (eds.). *Dis/ability in media, law: Intersectional, embodied and socially constructed?* London, UK: Routledge. pp. 119-133.

Parts of Chapter 4 are part of the forthcoming book chapter “Feminism and Disability” in the “Handbook for Feminisms in Japan”, edited by Ulrike Wöhr and Andrea Germer (in press).

Acknowledgements

Sitting at my desk finishing up the final edits of this thesis, I cannot believe that I have actually reached the finishing line of my PhD. I feel great relief that after 4 years and 2 months I will finally be able to enjoy reading a book for entertainment again without feeling guilty! It's a much overdue farewell to a project that introduced me to so many great people, some of them I am now lucky enough to call friends; a project that also caused me great emotional and financial distress along the way. Researching and writing this thesis during a global pandemic while also working on the frontline in a supermarket was the most stressful things I have done so far in my life and without the love, care and support from my family and friends this would have not been possible! Thank you for all your calls and visits, in spirit and in person, getting me over the line was a true team effort. But in the end, all the sleepless nights and early mornings aside, I think it was all worth it.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Yonezu Tomoko for sharing her experiences and materials with me, without whom my whole thesis would not have been possible! Interviewing her in person and experiencing her kindness and commitment to push the societal discourse on reproductive justice and inclusivity have been the great joys of this research project!

Ehre wem Ehre gebührt, I would like to express my eternal gratitude to my supervisor Dr Chris Perkins. Without his endless patience and invaluable guidance, I don't know if this research project would have ever actually manifested onto the following pages! Thanks for pulling me out of many rabbit holes and keeping my eyes on the prize, Chris.

I would also like to thank Dr Helen Parker, my second supervisor, for her encouragements and constructive comments in our end of year conversations. Furthermore, I feel indebted to the whole Asian Studies Department at the University of

Edinburgh, who have always supported me in my studies, through Master's and PhD, and who gave me the opportunity to engage with the next generation of researchers as a tutor for 3 years. A special thank you to Dr Mark McLeister, Dr Ian Astley, Dr Aaron Moore, Dr Holly Stephens, Dr Daniel Hammond, Dr Youngmi Kim and Fumiko Narumi-Munro.

Thank you to my parents, Andrea and Helmolt, for always having my back and their unconditional love that is the greatest source of strength in times of self-doubt. Thank you to my grandma, Nagyi, my cousin Iván and my uncle Frédi and his wife Ildikó, my Edinburgh family, Natascha, Joachim, Philipp, and Fredi, and all the others of the Vittinghoff-Vitáris clan!

Where would I be without my partners in crime, my Master and PhD companions, my pub discussion buddies, my sources of countless memories and memes, Olivia and Matt! And of course, Sophie! How fortunate we are that we got to go on this crazy and exhausting ride together!

I would also like to thank my friends and former colleagues in Waitrose Morningside, who made it a wee bit easier to cope with lockdown and travel restrictions during the pandemic. After all we had a good laugh in some not so funny times.

Last but not least, I have to express my heartfelt gratitude to my partner, my rock, my best friend, Graeme who saw the good, the bad, and the ugly of this project and me in the process of writing it and whose unbroken confidence in me amazes me every day! Thanks for reminding me to keep hydrated every day, I owe you on demand lasagnes for eternity!

It's finally done.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A young woman sprayed red paint in the direction of the Mona Lisa today but was arrested immediately, the police reported. No damage was reported done to the masterpiece.

(The New York Times, April 20th, 1974, p. 16)

This short news item was published as a side note to an article reporting on Leonardo DaVinci's famous Mona Lisa's visit to Tokyo in the New York Times on April 20th, 1974. Screaming "[y]ou are excluding the disabled! Show the Mona Lisa to everyone! [...] The Mona Lisa is crying when witnessing such wrongful discrimination!" (Mainichi Shimbun, 1974a, p. 6), *ūman ribu* (short: *ribu*; a Japanese rendering of 'women's liberation' in English) activist Yonezu Tomoko approached the Mona Lisa and sprayed red paint onto the security glass case protecting the artwork. Yet, what seemed a minor incident of civil disobedience and vandalism to most American readers marked a significant moment within Japanese social activism. It represented the joint struggle of radical feminists and disabled activists against the persistent discrimination and systematic exclusion of marginalised groups in post-war capitalist Japan. It also provided public exposure to the discriminatory practices against disabled people. The symbol for this alliance became the then 25-year-old *ribu* and disabled activist Yonezu Tomoko, who was arrested following her protest action and detained for a month.

But why did Yonezu protest the discrimination of women, disabled people, and working-class people all together that day? What was the reasoning that drew together these equivalences? How did this intersectional analysis of post-war Japan's social order come about? What represented the joint struggle of the groups in question?

I argue that Yonezu's actions and her organising against state intervention into people's bodies since the early 1970s fundamentally challenged the post-war bio-political order in Japan while critically engaging with the able-bodied employed man set as the standard for the social, economic, and political infrastructure. Furthermore, the deliberate equation of women with children and disabled people as both requiring different forms of access due to restrictions on their mobility (mobility aids in the case of disabled people and strollers for babies and toddlers for women with children) also demonstrated the entanglement of both groups on the question of reproduction. Both groups, as her action showed, were targeted by reproductive politics, and policed by Japan's bio-politics. This thesis is an account of how *ribu*, activists like Yonezu Tomoko, and the disability movement together reshaped the reproductive discourse by challenging the bio-political order of post-war Japan and scrutinising the norms and values produced by this order.

The story of the intersection of the *ūman ribu* and the disability movement starts a couple of years prior to the Mona Lisa Spray incident, when in 1972 the government attempted to revise the Eugenic Protection Law (short: EPL; *Yūsei hogo hō*) and limit access to legal abortions in Japan. Reproduction and women's bodies were governed by the Eugenic Protection Law (EPL) from 1948 up until its replacement in 1996. It set out the legal framework for abortions and sterilisation as under Chapter XXIX of the Penal Code abortions were de jure illegal.¹ In its language, the law stressed the importance of promoting a healthy and strong population and the prevention of biologically inferior offspring, including mentally and physically disabled. After failed revision attempts in the

¹ This is still the case in November 2022 at the time of submission of this thesis.

1970s, conservative politicians again voiced their desire to revise the EPL in 1982, however this time their aim was only the deletion of the economic reasons clause.

The following establishment of an intersectional approach to reproductive justice that incorporated gender and disability, and which should be understood as interventions into the bio-political order, did not happen without conflict and tensions between the two groups. Especially, in the beginning of the debate *ribu* and disability activists like *Aoi shiba no kai* approached the topic from two opposite sides of the discussion: women framed it as a question of their right to choose what to do with their bodies focussing mainly on the proposed elimination of the economic reasons clause, whereas disability activists saw their right to live (or the right to be born) under attack by the foetal clause. It is important to mention here that the disability movement should not be understood as homogenous. Goals and motivations varied among representative groups. In my analysis, however, I will predominantly focus on the radical cerebral palsy group *Aoi shiba no kai* (Green Grass Society) as the main antagonist turned collaborator of the *ribu* movement in the 1970s, as well as representatives of the disabled women's movement through the Disabled Persons International (DPI) *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* and people active in the independent living movement from the 1980s. This is because these groups were key actors within the reproductive discourse in post-war Japan and stood in dialogue with the groups Yonezu Tomoko was involved with too.²

My thesis' interventions into the existing literature

Yonezu Tomoko's life and her activism is the primary focus of this investigation. Her personal history touches upon a broad range of topics covered in existing literature: the Japanese student movement in the 1960s, the subsequent women's liberation

² Yonezu was and still is a member of the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* as of October 2022 when this thesis was submitted.

movement, *ūman ribu*, in the 1970s, as well as reproductive politics centred around the revision attempts of the EPL, first during her time with *ribu*, followed by her organising against renewed political interest to revise the law and further limit the legal access to abortions in 1982, and all the way through to the replacement of the EPL with the Maternal Body Protection Law (short: MBPL; *Botai hogo hō*) in 1996. She was a key actor in driving the debate on bodily autonomy and reproductive justice forward based on her embodied existence, experience, and the exchanges with different stake holders within the public debate.

It is argued that the *ūman ribu* movement formally ended with the closure of its main hub the Ribu Shinjuku Center in 1977. While this may be the case for the formal organisation of the activist movement and network, I argue that the ideas lived on and moved into different fields of activity. To show how this happened, I focus on the life and work of leading *ribu* activist Yonezu Tomoko, who through her intersectional embodiment as a disabled woman, was able to take *ribu's* ideas into new and different directions on the margins of Japanese society. Thus, my thesis offers a case study for how specific activist frameworks and critiques extend beyond the movements they were initially proposed in. For example, how *ribu's* critique of the capitalist logic of productivity made its way into the 2019 Upper House election campaign of the newly formed Reiwa Shinsengumi party more than four decades after the movement's disbandment (Mainichi Japan, 2019).

Oguma's (2009) comprehensive account of the student movement and Japan's New Left, which is generally referred to as Japan's long 1960s, forms an important starting point for many scholars interested in the student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Examining the historical background and the different sects within campus based activism, he also provides an analysis of the socio-economic, political, and

historical conditions to situate the emergence of different ideological currents and sects within the movement. Providing a detailed genealogy of a range of different protest struggles including demonstrations of the *ūman ribu* movement, as well as for example the occupation of Haneda airport protesting the Japanese governments involvement in the Vietnam war, Oguma concludes that what started as a political endeavour with the goal to transform society, quickly dissolved into a space where young people were preoccupied with their self-realisation and reflection as a result of their alienation by post-war society. In essence, he disqualifies the political potential of Japan's 1968 after its actors retreated from the institutional political arena at the time. However, this a very narrow reading of the politics and socio-political influence of social movements. It limits the influence of radical movements to the collective level working through established political practices. However, I argue and demonstrate with this thesis that in many cases, as in that of Yonezu Tomoko and the *ūman ribu* movement, it is the individual that carries over the legacies of the movement into new contexts and develops them further. Therefore, we need to expand our understanding of how social change occurs paying closer attention to the grassroots activists rather than mainly judging it from what happens on an institutional level.

More recently, Schieder (2021) provided an important intervention into the existing literature on the Japanese student movement by highlighting the contributions of women. In doing so, Schieder puts forwards a nuanced accounting of the gendered reality of the Japanese New Left and its campus based activism in the late 1960s. Schieder debunks the common perception of the Japanese post-war student movement as an exclusively men lead movement and that women only did support work by focussing on revolutionary texts produced by women, such as Kanba Michiko (1937-1960) and Tokoro

Mitsuko (1939-1968), and the complexity of women's contributions to campus-based leftist activism (2021, p. 18-20).

Setsu Shigematsu's book "Scream from the Shadows – the Women's Liberation movement in Japan" (2012) is the hitherto stand-alone publication in English that comprehensively analyses the *ūman ribu* movement and its politics. She provides an extensive genealogy and historiography of the movement, its main actors, and the socio-political environment that enabled its formation. The main focus of Shigematsu's analysis is upon de-facto leader and main theorist Tanaka Mitsu. While she also looks at the reproductive discourse of the 1970s and *ribu's* campaign against the revision of the EPL, the core interest of Shigematsu's inquiry is the relationship between the movement and its engagement with violence. As she argues *ūman ribu* offered an important intervention in how violence expressed by women is conceptualised (ibid., p. xiii). By establishing solidarity with women who killed their children and their expression of support for United Red Army leader Nagata Hiroko, Shigematsu suggests the *ūman ribu* to provide "[...] insights into an alternative feminist epistemology of violence that locates violence in the female body and the feminine subject" (ibid., p. xiii).

Shigematsu goes on to argue that *ribu's* critique of the state-sanctioned institution of motherhood fundamentally challenged how motherhood, as well as maternal love (*bosei ai*), had been deployed as a nationalist ideological devices and how modern society regulated women's reproductive capabilities through the patriarchal and patrilinear nationalist family system (ibid., p. 19). A concrete expression of this critique was the establishment of communes among *ribu* activists and their support of the politics of giving birth outside the family system (ibid., p. 19-20). Shigematsu sees the theoretical reflections and the subsequent practical application of such in *ribu* affiliated activists' lives as a radical break that delinks motherhood from the patriarchal family system (ibid.,

p. 20). By analysing the coming together of *ribu* activists and disabled women on this issue in formulating an intersectional approach to reproductive politics which takes into account gender and disability simultaneously, I expand this analysis and demonstrate that *ribu's* influence on reproductive justice activism transcends the 1970s and it was negotiated into new contexts through people like Yonezu Tomoko.

Joyce Gelb's comparative analysis of gender policies in post-war Japan and the United States (2003) analyses the political stakeholders the relationship between the legislature, bureaucracy, and interest groups involved in the policy making process. Her case studies focus on policies regarding equal employment opportunity, domestic violence, reproductive rights, and harmonising work and family life. As a political scientist Gelb dissects the interplay of interest groups and how this manifest in policy proposals and ultimately enacted legislations, rather than investigating their function in upholding the persistent social order and questioning the logic behind it. Nevertheless, this study gives my doctoral research project an important springboard to further expose the political entanglements that define this debate.

Tiana Norgren (2001) provides a more in-depth analysis of establishment of the laws governing abortion and contraception and the interest groups involved in these processes. Norgren examines how the state negotiated with social activist groups, mainly women and disability rights groups, and special interest groups such as *Nichibo*, the National Association of Obstetrician-gynaecologists, while also positioning the discourses in their historical context. The main aim of her study is to provide "[...] an alternative picture of Japanese politics" by debunking the myth that Japanese politics are a strictly top-down affair where citizens' influence on decision makers is very limited or non-existent (Norgren, 2001, p. 12). Interested mainly in the dynamics behind the political discourse on reproduction, which political and social stakeholders are driving

which part of the discourse and policymaking, Norgren also sheds light onto the human experience behind the politics, how the legislations affect their primary target, namely women in Japan. Building on Norgren's research, my analysis delves deeper into the involvement of social activists, such as Yonezu, their human experiences in these processes and their critiquing of institutions. Additionally, I examine the experiences of disabled people, particularly that of disabled women, and their contribution to the wider discourse on reproductive politics spanning from the late 1970s, 1980s to the present day.

Utilising Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality, Takeda (2005) persuasively sheds light on how the state integrates women and their reproductive capacities into the Japanese political economies by intervening into their bodies. Her main objective is to "provide a clear picture of the 'reproduction' from the late nineteenth century to the present in Japan" (ibid., p. 5). In this process, encountering the topic from an institutional angle, Takeda reconstructs how policies and laws intervened into reproduction (ibid., p. 6). She shows how government interventions into people's reproductive practises were a constant since the Meiji period, however, their modes differ depending on the specific historic moment they take place in; secondly, eugenics are the main concerns when it comes to these interventions; lastly, women are the key target for these interventions as a result of the gendered role they play within the Japanese reproductive system (ibid., pp. 191-192). Following on from these insights I will examine what part reproduction plays within the bio-political order and how its regulation through the EPL highlights that since it was enacted in 1948.

The issue of selective abortion with the help of prenatal diagnostics and the bio-ethical consequences if such practises are or should be promoted through the law since the 1970s is central to Kato's analysis (2009, p. 13). Central to her inquiry is the question

whether women have the absolute right to abort a foetus with an anomaly (ibid., p. 14). Framing the termination of a pregnancy as a woman's right put the proponents of the women's movement such as *ribu* in front of a dilemma. Kato argues that on the one hand, conceptualising abortion access as a 'right' represented the rationalisation of the painful experiences of abortion and the ethical problems of aborting foetuses with anomalies, thus reducing the complex nature of the issue to a plain legal issue about access. On the other hand, however, if the women's movement completely rejected such a framing women would lose a persuasive political instrument to criticise the oppression they face in Japanese society, as they would effectively renounce their legal entitlement to bodily autonomy (ibid., p. 14). Subsequently, she critically engages with the notions of individual rights and discusses how this Western concept was 'supported, used, understood, and felt' within the Japanese women's movement (ibid., p. 20). Kato's book is therefore not only a historical analysis of the tensions surrounding selective abortions in Japan with a specific focus on the loaded interactions between the women's and disability movement, but it also provides a theoretical discussion of the language and framing of the discourse.

As illustrated above, work on the student movement as conducted by Oguma (2009) and Schieder (2020) provides my investigation with the crucial historical and socio-political background. In Yonezu's and so many other young Japanese people's life campus based activism represented their political awakening and many went on to challenge social justice after it came to an end. However, not much insight is given regarding what happened with these student activists once they left the movement and the barricades on university campuses across Japan were removed. By following Yonezu's life starting with her involvement in student activism at Tama Arts University, I reconstruct the story of one of these former student radicals and shed light on one of the stories of what happened after Japan's 1968. Through her story I link together social

movements who challenged the neoliberal status quo, the norms and values of post-war Japan and aspire to intervene and transform the persistent social order.

Furthermore, existing literature thematising reproductive politics in post-war Japan focuses on either the political stakeholders (Norgren, 2001, Kato, 2009, and Gelb, 2003), the consequences post-war reproductive politics had on Japan's political economy (Takeda, 2005), and/or the women's rights question with regards to eugenic abortions (Kato, 2009). Shigematsu's (2012) discussion of the *ūman ribu* movement also touches upon their campaign against the revision attempts of the EPL in the early 1970s, however she is primarily interested in the *ribu's* political ideology and their conceptualisation violence, especially female violence. These selected works all engage with the post-war reproductive discourse in one way or another, and therefore they laid the foundation of my investigation. They set the scene for my primary interest which the critical assessment of how *ūman ribu* and what followed shaped reproductive politics regarding the role it plays within the bio-political order of Japan. What role did the EPL play in maintaining this order? How did Yonezu's intersectional analysis of the issue, the inclusion of disability resulting from her embodied experience and the exchanges between *ribu*, the disability movement represented by *Aoi shiba no kai*, and disabled women, intervene and challenge the bio-political order?

Why Yonezu Tomoko?

As mentioned earlier, my thesis follows the life and work of *ribu* and disabled activist Yonezu Tomoko. Focussing on the life story of a person when linking together historical developments, especially when investigating social activism, bears its problems. How can a single individual's story influence the course of history? Are the personal circumstances really indicative of the social history in question? Does focussing on one individual potentially erase the experiences of the other actors involved? Does it

homogenise these experiences? I am aware that I cannot tell the whole story by looking at one person and how they navigated it. However, giving centre stage to Yonezu Tomoko's experiences and her progression through social activism of post-war Japan (student movement – *ūman ribu* – reproductive justice movement) provides biographical history that to a certain degree mirrored the evolution of post-war social activism in Japan. This is further exemplified by Yonezu's continuous participation within the reproductive debate to the present day, as she remains a leading voice within SOSHIREN - From My Body, from Women's Bodies' (SOSHIREN – *Onna (watashi) no karada kara*)³, the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku*, and the Association for demanding an apology for eugenic surgeries (*Yūseishujutsu ni taisuru shazai wo motomeru kai*; short *Motomeru kai*)⁴. Moreover, it provides an alternative story of *ribu* that is so far centred around Tanaka Mitsu who, however, left Japan and emancipatory movements following her move to Mexico in 1975 which also limited her relevance to the Japanese discourse on women's liberation thereafter. As described by Gerteis (2021) the main goal of leftist activism saw a shift from revolution to reforms of the existing political and socio-economic system, from comprehensive transformation of society to a more single-issue approach after the late 1970s. My thesis builds on this important observation by adding the case study of *ribu* and its legacy that was continued by activists such as Yonezu Tomoko who took the movement's main ideals and knowledge to her reproductive justice activism. Thus, Yonezu becomes the embodied connecting link between the 1970s, *ūman ribu*, and the subsequent decades of advocacy for bodily autonomy and against eugenics in Japan.

³ More context of the establishment and aims of the group colloquially known as SOSHIREN will be provided in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

⁴ The Conclusion Chapter of this thesis will engage with *Motomeru kai* more in-depth.

Moreover, this biographically motivated approach reveals the complexity and intersectional character of the interventions into the bio-political order as reflected in the Yonezu's struggle with her own positioning within the reproductive debate. Her reconciliation of both of her embodied identities, being a woman and being disabled, the difficulties of this process, it illustrates the tensions and contradictions that formed the biggest hurdle for the *ūman ribu* movement, later for the reproductive justice movement, and for the disability movement to overcome. This still is a work-in-progress.

The concept of intersectionality has its origins in the racialised gendered discrimination of black women in the United States and was coined by Black feminist legal scholar and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw and bell hooks in the late 1980s, over 10 years after *ribu* and the Mona Lisa Spray incident. At its core, intersectionality refers to “[...] systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination intersect to create unique dynamics and effect” (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2022). Thus, intersectionality's emphasis on the complexity of inequality makes it a concept applicable and significant to the analysis of *ribu* and its interaction with the disability movement. As an approach it embraces the notion that the categories of identities do not function additively regarding the discrimination they are exposed to, but, rather, are intertwined and constitutive (Siebers, 2017, p. 323). Furthermore, “[...] intersectionality insists that multiple, co-constituting analytic categories are operative and equally salient in constructing institutionalised practices and lived experiences” (Carastathis, 2014, p. 307). Subsequently, my approach is informed by the conception of what Leslie McCall (2005) describes as an ‘intercategorical complexity approach’ to intersectionality. This approach focusses on “[...] the complexity of relationships among multiple social groups within and across

analytical categories and not on complexities within single social groups, single categories, or both” (McCall, 2005, p. 1786).

Throughout the analysis of the *ūman ribu* movement’s reproductive politics and Yonezu’s activism, this thesis utilises the concept of intersectionality to highlight the complexity of the social issue of reproduction in Japan and how it is articulated by the activist groups in question as it affects and references multiple compounding categories such as gender, sexuality, disability, class, and race. Therefore, when describing Yonezu’s various experiences of inequality throughout different chapters of her life as profoundly intersectional, it emphasises the multiple intersecting identities that Yonezu brings together in her existence that of being a woman and a disabled person at the same time. My analysis does not look at her different categories of identity separately but together simultaneously. Furthermore, as this thesis will show the intersection of gender and disability is especially significant when it comes to the topic of reproduction and reproductive politics in post-war Japan.

Following Yonezu Tomoko helps us understanding the inherent intersectionality of *ūman ribu* as a movement characterised by its members diverse experiences what it means to be a woman in post-war Japan and through her embodiment of this character. Yonezu conceptualisation of her disability as a product of her social environment rather than consequences from her medical circumstances echo Siebers (2017) and Silvers (2019) ideas of embodiment theory and that of social construction. As Lee et al. (2022) argue disability is both embodied, “constituted by the configuration of a body in a physical world”, as well as socially constructed, “made meaningful through historical representations of the body and law”, at the same time (p. 1). This embodied analysis of Yonezu’s experiences as a disabled woman in post-war Japan ties in with the concept of

intersectionality and also, as I will show in this thesis, will influence the encounters between *ūman ribu* and the disability movement. Hence, embracing the concept of intersectionality here is imperative given the complex systems of discrimination disabled women like Yonezu are exposed in post-war Japanese society.

In this way, looking at the *ribu* movement and their struggle solely from a gender-based perspective would disregard the complexity of inequality and the interlocking systems of power that lead to discriminatory practices in post-war capitalist Japan. Further, it would not deliver an in-depth analysis of the movement's politics and influences on Japanese society, neither would it satisfy the complexity of social life and composition of the *ribu* movement itself. All the different categories at play, such as class, ability, race, and gender, must be considered together, in relation to one another as compounding categories. This of course, is also relevant when looking at the disability movement as key player within the discourse of reproductive politics and justice as the it is not to be understood as a homogenous movement either. My analysis of the disability movement's approach to reproduction, especially the approach of disabled women to the issue, shows that only an intersectional lens enables us to uncover the bio-political entanglements of the issue that is reproduction.

However, it is not to say that the development of an intersectional approach to reproduction in Japan was without any problems and a simple process for parties involved. Though it seems like an obvious approach to take given the different implications reproduction and the bio-political order has on those affected by it most, to this day, articulating a joint strategy remains difficult. Women's complicity in eugenics since the late 19th century, especially their collaboration in war-time mobilisation and the manipulation of the population for such, their participation in a horse trade for more bodily autonomy and birth control access in exchange for the prevention of the birth of

disabled life as argued by disability activists, poses seemingly unreconcilable tensions between the two groups. Additionally, the equation of women as first and foremost mothers or mothers-to-be by male disability activists highlighted how persisting gender roles were also replicated within marginalised groups and further impeded collaboration.

Thus, the emergence of spaces where women, able bodied and disabled alike, could exchange experiences became a crucial catalyst for the establishment of an intersectional approach to reproduction and reproductive justice. The emancipatory capacity of *ūman ribu* and how it affected its participants throughout the 1970s played a significant role in opening up such spaces. The fertile soil left behind after the end of *ribu* in 1977 together with the increased participation of disabled women in mainstream society, the formation of the independent living movement in Japan, as well as the heightened international attention towards disability issues with the United Nations' International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) in 1981 enabled the emergence of female disabled voices. Disabled women's participation in the reproductive discourse was crucial for bridging some of the differences and advancing the intersectional approach of reproductive politics in post-war Japan.

In the history of population policy, women's bodies, and their reproductive capacity, have been a key target for policy makers and medical professionals to regulate human life. This history, as I will show in the first chapter of my thesis, is closely intertwined with the emergence of the nation state and the transformation of power in the Foucauldian sense which in the Japanese case relates to the Meiji period onwards. The emergent bio-power, the power over life through the control of the population and its bodies, became a fundamental building block within the social order of a nation. Furthermore, I will demonstrate the role eugenics played in the early 20th century and how eugenic thought continued to be an ideological undercurrent of the reproductive

discourse in the post-war era. This is not only represented by the explicit language used in the legislations governing reproduction in Japan but also in the idealisation of economic productivity as the main determinant of human value. Thus, I will argue that looking at reproductive justice and politics as demonstrated by the interactions between the radical women's liberation movement *ūman ribu* and disability activists starting in the 1970s from a women's rights perspective alone will produce a one-dimensional analysis disregarding the bio-ethical entanglements of the issues at play.

As Tiana Norgren (2001) has shown in her analysis of the political stakeholders involved in the policy development and enactment of the EPL from its enactment in 1948 through the revision attempts in the 1970s and 1980s until its replacement with the Maternal Body Protection Law (MBPL) in 1996, the question of whether abortion access should stay legal or should be stripped away, whether pre-natal diagnostics should be included in legislations or not, cannot be reduced to moral concerns, religious agendas or its profit-maximising capacity for those offering it as a purchasable health service to women alone. As Norgren (2001) emphasises throughout her book, attention must be paid to all stakeholders' motivations and the broader societal context these are fostered in to provide us with the complete picture of how reproductive politics take place and what their functions are in upholding the social order they are articulated in.

When telling Yonezu's story, I draw upon in person interviews I conducted with her during a field trip to Tokyo in March 2020 and our follow up e-mail correspondence. As one of the figure heads of the *ūman ribu* movement and co-founder of the group that later becomes SOSHIREN Yonezu also administers the archives of these two groups, a collection of a diverse range of material they published throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, to which she granted me access to during my visit to Japan.

Besides the remaining original copies that are safely stored in Yonezu's private home, there are two edited collections of material from the 1970s published by two different groups as part of two different archival projects. The first one titled "The History of Japanese Women's Liberation (*Nihon ūman ribu shi*)" edited and curated by Mizoguchi Akiyo (1934-), Saeki Yōko (1940-), and Miki Sōko (1943-)⁵ published in three volumes as annotated transcriptions of the mostly handwritten or typed originals. This three-part publication is organised by time periods, 1969-1972, 1972-1975, and 1975-1979 and was published over three years in 1992, 1994 and 1995. The curated material did not exclusively contain publications from the Ribu Shinjuku Center and its core groups but was a broader archival project to showcase writings by groups affiliated with the *ūman ribu* movement from across Japan. It is not entirely clear what the specific selection criteria were to determine which publications were included and which did not make the cut. Almost a decade later, in 2008, the Ribu Shinjuku Center Committee for the Preservation of Documents (*Ribu shinjuku sentā shiryō hozonkai*) of which Yonezu was part of the editor team published the scanned copies of original material from the 1970s encompassing three volumes organised based on the format of the materials into *ribu* news, pamphlets, and flyers or posters (*ribu nyūsu, panfuretto hen, bira hen*). Selected parts of these materials constituted the starting point of my investigation.

Due to its short period the *ūman ribu* movement was active and its failure to materialise the radical transformation of Japanese society, the movement is generally described as a short-lived experimental phase of Japanese radical feminism. Subsequently, the movement's social impact is minimalised. However, in my thesis I offer an alternative reading of *ūman ribu*. As French psycho-analyst and political philosopher

⁵ All three women are former *ribu* members and life-long campaigners for social justice.

Félix Guattari (2015) argued, micropolitical movements like the feminist movement which appear to have rather minimal impact on a macropolitical level at the time they are taking place in, as in no immediate policy change or the failure to bring about the radical change they are advocating for, can in fact “produce effects of great magnitude on the scale of an entire country or even the whole planet” with long-term consequences for the societal fabric (p. 18). This underlines my argument that assessing the *ūman ribu* movement, and frankly any radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s, based on whether they have achieved their stated goals or not, is not taking into consideration their long-term impact on societal relations and how societal change occurs. As my investigation will show, the 1970s formed a catalyst for the formation of intersectional activism in Japan and the reframing of reproductive politics. Furthermore, limiting our assessment of radical movements to whether their agenda has been fully implemented and embraced by mainstream society or not does also not consider the personal emancipatory potential such radical enterprises have on their members. The space that *ribu* represented for participants enabled them to fundamentally question societal relations and the role the individual occupies in it. *Ribu* allowed women like Yonezu who struggled to find her place within Japanese mainstream society to explore their self away from the societal restrictions of post-war Japan and thus became a formative experience for their social activism too. By following Yonezu Tomoko’s activism and life story through the post-war period this becomes abundantly clear that this ‘fringe movement’ indeed successfully penetrated Japan’s societal fabric by expanding the discourse in post-war Japan.

Thesis structure

Chapter two provides my thesis with the necessary analytical framework for my analysis of reproductive politics by activists from the 1970s. Its main aim is to develop a framework that reflect the role state interventions into bodies plays in the social order of

post-war Japan. Hence, I turn my attention to the formation of bio-power and its modes of action as developed by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Subsequently, I will dissect how the EPL features in the bio-political order in Japan and how said positioning affects bio-political interventions into female bodies. As mentioned in the above section about existing scholarship, my doctoral research will not reconstruct the establishment of the EPL and the legacies it carries over from the pre-war period. Neither will it dwell on the composition of the political stakeholders behind the revision attempts, their motivations as this has been analysed sufficiently by Norgren (2001), Takeda (2005), Kato (2009), and Gelb (2003) previously. Rather, my main aim in relation to the EPL is to understand how it fit into the persistent bio-political order in post-war Japan, what role it played within that structure and what its bio-ethical implications were. For that the political context is important but not of primary interest.

Chapter three will focus on the challenges to the bio-political order by the *ūman ribu* movement in the early 1970s as exemplified by their opposition to the proposed revisions of the EPL in 1971. Besides looking at the movement's argument against the tightening of legal access to abortion and the introduction of a foetal clause to the law, this chapter will also provide important historical context of the socio-political hotbed that enabled the establishment of the *ūman ribu* movement. It will reconstruct and analyse the ideological entanglements and continuities that members brought with them as they departed the male dominated student movement of the late 1960s. These previous experiences represented an important catalyst for a woman centred approach to social justice, the radical transformation of Japanese society, and societal critique, not only on the level of the collective, the movement, but also on an individual level, that of the specific activist like Yonezu Tomoko. Subsequently, I dissect the tensions and exchanges with proponents of the disability movement, represented here by radical

cerebral palsy group *Aoi shiba no kai*, that arose within the reproductive discourse among emancipatory movements at the time. These interactions formed the starting point for the formulations of an intersectional approach to reproductive justice and bodily autonomy in post-war Japan and furthermore highlighted the important part reproduction and state sanctioned interventions into bodies played within the biopolitical order.

The last analytical chapter of this doctoral thesis will focus on the period after the conclusion of the *ūman ribu* movement in 1977 up until 1996 when the EPL was changed into the MBPL which saw the erasure of explicitly eugenic language from the law. Specifically, I will look at the renewed interest in revising the EPL in 1982, how groups like the '82 Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law' which Yonezu was a key organiser for as well as the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* (Disabled Peoples' International Disabled Women's Network) impacted and further developed the reproductive discourse. Again, following Yonezu's involvement within social activism I will demonstrate how activists like her carried on the legacy of the *ribu* into the subsequent decades. Additionally, I will also shed a light on the emergence of vital female voices within the disability movement and how it was connected to international and national efforts of disability liberation at the time. Disabled women becoming more vocal and more present in everyday life in Japan did not only enable them to advocate for their own interests more effectively but also allowed a broader exchange of experiences among women. This empowered new campaigns such as the one surrounding menstrual health which I look at more closely. Besides, engaging with the intersectional approach to reproduction and bodily autonomy post-*ribu*, this chapter also provides indications for the potential of transnational networks to advance reproductive justice in East Asia, as well as globally.

Finally, my conclusion, chapter five of this thesis, will provide an overview of my thesis, its main argument and key findings, as well as reference points for future research. Furthermore, I will give a brief review of how ableist and eugenicist biases outlasted the EPL and despite the deletion of explicitly eugenic language from the law, it still poses a persistent source of threat and discrimination for the disabled community. A prime example for this represents the so-called Sagami-hara stabbings in 2016 where 19 people were killed and 26 others injured at a care home for disabled people in Kanagawa prefecture as a result of a hate crime committed by 26-year-old former employee at the institution Uematsu Satoshi (Rich, 2016). Lastly, I will briefly look at the legacies of the EPL and those whose bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom was violated, by taking the example of the victims of forced sterilisation. The subsequent lawsuits filed by these victims represent the rightful accounting of the past, however with only marginally changed attitudes towards those who do not conform with the norms and values of the bio-political order, it remains to be seen whether the chance to break with eugenic ideology more than just semiotically as the government did with the change of the EPL to the MBPL in 1996 will be taken or not.

Chapter 2: Analytical Framework

In this chapter, I analyse the role the EPL plays within politics and the power structure in post-war Japan. The EPL is an integral tool for the state to intervene into citizens' bodies and to regulate them as needed for promoting the national interest. In order to help us understand this process, I will make use of Michel Foucault's approach to power and governmentality. Examining of Foucault theory of the evolution of power in the nation state era provides my thesis with essential context which informs my analytical framework. As I am particularly interested in how social order is constructed in Japan and the role the EPL plays within it, it is crucial to form a fundamental understanding of the working ways of power relations to comprehend the modality of social order which is established at the same time. This social order that I will frame as the bio-political order in post-war Japan is primarily interested in regulating and normalising the bodies entangled in it. A key target is reproduction and the intervention into female bodies for the purpose of optimising the population to benefit capitalist production and neoliberal social policy, ergo reduction of social welfare provisions and shifting social responsibility from the state level to that of the individual.

Power in the Foucauldian sense is inherently productive and transcends institutions and the law, due to production of norms and values which are internalised by the population. Moreover, it is a form of government that acts on two levels, the individual and the collective. This provides us with a more nuanced analysis of the interplay of power and the resistance to it. It exposes the intricate governance of bodies within a capitalist logic and critically engages with concepts such as productivity, norms, and values within a society. The synergy of such concepts is integral in the articulation of order, in this instance the bio-political order. Hence, Foucault's conception of power

determines why resistance to interventions into women's bodies and reproductive politics conducted by the state and its actors should be conceptualised as interventions into the bio-political order.

From sovereign power to the analysis of power relations

Fundamental to Foucault's understanding of power in the nation state era is that it is not something that has been granted, bestowed upon someone or an institution as it was generally understood prior to the 18th century, but rather it is an action, something that is exercised (Foucault, 1982, p. 788). Thus, Foucault's historical analysis of power reconstructs how sovereign power expressed in the absolute ruler, the idea of the 'right to take life or let live' developed into a new form of multiple power relations, a process he branded 'the governmentalisation of power' (Foucault, 1976, p. 136, Foucault, 1991, p. 103, Rabinow and Rose, 2006, p. 195, and Dean, 2014, p. 287). This progression of modification is essentially the expression of the separation of the art of government from the "[...] theory and practice of sovereignty and whereby that theory and practice must be reconciled with this burgeoning and proliferating art of government" (Dean, 2014, p. 288). The beginning of this process forms the 'dissociation of government from sovereignty' (ibid., p. 289).

In the Western European tradition starting in the Middle Ages, sovereignty was understood as a transcendent form of authority that was exercised over subjects within a defined territory (Dean, 2014, p. 293). To uphold the sovereign this hierarchy was legitimised by laws, decrees, and regulation through coercive sanctions with the sovereign's monopoly over the right of death, consequently understood as a 'specific form of a rule over things' (ibid., p. 293-294). The power over life and death was, however, not an absolute privilege, rather it was conditioned by defending the sovereign and his existence (Foucault, 1979, p. 135). In its nature sovereignty is deductive, repressive, and

depends on technologies of subtraction imposed on its subjects (ibid., p.136). Rather than forming subjects, disciplining them productively, it punished the subject who offended against the law. It has an impeding quality to it in relation to its subjects. Thus, sovereignty and the law are inseparable since the legitimacy of the sovereign, as well as their aims, both stemmed from the law. Foucault further described this form of sovereign power essentially as a 'right of seizure', seizure of bodies, time, things, and ultimately the subjects' lives themselves (Foucault, 1979, p. 136). The sovereign can take whatever they desired and/or required from their subjects based on this absolute hierarchy. This changed with the French Revolution, the beginning of the end of absolutism in Western Europe, forming the start of the aforementioned separation of sovereignty and government. It rung in the compartmentalisation of power and the increased significance of power relations.

For Foucault this type of power is fundamentally productive as it works towards the production of specific types of bodies and minds through practises invisible within the old model which equals power with sovereignty (Takeda, 2005, p. 8). Furthermore, as Lemke (2002) notes "[it] refers to more or less systematized, regulated and reflected modes of power (a 'technology') that go beyond the spontaneous exercise of power over others, following a specific form of reasoning (a "rationality") which defines the telos of action or the adequate means to achieve it" (p. 53). Here for Foucault the relationship between sovereignty, discipline, and government plays an important rule understanding them as a triangle whose main target is the population with the apparatuses of security as its essential mechanism (Dean, 2014, p. 288).

Foucault was predominantly interested in the question of how power relations, namely between a state and its subjects manifested and impacted the subject (Foucault, 1982, p. 777). In his work, he reconstructed the evolution of said power relations

historically and argued that power is always paired with resistance (ibid., p. 781). Only through the way that social movements are resisting power is power's modus operandi revealed and therefore resistance is methodologically crucial to the study of power and power relations (Nash, 2010, p. 25). Foucault further suggests that instead of looking at institutions when analysing power relations, one should rather analyse "institutions from the standpoint of power relations", making the exercise of power "a mode of action upon actions" (Foucault, 1982, p. 791). What he meant by that is that when we move our focus away from institutions and the juridical conceptions of power, its productive capacity and subtle machinations that began to coalesce in the late 18th century are exposed (Tremain, 2008, p. 4). Thus, for Foucault power is fundamentally productive in that it works to "[...] produce particular types of bodies and minds in practices which remain invisible from the point of view of the older model of power as sovereignty" (Nash, 2010, p. 21).

Government and governmentality

Key to understanding of power's mode of action, is the concept of government and concomitantly governmentality. Foucault (1982) describes government as 'conduct of conduct' (p. 220-221). Dean further explains that:

"Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through the desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes."

(2014, p. 69-70)

Thus, governmentality (or governmental rationality) describes “[...] the system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government [...] capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it was practised (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). Furthermore, the key notion behind the concept of ‘governmentality’ was to understand how these new ways were acting upon individual and collective conduct based on values and norms which were not necessarily enforced or sanctioned by the state as the main point of reference (Rabinow and Rose, 2006, p. 200). Subsequently, governmentality obtains a moral dimension: “It is moral because policies and practices of government [...] presume to know [...] what constitutes good, virtuous, appropriate, responsible conduct of individuals and collectives” (Dean, 2014, p. 72). Therefore, the notion of government is not limited to that of collective questions and practices of institutional politics, but at the same time due to its moral component it also extends to the individual and the individual’s own conduct, the practice of the self, too (ibid., p. 74-75).

Foucault’s analysis of governmentality showed how the connections between the health of the population and the economic and political security of the state lead to distinguishable bio-political strategies for representing and influencing populations in liberal governmentalities (Nadesan, 2008, p. 93). And crucially these strategies are not simply imposed from above onto the populations but rather were “[...] adopted as practices of self-government in everyday routines and disciplines” (ibid., p. 93). Governmentality and the theory of such as developed by Foucault builds the core of liberalism. Ultimately, his argument “[...] emphasise[d] the continuity between the governing of the self, governance of the population and the state to focus on said ‘conduct of conduct’” (Muller, 2017, p. 9).

By conceptualising the modern state as a new form of pastoral power, a power that is primarily concerned with the 'salvation' (health, well-being, security, and protection against accidents) of its subjects, exerted by the state apparatus, public institutions like the police or hospitals, as well as private ventures, welfare societies among others, to the individual, the governing of the individual as such becomes even more apparent (ibid., p. 783-784). In early modern Europe doctrines of government were associated with the idea of reason of state, as well as the police state (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). Within this, two roles emerge: one concerned with the population, globalizing and quantitative, and another, analytical, concerned with the individual (ibid., p. 784).

Anatomo-politics of the human body

According to Genel (2006), these “[...] new technologies of power are situated in effect below the power of sovereignty: power is increasingly less the power to put to death, and increasingly more the right to intervene in order to make live” (p. 47). Foucault characterised power concerned with the population, revolving around the ‘body as a machine’, interested in its disciplining, its optimisation, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, as an ‘anatomo-politics of the human body’ (Foucault, 1976, p. 139). It has a disciplinary character and sees the body as the object of control, and the mode of uninterrupted coercion (Hall, 2017, p. xv and Foucault, 1979, p. 181). This disciplinary power produces *docile bodies*, bodies that are receptive to power, that are made formable. Institutions like prisons, schools, clinics, the family, or the army are the most prominent scenes for producing such *docile bodies*. As Genel (2006) rightfully states “[t]he logic of power is a logic of exclusion and inclusion which designates the thresholds which continually redefine life, its value, and, as a result, the human” (p. 58).

Another role power takes on is the supervision of a population and its quality (birth rates, mortality rates, level of health etc) through interventions and regulatory

controls described by Foucault as a 'bio-politics of the population' (Foucault, p. 139). Regulatory in its nature bio-politics focusses on birth rate, death rate, disease, and other collective principles within a population (Hall, 2017, p. xvi). These two roles or forms power can take on are not mutually exclusive but rather articulated together, in the organisation of 'power over life', or as it is referred to otherwise 'bio-power' (Foucault, 2003, p. 250). This can be characterised as a 'bipolar diagram of power over life' where one pole focusses on the optimisation and integration of the human body into efficient systems and the other is concerned with regulatory controls of the population (Rabinow and Rose, 2006, p. 196). Thus, bio-politics also concern "the social, cultural, environmental, economic and geographic conditions under which humans live, procreate, become ill, maintain health or become healthy, and die" (Dean, 2014, p. 260). A specific order or a bio-political order is constructed. Family structures, housing, labour conditions, public health issues, migration, economic growth, and standards of living become of interest for bio-politics and represent bio-power's place of activity (ibid., p. 260-261). Of course, this also includes reproduction.

In his lecture of March 17th, 1976, Foucault illustrated this interplay of disciplinary and regulatory power with the example of sexuality. Sexuality in the 19th and 20th century was disciplined at home and at school, for example, children who masturbated could not freely give into their sexuality, but as it also has a procreative effect with regards to the multiple unity of the population it was subjected to regulations (Foucault, 2003, p. 251-252). Foucault further noted that looking at undisciplined and unregulated sexuality from a medical point of view has implications on two levels: firstly, the individual diseases sexual debauchery causes and secondly, how those individual diseases then become hereditary to future generations starting from the individual's diseases (2003, p. 252). This process is described as theory of degeneracy. It explains how medicine, more

specifically the combination of medicine and hygiene, became a power-knowledge of considerable importance and influence from the 19th century onwards as it can be applied to both the individual body and the population, having both regulatory and disciplinary qualities at the same time (ibid., p. 252). Thus, authorities such as physicians, public-health experts, psychologists, and social workers were established who, according to Nadesan (2008) “[...] also produced new ‘disciplines’ that shaped the practices and value orientations of the population, including sanitary sciences, domestic hygiene, and medical hygiene” (p. 94).

As the population needed to be educated on hygiene and became more and more medicalised, consequently, the need arose to establish constants that pertained to the collective whose functions include forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures (Tremain, 2009, p. 5). This perpetuated the creation of a certain medical norm. Norms in general becomes an important element within bio-power that affects the body and the population alike and that has controlling abilities of both regulatory and disciplinary character linking the two together (Foucault, 2003, p. 252-253). Subsequently, the outcome of a technology of power centred on life, according to Foucault, is that of a normalising society (1979, p. 144 and Hall, 2017, p. xvii). The theory of degeneracy as illustrated above and the consequences it has for society and its values, the establishment of the normalising society as per Foucault, are also applicable to disability.

Productivity and bio-power

The shift from sovereign power to bio-power goes hand in hand with the development of capitalism and represents a crucial element in maintaining it (ibid., p. 141 and Hall, 2017, p. xv). Foucault emphasised the ineffective character of power, a power whose organising pattern is sovereignty for “[...] governing the political and economic body of an industrializing and demographically developing society” (Genel, 2006, p. 47).

But how does this manifest more specifically? The regulation of bodies, on both anatomopolitical and bio-political level, disciplinary and regulatory, as well as the provision of productive bodies ensures the maintenance of the machinery of production and its relations (Foucault, 1979, p. 142). This can also be described as medical government. Connected to questions of security prompted by the vitality, fecundity, and productivity of the population, these liberal regimes of medical government argue to optimise freedom by regulating living conditions (Nadesan, 2008, p. 93). Public and individual health as well as reproduction becomes a key concern of bio-power.

For example, rising or falling birth rates have widespread implications on the composition of the social body which in turn has implication for its over-all productive capabilities, something articulated in the work of political economist Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834). This consequently also means a stratification of the social body according to such productive capabilities. Thus, productivity becomes a key theme when discussing disability within a liberal, capitalist framework. Further, as Rabinow and Rose (2006) explain, 'biopolitics' can be used to comprise all the "all the specific strategies and contestations over problematizations of collective human vitality, morbidity and mortality; over the forms of knowledge, regimes of authority and practices of intervention that are desirable, legitimate and efficacious" (p. 197). The example of sexuality which as described earlier depicted sexuality's - to an extent - disengagement from the symbolics and practices of reproduction whereby reproduction as such becomes the object of a series of forms of knowledge, technologies, and political strategies due to its economic, ecological, and political consequences (ibid., p. 208). As a result, a new 'politics of abortion' emerges which takes up different shapes and forms depending on the national contexts they arise in, for example the question of 'reproductive choice' in Western Europe, the United States and also Japan, making reproduction a problem space

within the normalising society (ibid., p. 208). This space exemplifies the wide range of intersections between the individual and the collective, the technological and the political, the legal and the ethical, as well as the able and disabled – making it the epitome of a bio-political space (ibid., p. 208).

Understanding reproduction as a bio-political space, of course, has profound implication for disability and the disabled, a key point of interest for the normalising society. According to Shelley Tremain (2009) through the vast apparatus aiming to secure the well-being of the general population has put the disabled subject into the spotlight of the discourse (p. 5). Practises such as “[...] asylums, income support programs, quality of life assessments, workers’ compensation benefits, special education programs, regimes of rehabilitation, parallel transit systems, prostheses, home care services, telethons, sheltered workshops, poster child campaigns, and prenatal diagnosis” and various other measures have “[...] created, classified, codified, managed, and controlled social anomalies through which some people have been divided from others and objectivized as [...] physically impaired, insane, handicapped, mentally ill, retarded, and deaf” (ibid., p. 5-6). In a normalizing society the disabled body attracts both disciplinary and regulatory power; thus, a distinction between normal and abnormal subjects is created (Hall, 2017, p. 120).

There are three dimensions to reproduction that are key to the establishment of a bio-political order: economic, biological, and socio-political. All three are correlated and hence are contributing to the renewal of the political, economic, and social system. While the economic dimension refers to reproduction’s vital part in ensuring the continuity and maintenance of the economic process, this as noted by Marx can only happen if the biological reproduction of the labour force as well as the socialisation of such (socio-political dimension) takes place simultaneously too (Takeda, 2005, p. 8-9). Thus, as

Takeda further assesses the three dimensions of reproduction function politically and therefore reproduction is a critical practice for the maintenance of the nation-state (ibid., p. 9). Moreover, this means that power's intervention into bodies becomes a prerequisite.

Eugenics as a bio-political tool for optimising a population and the promotion of 'productivity'

The main ideological tool for bio-power's normalising aim is eugenics. The term eugenics was coined by British polymath Francis Galton (1822-1911) in 1883 and describes the notion that humankind can shape the characteristics of its descendants through selective breeding (Amy and Rowlands, 2018, p. 121). Eugenics can be further differentiated into 'positive eugenics' which encourages the most capable within the community to reproduce and 'negative eugenics' which aims to reduce those who are deemed unfit to reproduce through sterilisation, marriage restrictions, and euthanasia for example (ibid., p. 121). The most extreme and deadly interpretation of the concept of eugenics is the racial cleansing subsequent genocide committed by Nazi Germany. Amongst the victims of the Nazi' eugenic ideology (racial hygiene, Rassenhygiene) were also mentally and physically disabled people who were systematically killed in medical institutions across Nazi Germany and the annexed territories from 1933 and 1945. It is estimated that between 200,000 to 300,000 disabled people were killed in what was euphemistically described as euthanasia or mercy killings (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2019).

Galton's concept was first introduced to the Japanese context through discussions on 'race improvement' lead by Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) and his protégé Takahashi Yoshio (1861-1937) in the mid-1880s as part of Imperial Japan's modernising project (Otsubo and Bartholomew, 1998, p. 550). Eugenics was translated into Japanese as the

neologism *yūseigaku* but was also referred to as the romanised version *yuzenikkusu* (Robertson, 2001, p. 4). As Robertson (2001) notes eugenics in the sense of selective breeding was not a new concept to Japan where maintaining genealogical integrity was central to household (*ie*) succession (p. 3). However, the optimisation of the population, or 'race improvement', through targeted state intervention in form of policies and such was a result of Japan's nation-building efforts and modernisation programme.

In Takahashi's controversial book titled 'A Treatise on the Improvement of the Japanese Race' (*Nippon jinshu kairyōron*) published in 1884 he argued Japan was going through the transition process from a 'semi-civilised' to a 'civilised' nation and this process could be accelerated by the 'mixed marriage' Japanese males and Anglo females (*kōhaku zakkon*) which would create a 'physically superior and beautiful Japanese race' enabling the Japanese to successfully compete with the other imperial powers in international affairs (ibid., p. 4-5). Two opposing positions emerged within the Japanese eugenics debate: Takahashi's position, which can be characterised as the 'mixed blood' (*konketsu*) position, and the 'pure blood' (*junketsu*) position, which quickly became the dominant position within the discourse (ibid., p. 5). Throughout Japan's imperialist expansion into its neighbours in East Asia, namely Korea, Manchuria, and Taiwan, and further into Southeast Asia and the Pacific, the 'pure blood' position was further enforced among eugenicists and colonial legislators who feared the 'dilution' of the Japanese race through the increasing number of mixed-race relationships across the empire (ibid., p. 6-7).

Following the turn of the century, a number of influential eugenic societies were established such as the Greater Japan Eugenics Society (*Dai Nihon Yūseikai*) in 1917 by Yamanouchi Shigeo (1876-1973) and most famously the Japan Society of Racial Hygiene (*Nihon Minzoku Eisei Gakkai*) in 1930 by Abe Ayao (1879-1945) and Nagai Hisomu (1876-

1957), both organisations that were dedicated to the promotion of eugenic for race improvement purposes (Otsubo and Bartholomew, 1998, p. 552 and p. 557). A few years later Nagai, a medical professor at Tokyo University, was the driving force behind the establishment of the all-female but male lead ⁶ organisation Eugenic Marriage Popularisation Society (short: EMPS, *Yūsei Kekkō Fukyūkai*) as an affiliate of the Japan Association of Race Hygiene and its official journal *Yūsei* in Tokyo on November 11th, 1935 (Otsubo, 1999, p. 44). Like many eugenicists at the time, women were identified as the key target for promoting eugenic practices within the discourse and institutions of race hygiene and improvement due to their biological reproductive capabilities (Robertson, 2001, p. 9).

Otsubo (1999) argues that the importance of the association lies in its role as refuge space for feminists in the 1930s in Japan, who due to the pronatalist approach of the state, had to reframe their strategy to promote women's rights into motherhood protection (p. 43). This adaptation was a response to the socio-political climate of the time and appears today as a trade-off of rights and protection in exchange for the promotion of eugenics. Furthermore, this trade-off later became a historical sore point between feminists and disability activists in the 1970s. At its peak, EMPS, which Nagai presided over, had about 800 members including prominent activists such as Japan Women's Christian Temperance Union leader Moriya Azumako (1884-1975), birth control movement leader Katō Shidzue (1897-2001), suffragette and supporter of the legalisation of abortion Ichikawa Fusae (1893-1981), as well as maternalist (*bosei shugisha*) and *Seitō*⁷ contributor Yamada Waka (1879-1957) (ibid., p. 46). As I will show

⁶ While the membership of EMPS was all female, male medical doctors were the ones who disseminated their eugenic ideas among female readers of *Yūsei* (Otsubo, 1999, p. 43).

⁷ *Seitō* (Bluestocking) was a women's literary journal established in 1911 by Hiratsuka Raichō, Yasumochi Yoshiko (1885-1947), Mozume Kazuko (1888-1979), Kiuchi Teiko (1887-1919), and Nakano Hatsuko (1886-

in the section of this chapter, EMPS members became actively involved in the drafting process of the first eugenic legislation in 1940, the National Eugenic Law short NEL; *Kokumin yūsei hō*).

In reference to disability, eugenics is inherently ableist in both ideology and practice. This is due to its devaluation of, which is deemed as deviating from the norm of what is considered healthy and desirable. Furthermore, human value is evaluated according to productivity, meaning that disabled individuals who deviate from this norm are deemed less productive under this ideology. For instance, limited mobility caused by physical impairment may prevent a person from performing specific types of labour, thereby constraining their employment options or necessitating increased resources for their accommodations. Therefore, defining eugenics positively is highly problematic from the disability perspective.

Increasing disabled people's productivity within society through employment has been one of the key policy targets since the 1950s in Japan. It has been framed as a fundamental step towards the 'normalisation' of disabled people by the 1960 Act for Employment Promotion, etc., of the Disabled (*Shōgaisha no kyō no sokushintō ni kansuru hōritsu*). According to this normalisation policy, the welfare of disabled people can only be promoted if they are able to work to support themselves (Sakuraba, 2014, p. 364). The law also introduced an employment quota system, requiring large companies to hire disabled people with physical disabilities and make up 1.3% of their workforce, with the quota becoming compulsory in 1997 for people with an intellectual disability and gradually increasing to 2.2% in 2018 (Mithout, 2021, p. 343). To put these percentages into context, the officially recognised disabled population in Japan lies at about 6% of the

1983) providing women a space to explore questions of self-expression, gender roles, sexuality, and feminism (Mackie, 2003, p. 47-48).

total population, however due to the narrow legal definition what it means to be a disabled person in Japan only those with severe physical disabilities are included in this number (Sakuraba, 2014, p. 360). Companies with more than 201 workers who fail to adhere to the quote regulation must pay levies for the employment of disabled people to the Japan Organisation for the Employment of the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities (short JEED, *Kōrei shōgaisha kyūshokusha koyō shien kikō*) (ibid., p. 367).

These legal measures saw a steady rise of disabled people's employment rate since 1977 from 1.09% to 1.69% in 2012 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2012, p. 8). However, in August 2018 multiple news outlets reported that government ministries had padded their statistics of disabled people's employment across Japan for decades according to reports overstating numbers by more than 1,000 and including the names of retired and deceased people in their data (Shek-Noble, 2020, p. 148). As a result, the credibility of figures reported is questionable, as is the successful implementation of legislation to promote the employment of disabled people. The way in which the subsequent backlash to the revelation of the scandal was framed in the media discourse further demonstrates that common perceptions of disabled people as 'unproductive', incapable of living independently and financially self-sufficiently, and dependent on family or government support, are still very much present in contemporary Japan (ibid.).

Furthermore, the connection between eugenic ideology and population control in post-war Japan is clearly evident when looking at the very name of the legislation governing reproduction itself, namely the EPL. The aim of the legislation is not disguised by euphemistic language; it stated very explicitly in the beginning of the law that its purpose is to "prevent the birth of eugenically inferior offspring" (as translated in Norgren, 2001, p. 145). The circumstances under which the potential offspring is regarded 'inferior' and therefore an 'eugenic operation', an abortion based on eugenic

reasons, is permissible if either of the parents have hereditary psychopathic disorders, hereditary physical ailments, hereditary deformities, or if they are mentally ill or deficient, as well as if either spouse has leprosy (Norgren, 2001, p. 146). In the next section of this chapter, I analyse what role this legislation played in the bio-political order of post-war Japan.

Pre-war legacies and the EPL's role within the bio-political order of post-war Japan

The obvious eugenic language of the legislation governing reproduction in post-war Japan highlighted its motivation clearly: establishment and insurance of a healthy, productive population with the goal to eliminate anomalies and divergence from the medical norm. References to the safeguarding of the mother's health during pregnancy and childbirth were made in the law too, however they seemed secondary to the eugenic motivations of the law. Among other things this becomes apparent from the positioning of the eugenic dimension of the law at the very beginning of the law. As a matter of fact, even in the part of the law that is dedicated to the "protection of motherhood", more specifically Article 14 of the EPL which sets out the legal conditions under which an abortion can be legally authorised by a physician, the first three items are exactly the same as those mentioned under 'eugenic operations', hereditary mental illness, physical disability, or in the case of leprosy (Norgren, 2001, p. 149). This highlights that the inclusion of the term 'eugenic' in the name of the law also set the tone of the purpose of the law and thus simultaneously established certain norms and valuations of humans based on its wording.

Therefore, the EPL cannot be merely understood as a law governing reproduction, but much more as a tool that is instrumental to the establishment of the bio-political order in Japan. In order to further analyse the function of the EPL within this order, establishing a brief genealogy of the law in regard to the law's entanglement in

establishing and upholding the bio-political order is imperative. Before I dive into my examination of this process, I would like to highlight that rather than providing a comprehensive genealogy of the EPL, the political stakeholders and specifics of its drafting and promulgation process, I focus on its ideological implications and functions within Japanese post-war bio-political order.⁸

Reproductive politics entanglement with eugenics goes further back than Japan's post-war reconstruction under the United States led Allied Occupation and the introduction of the EPL in 1948. It started with the EPL's predecessor, the NEL, which was promulgated in 1940 under the Konoé Fumimaro (1891-1945) government the same year that Japanese Empire's invasion of French Indochina saw its entry into the World War II. Inspired by the pro-natalist population policies of Nazi Germany and other European counterparts at the time, proponents of eugenics which included members of the Japan Birth Control League and EMPS, such as leading feminist Hiratsuka, supported the notion of a NEL and lobbied the newly established Ministry of Health to create a bill to ensure the quality and quantity of the Japanese population (Norgren, 2001, p. 30). Thus, the NEL's purpose was formulated as the prevention of people with hereditary diseases and the promotion of healthy, by extension productive, people instead (ibid., p. 140). Three medically trained members from the aforementioned EMPS contributed to the drafting process of the bill (Otsubo, 1999, p. 54).

Subsequently, reproduction in the Japanese Empire was framed as a problem space, state intervention was deemed necessary to promote the birth of healthy children in conformity with the national interest (imperialist expansion and promotion of ethno-nationalism). Therefore, it attracted the attention of the normalising society which

⁸ See Norgren (2001) for the comprehensive genealogy of the NEL.

manifests in the form of eugenics as explained earlier by Tremain (2009). In this specific case, the unborn disabled subject becomes the key target of the normalising society through the NEL. Under the eugenic operation provision of the NEL 538 people, 217 men and 321 women, were sterilised between 1941 and 1947 which considering Japan had a population of 72 million at the time seems like a rather small number (Otsubo and Bartholomew, 1998, p. 558, Amy and Rowlands, 2018, p. 126).

However, it is important to mention here that, apart from the focus of preventing the 'unfit' to reproduce, another key point in pre-war population policy was to prevent the 'fit' from limiting their reproductive capacities (Norgren, 2001, p. 32). Hence, reproduction and the government of such becomes an important building block within the optimisation of the population for the goals of the nation state. As Takeda (2005) summarises, pre-war Japanese government regulated bio-logical reproduction to "[...] procreate good children who could turn into good soldiers, good workers and good mothers who could construct the strong Japanese nation in terms of economic and political competition in international relations [...] (imperialist projects)" (p. 67). These ideals were expressed and propagated in the slogan of 'bear children, swell the population' (*umeyo fuyaseyo*) during Japan's war effort. In sum, reproduction in its overall political character was essential to create the productive subject.

At the same time this state intervention and its articulation through the NEL hierarchically organised the racialised population, placing the productive, healthy body at the top and those diverging from it below it. This bio-ethical classification of human life was quintessential in setting up Japan's bio-political order. Thus, the establishment of the Ministry of Welfare in 1938 became a necessary tool to set out norms and standards around health and hygiene to administer said order. It also signified the introduction of eugenics into the governmental administrative system with the creation of the

Department of Eugenics (*Yūseika*) as part of the Bureau for Prevention (*Yobōka*). Furthermore, Kido Kōichi (1889-1977), who was appointed Minister of Welfare in 1938 and went on to be a close advisor of Emperor Hirohito during World War II, declared that the new ministry will be responsible for conducting research and surveys on eugenics, as well as that his aim as minister was the removal of most of the unfit from the Japanese population and promote the hereditarily healthy (Takeda, 2005, p. 82).

The two important core organising principles of the Imperial Japanese society that correspondingly played a crucial part in constructing and maintaining the bio-political order was the so-called 'family state' (*kazoku kokka*) in tandem with the *ie* system, the household system, as the pre-war welfare system and its influence on population management was rather rudimentary and negligible in this regard (Kasza, 2002, p. 422). The family state conceptualised the relationship within the body polity, between the Imperial state and its subject, as that within a family, between father, mother, and children, and thus connected each family with the nation state represented by the emperor who was characterised as the benevolent father of the people (Takeda, 2005, p. 67-68). While the family state ordered society on the macro level establishing a clear patriarchal hierarchy within the power relation of the Meiji State, the *ie* system organised society on its micro level with consequences to the gendered role allocation within the family unit, the smallest grouping within the bio-political order.

The structural framework of the post-war bio-political order inevitably took on a different shape to that of the pre-war due to the formal dissolution of the family state spearheaded by the Imperial family and the *ie* System through the new post-war constitution. This was primarily due to the Allied Occupation's main goal which was to promote a social order based on liberal democratic values and egalitarian principles, as

well as the ideology of the modern nuclear family (mother, father, and two children).⁹ However, in practice not everything had changed, and we can detect some influential continuities between the pre-war order and the post-war order.

Some tenets of the pre-war bio-political order have made it into the post-war era as found in the Civil Code where the provision of obligation of care between direct blood relatives was applied from the pre-war *ie* System (ibid., p. 118). Subsequently the expansion of the welfare system whose establishment had its origins in the war time era and was primarily motivated by the aim to provide healthy and strong soldiers for Japan's total war grew in its influence within the bio-political order during Japan's political restructuring (Kasza, 2002, p. 423). Key actor in this process was the Ministry of Health and Welfare as the main administrator of Japan's population policies.

After Imperial Japan's defeat in World War II and surrender on September 2nd, 1945, the aforementioned pre-war bio-political order was intermittently, on a formal or legal level, dissolved due to the reconstruction of the political and social institutions of Japan following the Allied Occupation. However, while not enshrined in legal texts and most importantly the constitution, the pre-war bio-political order was upheld by the population further adhering to the established pre-war norms and values. Subsequently, by re-establishing the main actors within the framework of population management during the Allied Occupation such as the Ministry of Health and Welfare, comprehensive population policy, legislation governing reproduction and a national health care system, the pre-war actors that regulated and safeguarded the bio-political order in Japan returned and quickly re-established the said order even though the national interest changed from imperialist expansion and aggression to economic development and

⁹ This changed due to the reversed course following the rising tensions of the Cold War and economic rehabilitation became the key objective for the Allied Occupation.

growth. Population policy was seen by Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) General Douglas MacArthur as a key factor in Japan's economic reconstruction. Contrary, to the pre-war pro-natalist approach, in the aftermath of Japan's loss of empire and soldiers returning home from the battlefield the soaring birth rate in the immediate post-war caused deep concerns among elites and incentives were introduced to curb population growth (Norgren, 2001, p. 37 and Takeda, 2005, p. 84). Hence, there were visible continuities between the Japanese Empire and its post-war successor in terms of both government's agenda considered human reproduction, its quantity and quality, a key priority (Takeda, 2005, p. 86). Furthermore, as Matsubara (2021) has pointed out, the wartime NEL and post-war EPL were both "[...] product[s] of the state's effort to intervene in people's reproductive lives" (p. 319).

Under these pretences, the EPL was promulgated in 1948 to create the legal framework to intervene into reproduction, at the time to prevent the population number from further increasing and therefore threatening Japan's economic recovery. In 1949 legal abortion access was further expanded through the addition of the 'economics reasons' clause that enabled women to have abortions if experiencing economic hardships. Three years later saw another revision of the EPL and the addition of birth control for population control purposes. Furthermore, the law's eugenic notions intensified as the condition of sterilisations was extended to those who have a spouse with a 'mental illness or deficiency' (Takeda, 2005, p. 104). The increased eugenic motivation of the law resulted from the introduction of birth control and its popularisation which government officials and experts feared could cause 'reverse

selection'¹⁰ explained due to application of birth control predominantly amongst people 'with better intellectual ability' (ibid., p. 104). A fear that in itself reflected the stakeholders' eugenic motivation and perception relating to population management. The state's heightened attention to 'population problems' is also apparent from the establishment of the Population Problem Advisory Council (PPAC) as a consulting body to the cabinet in 1949, and later in 1953 it was re-established as a regular institution within the Ministry of Health and Welfare (ibid., p. 105).

Following the proliferation of birth control as set out by the Yoshida government in 1951, the PPAC published a motion to re-conceptualised birth control as 'family planning' (*kazoku keikaku*), a 'paradigm shift' which also implied a focus on not only controlling the number of children being born but also the notion of bearing and raising healthy children in a well administrated fashion (Homei, 2016, p. 229 and Takeda, 2005, p. 106-107). Hence, the adoption of family planning as an integral part within the structure of population policies and management highlights how eugenics further infiltrated welfare policies and gained influence during the post-war period. In another motion published in 1962, the PPAC stressed the importance of population policy that focussed on quality management of population as an integral part for Japan's economic growth:

The policy targeting economic growth is a measure to realize the welfare state where the Japanese people have healthy and cultural lives. But it is human beings who carry out economic activities, and without excellent

¹⁰ Relating to the presumption that "the 'biologically unfit' or those in lower socio-economic classes would bear multiple children, while others regarded more 'biologically fit' would regulate fertility" (Homei, 2016, p. 230).

human beings in physical, intellectual and psychological aspects, the policy for economic growth cannot achieve its objective.

(Jinkō mondai kenkyū no. 86 as translated in Takeda, 2005, p. 110)

This statement reflected the aforementioned threefold character of reproduction as well as the vital role it plays within the capitalist order. Further on in the motion, the recommended measures included the “improvement of the ‘gene pool quality’ of the national population” which highlights the eugenic underpinnings of population policy, while also exhibiting the fundamental need for a comprehensive policy that considers all aspect of human life from a predominantly economic perspective (ibid., p. 111). Therefore, population policy became a key tool in constructing a bio-political order.

Additionally, family planning laid out and emphasised the normative framework of the family in post-war Japan as reflected in an official notice a year after the promulgation of the Mother and Child Health Law in 1965 defining it as “[...] practices for achieving *happiness* [emphasis added by author of the source] in each home with full consideration of economic conditions and the environment of the home, and the health conditions of the mother” (ibid., p. 110). This further developed the notion that only a productive life is a happy life, consequently rendering disabled life unhappy due to its limited productivity.

Carrying this eugenic ideology that equated disability with unhappiness, was the policy called “Prevention of the Birth of Unhappy Children” (*Fukōna kodomo no umarenai shisaku*) which was propagated across Japan from the late 1960s (ibid., p. 112). The Department of Hygiene, part of the Hyōgo Prefectural Office, which was a pioneer of the policy gave further details about the concept of ‘unhappy children’:

1. A child whose birth itself is ‘unhappy’, for example, a child who inherits mental illness.

2. A child whom nobody wishes to be born, for example an unborn child who was aborted.
3. A child who becomes handicapped during the embryonic or foetal period through its mother's illness or ignorance, for example through viruses, contagious diseases, toxoplasmosis, venereal diseases, diabetes, toxæmia of pregnancy, disorders caused by medicine or nourishment, radiation hazards.
4. A child who will have to spend the rest of her or his life with an unhappy destiny because of lack of treatment soon after birth, for example in cases of obstacles to delivery, premature birth, or incompatible blood reactions.
5. An unhappy child due to lack of treatment during early childhood, for example, a child who is mentally deficient due to congenital metabolic disorder, congenital dislocation or heart disease.

(As translated in Takeda, 2005, p. 112)

This state policy explicitly devalued children who differ from the medical norm of 'healthy' while not only deeming their existence as unhappy and unproductive, but moreover their birth should be prevented in the first place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have first examined Foucault's theory of power and governmentality in relation to the bio-political order within the modern nation state, to develop the necessary theoretical background for my investigation in the following chapters of this thesis. Subsequently, in my analysis of the main drivers and characteristics of the post-war population policy in Japan which laid the groundwork for the establishment of the bio-political order, I have revealed the bio-political strategies to

influence and intervene into the population within a liberal governmentality such as post-war Japan. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how reproduction becomes a bio-political space targeted by the normalising society in its attempt to manipulate human life for the benefit of the national interest which after Japan's defeat in World War II was primarily economic growth and development. In the course of my investigation, I have paid specific attention to how disability is conceptualised in the bio-political space and how it is targeted by the modus operandi of bio-politics. Applied to the Japanese context, I followed the normative discourse surrounding disabled life, its positioning within the bio-political order and its relationship with the three dimensions of reproduction. These insights provide me with the necessary theoretical and historical context to investigate the role *ūman ribu*, the disability movement and Yonezu Tomoko played with their activism in challenging the persistent bio-political order in Japan.

Chapter 3: Yonezu Tomoko and intervention into bio-politics in the 1970s¹¹

This chapter examines Yonezu Tomoko's participation in the student movement in the late 1960s which served as a springboard for her involvement with the *ūman ribu* movement in the early 1970s. More specifically, it analyses her activism as a leading voice within the *ūman ribu* movement and how she contributed to reframe reproductive politics. Essentially, *ribu* prompted an intervention into Japan's bio-political order through their opposition to the revision of the Eugenic Protection Law and collaboration with the disability movement on issues regarding reproduction and accessibility. By outlining the situation of female student activists within the New Left in the late 1960s this chapter is setting the scene for the emergence of the *ūman ribu* movement and provides the necessary background information for its formation and what it reacted to. *Ribu* and its critique did not develop in a vacuum and the personal experiences of *ribu* activists like Yonezu behind the barricades during the student movement are important to understand the evolution of the *ribu* movement and that of its members. Campus based activism of the late 1960s provided an important impetus for *ribu's* feminist critique of gender relations and politics of the revolutionary Left in Japan.

Moreover, it is crucial to look at the challenges Yonezu faced early on in her life as a disabled woman in post-war Japan in order to comprehend her activism with *ribu* which was deeply influenced by personal experiences of its members. Yonezu's personal development, her coming to terms with her identity as a disabled woman, highlights

¹¹ Parts of this chapter have been published as the book chapter "Vittinghoff, A. (2022). Reassessing Japanese Radical Feminism from the Vantage Point of Dis/ability. In: Lee, M., Cooper, F.R. and Reeve, P. (eds.). *Dis/ability in media, law: Intersectional, embodied and socially constructed?* London, UK: Routledge. pp. 119-133."

common discrimination and prejudices that disabled people encountered in the immediate post-war years in Japan, and continue to encounter today. It serves as a starting point to analyse the underlying ableist bias of capitalist societies and uncovers the gendered social hierarchies created by the power relations at play.

Growing up disabled in Japan in the 1950s/60s – Early life as starting point for self-discovery and personal emancipation

In many ways, Yonezu's life reflects different contentions with the status quo of post-war Japan. She was born in 1948 during food scarcity and general economic turmoil following Japan's defeat in WWII and contracted polio in 1951 while living in Tokyo. As a result, her right leg was paralysed leaving her with a permanent limp. People's general reaction to her disability, their apprehension and pity, was emotionally painful for her to witness. Her parents, agitated by receiving such attention, saw her as a burdensome child to the family (Yonezu, 2020a).

Shame and stigma towards disabled children within Japanese families in the 1950s/60s and beyond have their origins in the cultural entanglements of religious beliefs and the fundamental organisation of Japanese society. More specifically, people's encounter with disabled life was framed by the belief systems of Buddhism and Shinto which both made significant and long-lasting contributions on the Japanese 'worldview' (Stevens, 2013, p. 24). From a Buddhist perspective, the birth of a disabled child is associated with negative karma of the parents or other ancestors (Stevens, 2013, p. 25 and Kato, 2009, p. 132). This is described as the Buddhist term of *in-nen* (fate or destiny) which is based on the principles of karma and the idea that actions and their intentions have an effect on future rebirths (Kato, 2009, p. 132). However, in some cases the birth of disabled child can also be interpreted positively as the 'erasure of bad fortune of a

family line' where the child is taking on the bad karma for the family in an act of redemption (ibid., p. 132-133). Ancestor worship and caring for the family line plays an important part within Shinto too. These practices are based on the household system, or *Ie* system, as the basic organisational unit within Japanese society, socially as well as economically (ibid., p. 133 and Stevens, 2013, p. 26). Hence, disability in the Japanese context is seen both as an individual and a familial attribute (Stevens, 2013, p. 26). The role the aforementioned *Ie* system plays within societal attitudes towards disability of course becomes an especially interesting connection when looking at the women's liberation movement of the 1970s and their fundamental critique of said *Ie* system. Stevens (2013) mentions Japanese legal documents from 701 AD that relate disability directly to the individual's capacity to work, an evaluation of one's productivity so to speak, something that not unlike welfare criteria today (p. 25). Thus, emphasising the intersectional character of disability, the complex interplay of productivity, reproduction, and the government of such.

The persisting hostility Yonezu experienced on multiple fronts from a very young age, convinced her that the course of life traditionally designated for a woman within Japanese society, namely marry, have children, and take care of the household and family, was not viable due to her disability. Becoming a parent as a disabled person was neither anticipated nor encouraged by society and living an independent life without the support of family members also was not commonplace. For Yonezu this meant that she had to find her own path to economic independence and self-fulfilment, as marriage and relying on the income of a potential breadwinning husband, seemed out of the question. In a way, the departure of what was considered the gendered norm together with the empowered outset on life she adapted as a reaction to her circumstances in her youth fill Yonezu with pride today (Yonezu, 2020a). Only later in life, did she come to understand the

intersectional nature of discrimination she was subjected to. Motivated by her plans for the future, and despite her bad grades at school, she managed to enrol at Tama Arts University to become a designer, a profession she could pursue without limitation due to her disability (Yokota, 2004, p. 71-72). However, early on in her university career she encountered the gendered bias of the labour market. Most of the job opportunities advertised were tailored to male students, female students had considerably fewer opportunities. The path to economic independence appeared rocky, with some diversions along the way too.

The same can be said about her relationship with her body and her disability. University life, although it meant creating a chance for an independent life away from the traditional path anticipated for a woman in Japan at the time, also meant she was confronted with her own disability more directly than before:

Until then, I could walk, and if I wanted to blend in with the normal students, I could. I didn't have any friends with disabilities, and I didn't understand that there was a place for me among able-bodied people where I could blend in and fit in. I never talked about my disability with my family or friends, but I've always felt depressed about it. I am not an able-bodied person, and I don't know who I am, so I felt a bit confused. I was attracted to the barricade created by the Tama Art students, and I joined them. [*The students*] talked a lot about themselves, what was bothering them, how angry they were, and so on. It was the first time that I realized that although I have a bad leg and people stare at me and all kinds of things, it was not my fault. I was so happy to be able to talk about myself and my leg. I was very happy about that, and I thought it was great to be part of the movement. I felt like I was being liberated.

Thus, Yonezu's student years became a formative period of her life where she made personal connections that went on to majorly influence the course of her adult life.

The student movement as catalyst for the New Left activism of the 1970s

From the late 1950s the burgeoning leftist student movement criticised the Japanese state and economy profiting from Japan's geo-political position within the post-1945 Cold War world order and problematised their own complicity to upholding the Japanese capitalist machinery as the future elites-in-training (Schieder, 2021, p. 2). Students nationally organised under Zengakuren (*Zen nihon gakusei jichikai sō rengō* All-Japan Federation of Student Self-Government Associations) starting from 1948 took part in many protest actions and movements. This was facilitated by the return to the political sphere of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) which was legalised again in 1945 by the Allied Occupation's immediate abolition of the 1925 Peace Preservation Law after Japan was defeated in WWII and helped students set up self-governing councils (Steinhoff, 2012, p. 59 and p. 61). The Peace Preservation Law was used as an instrument to suppress threats against imperial sovereignty during the interwar years and mainly targeted political organisation on the far left of the political spectrum (Ward, 2019, p. 50). Deemed as fundamentally undemocratic and as a tool to mobilise society for the total war effort in the war years, the Allied Occupation abolished them in 1945.

In 1952 Zengakuren together with Zainichi Korean activists and militant young labour unionists occupied the people's plaza in front of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo during the so-called "Bloody May Day", where activists violently clashed with police officers (Kapur, 2022, p. 6). This was part of larger protests across the country against continued U.S. military presence in Japan resulting from the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty (*Anzen hoshō jōyaku*, short Anpo) in tandem with the Treaty of San Francisco (ibid., p. 7).

In the summer of 1955 student activists also clashed with authorities at Sunagawa, a town south of Tokyo, where they joined forces with farmers in their struggle to prevent expropriation of their land to expand the runways of U.S. Tachikawa Airbase (ibid., p. 7). Three years later, Zengakuren experienced an ideological split due to irreconcilable positions between some student groups and the JCP over the theoretical role students occupied within the movement (Steinhoff, 2012, p. 63-64). The organisation called the 'Communist League' (*Kyōsanshugisha dōmei*), or short 'Bund', was free from JCP influence and followed a Leninist organisation model under which they understood themselves as the vanguard political party leading and organising student activism of affiliated student groups across campuses (ibid., p. 64).

The Bund quickly became the Mainstream faction of Zengakuren further relegating JCP influence over campuses. Further ideological factions as the Trotskyist 'Revolutionary Communist League' (*Kakumeiteki kyōsanshugisha dōmei*) and the 'Student Socialist League' (*Shakaishugi gakusei dōmei*) emerged around the same time, causing more ideological splintering of Zengakuren. Thus, this campus-based New Left understood itself as a break from the hierarchical old established Left of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and campaigned for an expanded definition of leftist politics, as well as an in-depth analysis of power structures that facilitated among other things economic exploitation and oppression (Schieder, 2021, p. 2 and p. 58). A divided Zengakuren became part of the 'People's Council to Prevent Revision of the Security Treaty' (*Anpo jōyaku kaitei soshi kokumin kaigi*, short Kokumin kaigi) together with opposition parties, unions, and grass-root groups and played a crucial role in the mass protests against the Kishi government's attempted renewal of Anpo in 1960 (Kapur, 2022, p. 8 and Steinhoff, 2012, p. 64). Ultimately, the security treaty got renewed which students regarded as a failure of their cause and led them to engage in extensive soul

searching about the why's and how's of their failure (Steinhoff, 2012, p. 65). As a result, the New Left student organisations further fragmented and experienced organisational disarray during the early and mid 1960s.

Zengakuren was taken over in 1964 by Sanpa (The Three Faction Alliance), a three-sect coalition of *Chūkaku* (the National Committee of the Revolutionary Communist League, Nucleus Faction), *Shagakudō* (*Shakai shugi gakusei dōmei*, the Socialist Student League), and *Shaseidō kaihō* (the Liberation Group of the Socialist Youth League), successfully suspending dogmatic differences between leftist sects temporarily in the beginning (ibid., p. 58-59). Three years later, in October 1967, the first so-called Haneda incident occurred where Sanpa activists tried to stop Prime Minister Satō Eisaku's departure to Saigon and South Asia by force and clashed in the process with authorities (Marotti, 2013, p. xxi). Subsequently, early June 1968 saw a renewed strong student activism with the start of the Zenkyōtō (*Zengaku kyōtō kaigi* All-Campus Joint Struggle Committees) movement on the campuses of the University of Tokyo and Nihon University. Again, activism quickly spread across multiple campuses throughout Japan. Zenkyōtō motivated by students' opposition to the rationalisation of higher education and the Vietnam War, aimed to be non-hierarchical, and non-sectarian (Kersten, 2009, p. 228). Although Zenkyōtō was one of many groups involved in student activism in the late 1960s, it became the byword for the student movement of the time (Schieder, 2021, p. 58). Even though Zenkyōtō pledged to be 'non-ideological' and 'non-sect' which also meant that any group could join the struggle, it was difficult for campus organisers to refuse sect participation in the movement as the former Zengakuren members offered invaluable practical, logistical advice and combat training for the new generation of campus activists (Kapur, 2022, p. 14-15). The movement became further radicalised by the violent clashes with campus and riot police which were sent in by university administrators as attempts

to dissolve the barricades and restore order on campuses (ibid., p. 15). As the use of violence increased within the New Left from 1968 onwards the police took vigorous action against protesters. On January 18th and 19th, 1969 authorities forcefully vacated the barricades on the University of Tokyo's Hongō campus and subsequently arrested 819 students during the violent clash between students and 8500 riot police officers (Ando, 2014, p. 81). Through the state's violent response to communal organising and the expansion of the police force in numbers, in the fiscal year of 1969 alone 5000 new police officers were recruited (ibid., p.81), spaces to explore actions as a community, a movement were more and more falling away. Activists committed to the revolutionary cause were pressured to either oblige to the tightening state control of protests and demonstration or to engage in guerrilla actions with petrol bombs and promote the armed struggle against the state (ibid., p. 82). Consequently, New Left activism after 1969 became increasingly militarised.

However, despite noble intentions, the late 1960s student movement became a time characterised by violent sectarian infighting. This legacy was carried over by the New Left into the 1970s, most prominently culminating in the internal purge within the United Red Army (*Rengō sekigun*), short URA, resulting in the Asama Sansō incident¹² in late February of 1972. However, as noted by Perkins (2015), describing the URA as symbolic of the New Left as a whole is problematic as it not only simplifies and homogenises the movement but also disregards the role the interactions between the state, the media, and the activists themselves play in constructing said framing (p. 20).

¹² The Asama Sansō Incident (*Asama sansō jiken*) refers to a hostage situation and subsequent police siege at a holiday lodge in holiday town Karuizawa by the URA. Five URA members who on the run from authorities, broke into a lodge, occupied it, took the lodge's manager and his wife hostage, and engaged in a 10 day stand-off with the police (Perkins, 2015, p.2). On the final day when the police finally made forceful entrance into the building reportedly 89.7% of all Japanese TV sets (around 60 million people) were tuned in live making it one of the largest media spectacles in post-war Japanese history (ibid., p. 45).

The sectarian violence is rather a symptomatic, common feature of groups ideologically belonging to the New Left. Perkins (2015) further challenges the notion of the common perception that the New Left in Japan ended with the URA (p. 20). With my research presented in this thesis I would like to reiterate this challenge by providing the accounts of one of the ways New Left politics continued after the 1970s and took on new forms through former activists like Yonezu Tomoko.

The student movement in post-war Japan is mostly characterised as male centred and male driven. However, as Schieder (2021) examines, women were also at the forefront of the movement with female students like biologist and activist leader Tokoro Mitsuko whose theoretical writings on how to create a horizontal organisational style within a political movement, reacting to the strong hierarchical system of the traditional Japanese Left, influenced the late 1960s student movement and their organisational ideals (ibid., p. 18). The most famous female figure within the student movement was student activist leader Kanba Michiko who through her death at the mass demonstration against Anpo in 1960 became the “maiden sacrifice” for Japan’s fragile post-war democracy (ibid., p. 7). Schieder further explains that through her death Kanba perfectly fit into the dominant narrative constructed by the mass media which constructed young, middle-class women (the majority of female students in the 1950s and 1960s) as particularly vulnerable to state violence and equated it with Japan’s fledgling democracy (2021, p. 18). This imposed identity completely disregarded Kanba’s own radical politics. Following on from Schieder’s analysis, in the following I expand the discourse on the radical female student and what became of her through my focus on Yonezu and investigating her experiences within the 1960s student movement.

Revolutionary awakening and denouncing the gendered binary of the New Left – The Tamadai years

Protest also took place at Tama Arts University where Yonezu Tomoko enrolled as a design student in 1968 (Arai, 2022, p. 43). By January 17th, 1969, Tama students had barricaded all entrances of the university to prevent teachers from entering, only allowing students behind the barricades who agreed with their politics. Organised as *Tamabi zenkyōtō* (Tama Arts University All-Campus Joint Struggle League) students campaigned against the planned relocation of the Tama Arts University to Tokyo's Hachiōji area and demanded mass bargaining with the university (ibid., p. 51-52). Student organising also spilt over to the associated vocational colleges and students there formed *Tamagei zenkyōtō* (Arts College University All-Campus Joint Struggle League) (ibid., p. 52). The campus-wide barricades lasted for 9 months, until October 19th, when riot police stormed the university grounds and forcibly removed the students.

Having doubts about her future and experiencing anxiety over where and how she would fit in, the transformation of society that the student movement of the 1960s promised looked encouraging and Yonezu joined the barricades. This was the first time Yonezu had ever joined a demonstration or political action in any form or shape (Arai, 2022, p. 52). Yonezu does not recall any sectarian infighting behind the barricades at Tama but much more she remembers the atmosphere of free discussions and different voices being heard as very uplifting for the first time she felt comfortable talking about her disability (Yonezu, 2020 and Arai, 2022, p.53). Feeling empowered by this newly found space where she could express herself genuinely, she joined 'Artists Joint Struggle Committee' (*Bijutsuka kyōtō kaigi*), short *Bikyōtō*, a student group wanting to challenge

the institutionalised nature of the arts world (Mizuma Art Gallery, 2022)¹³. Through her involvement with campus-based activism Yonezu became political. She took part in the reading groups organised by other students where they would read and discuss Marx's *Das Kapital* and Yoshimoto Takaaki's '*Kyōdō gensōron*' (A study of collective illusion), however these writings didn't resonate with her, she didn't relate to them much (Arai, 2022, p. 55).

Yet, the student groups behind the barricades were still dominated by their male members, women were reduced to helpers. Male students were leading the discussions, were giving the speeches whereas women were mostly just listening or printing flyers (Arai, 2022, p. 55-56). Male students categorised female students into two roles: women inside the barricades, those who were helping the revolutionary cause which involved intense physical labour, carrying heavy things, and getting your hands dirty. The other group of women were those who there were seen as conventionally feminine and pretty, women who came to see the male students within the barricades as their love interests (Yonezu, 2020a, Oguma, 2015, p. 20, Schieder, 2020, p. 155-156). Marriages inside the occupied campuses were common occurrences, hence the patriarchal family structure was reproduced in the revolutionary context. Male activists would denounce structural violence of capitalist societies that exploited the working class, however they failed to incorporate the gendered nature of structural oppression into their analysis (Arai, 2022, p. 56). There was a strict binary role allocation for women in the movement, they were assigned either one or the other identity but never both simultaneously. The price for being treated equally to their male comrades was the complete adoption of a masculine identity in negation of their femininity. This binary was further perpetuated by the media

¹³ Other *Bikyōtō* members included its chairman artist Horii Kōsai, artist-theorist Hikosaka Naoyoshi, and photographer Ishiuchi Miyako (Arai, 2022, p. 54).

reporting on student activism in the late 1960s, especially the media's framing of the female student activist. Their construction and coining of the term 'Gewalt¹⁴ Rosa' (Violent Rosa) for female student activists highlights the binary role allocation and as Schieder (2021) argued demoted militant female activists to figures of play (p. 134). Claiming that female students' participation in student radicalism as a sign of 'rampant immaturity and irrationality' the mass media attempted to undermine the student movement's societal relevance effectively attributing feminine political agency with emotionalism and even hysteria (Schieder, 2021, p. 135-136). The gendered stereotyping exercised by journalists further demonstrated the gendered inequality of power between male-dominated institutions like news journalism and female student activists (ibid., p. 136).

It is important to note that women, feminist scholars in particular, who extensively analysed 1968, the student movement in its aftermath, contributed to the devaluation of care-work women carried out behind the barricades. Schieder (2021) critically engages with this adversely evaluated binary. The devaluation and dismissal of care-work within the student movement, essential labour that ensured the continuation, in fact, the very existence of the students' revolutionary endeavours, is further evidence of the translation of mainstream society's existing gender dynamics into the revolutionary context. It further reflects how through socialisation these attitudes are not only found within the male reflections of the student movement. As Schieder (2021) notes the devaluation of women's care contributions within the student movement also can be found in the memory of the student movement and feminist analysis of such, most

¹⁴ *Geburto*, the Japanese transliteration of the German term 'Gewalt' (violence or force). Student activists framed their counter-violence against state violence as 'Gewalt', a strategy to disrupt everyday life of the nation and capital (Schieder, 2021, p. 98-99).

prominently articulated by leading Japanese feminist scholar Ueno Chizuko (p. 10). Additionally, Schieder describes the difficulty of liberation from such socially ingrained attitudes towards femininely coded care work and how the creation of a separate 'women-only' movement like *ribu* did not necessarily mean the instant emancipation from such behaviour within its participants, it needed much more conscious work to undo it than just forming an own women's movement (2021, p. 17). The feminization of caregiving was also a recurring tactic of conservative social policy making of the 1980s and 1990s in efforts to strengthen the national economy and its justification for the shift of responsibility from the state to the individual in times of austerity in Japan.

Mori Setsuko, Yonezu's classmate at Tama who later also became another key member of the *ūman ribu* movement, was similarly disillusioned by the gender dynamics of the student movement. To illustrate this, here is an anecdote as recounted by Mori and reprinted in Arai's book "*Rintoshite tomoru* (Be dignified)" (2022, p. 57-58) that becomes symbolic for women's frustrations with male led campus groups and the formation of female-led female-only groups. Mori compared to Yonezu was a much more vocal student activist, men subjected her to the same standards as other male comrades. As the campus was under student control who wouldn't let anyone else behind the barricades, toilet facilities had to be cleaned by the students themselves, and this menial task was left to female students (Arai, 2022, p. 57). While Mori, Yonezu and other female comrades were cleaning toilets in one block, their male counterparts were going around campus smashing toilets in other parts of the campus as a demonstration of 'strength and readiness for the battle ahead of them' (ibid., p. 57). Just as the women had finished cleaning, the men wanted to use the freshly cleaned toilets and Yonezu made a gesture towards them, signalling that they were free to do so, as they were now tidy and ready for use. In this moment, Mori started to scream:

I'm not going to let you use it! You have to use the ones you broke! Men are not allowed to use these toilets here anymore! Get out! This is a women-only toilet from now on!

(Mori Setsuko as quoted in Arai, 2022, p. 58)

As the women followed Mori and shouted in unison at the male students, Yonezu remained quiet (ibid., p. 58). When reflecting on the incident, Yonezu said it showed how deeply ingrained her gendered behaviour as a woman was when interacting with men; her body was acting before her mind was able to intervene, her saying '*dōzo*' (Here you go) to the men wanting to use the freshly cleaned toilets happened in affect (ibid., p. 58). Un-learning these kind of behaviours takes an active engagement and analysis of one's social behaviour and positionality. Additionally, different personalities also influenced the manner in which female members challenged the male bias of the student movement. Female students' frustration with their roles behind the barricades mostly had the same origins but their expression of such varied. Speaking of the general 'female student', the generalisation and homogenisation of the female participants within the student movement, reduces their experience to the very stereotypical roles assigned to women and which they came to criticise. What this show is that a nuanced assessment and analysis of gendered dynamic of the movement is necessary; space has to be granted to take different personality types into consideration. Dissent and rebellion against persistent gendered roles took and still takes on different forms.

Nevertheless, the propagated binary of female identity within the New Left served as a catalyst for female activists like Yonezu and Mori to move on in their activism. Yonezu further describes a different approach of their post-New-Left future life between male and female students: If the revolution failed and the student movement did not achieve its goals, the personal and professional future of the men involved in it would not be

impacted by that. They could return to the place society had prepared for them before their revolutionary endeavours. They were still seen as the educated elite, the next generation of Japanese political social and business leaders. Women, however, had no job waiting for them to go to, they didn't see returning to what was waiting for them prior to their revolutionary awakening as an option. This was particularly highlighted when riot police forcibly removed the barricades at Tama in the early morning of October 19th, 1969, and the only 18 remaining student activists on campus didn't resist arrest by the police on grounds of assembling weapons and illegal occupation (Arai, 2022, p. 61-62). Yonezu recalls that when this happened male comrades started to talk about conversion and abandoning the fight as the student movement started to cool down by late 1969 (ibid., p. 62). Male students were beginning to leave their revolutionary existence behind to re-join mainstream society, female students didn't want to resign and surrender their emancipatory struggles. As a result, they started to form their own female-led female-only groups.

Re-calling her time in the student movement at Tama, Yonezu says that she realised her personal identity and the work she wanted to do were intrinsically connected to Japanese society and its history. The personal and the social were related and had to be thought about in relation to one another. Her student activist years kickstarted her critical engagement with her internalised gendered and ableist bias and signified the beginning of her personal emancipatory journey. This was also true in regard to her professional training and career development as she realised the transferable skills she was learning as part of her university education and how they became useful skills in her activism. Working as a designer was similar to that of a social activist: selling something or conveying political slogans, require the same techniques and designs students she had learned during her training at university (Yonezu, 2020).

Therefore, even if the labour market was not providing her and other women in comparable situations with the job opportunity to apply their training and knowledge, through their activism they created new spaces to make use of their education.

‘Thought Group S.E.X.’ and the beginning of the *ūman ribu* movement

The lack of solidarity of male student activists for female students’ struggle within campus-based activism and post-war society as a whole led Mori, Ishiuchi Miyako and Yonezu to form their own women-only group ‘Thought Group S.E.X.’ (*Shisō shūdan Esu · E — · Ekkusu*) on April 2nd 1970.¹⁵ Their group made up female students at Tama Arts University wore typical for the Zenkyōtō movement helmets coloured in white with ‘S.E.X.’ written in black painted letters (Arai, 2022, p. 60). The group first introduced themselves at a political rally against the Osaka Expo organised by *Bikyōtō* on April 26th by jumping onto the stage, disrupting the speeches, and announcing the formation of the group while wearing their moniker, the white helmets (ibid., 63). However, their confrontational debut was drowned out by someone turning up the volume of the TV screens which were part of an art installation at the venue and the crowd turned their attention to a non-sensical performance of a teenage girl playing rock paper scissors on the screens (Schieder, 2021, p. 1). Reflecting on their protest action a few days later (May 12th) Yonezu wrote a leaflet titled “Erect the 70s from self-consciously engaging with our own sex!” where she called out the leftist men at the rally who once again dismissed women and their concerns (Ribu Shinjuku Center, 2008b, p. 2). Based on the members’ experiences in the student movement, ‘Thought Group S.E.X.’ wanted to politicise a new theorisation of sex and centre their politics around it (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 66).

¹⁵ A fourth member of the group is mentioned but never explicitly named in any of the sources available.

Disrupting and intervening at already existing political events like the rally at Tama became a characteristic feature of the group's activism. Later this form of direct action was also adopted by *ribu* groups who aimed to demonstrate the exclusion of gender politics from existing student movement with these tactics (ibid., p. 66).

In their writing Yonezu and Mori posed a feminist critique of Marx in an attempt to critique the sexist behaviour of male comrades and the false "neutrality" of their proposed "human liberation" (ibid., p. 219). Shigematsu further summarises that their "[...] clear consciousness of sexual difference as a site of political antagonism was initially articulated through a Marxist concept of class oppression [... *reacting*] to the existing gender politics of leftist student movements whereby the liberalization of sexual relations should be critically distinguished from *ribu's* notion of the liberation of sex" (ibid., p. 219-220). In the group's position paper written in May 1970, Mori declared that "[i]n order to create from our sex (*sei*), we need to be conscious of our class as *onna* [...]" (as translated in Shigematsu, 2012, p. 68). Mori further advocated smashing the dominant pattern of gender relations which requires women to be passive towards men and instead argued for *onna* (women) to acquire their own violence (ibid., p. 68).

Shortly after founding 'Thought Group S.E.X.', Yonezu learned from a newspaper article about a group of women (Committee to Prepare for Women's Liberation, this group later began to use the name Group of Fighting Women *Gurūpu Tatakau Onna*), one of them Tanaka Mitsu, who were organising a series of demonstrations against Anpo in Yoyogi Park in Tokyo in June 1970. Intrigued by what she read in the article, she went to the protest and got to know the group and its members better. At one of the rallies the pamphlet calling for the liberation of sex titled "The Declaration of the Liberation of Eros" written by Tanaka was distributed, which later together with "Liberation from the toilet (*Benjo kara no kaihō*)", also authored by Tanaka, became a manifesto for the *ūman ribu*

movement. The manifesto, while echoing the political consciousness that was formulated in 'Thought Group S.E.X.' position paper, criticised both the existing women's movements and the Marxist New Left groups for their joint failure to recognise that gender relations and the family system formed the basis for the capitalist authoritarian state (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 67-68). In contrast, *ribu's* primary aim was to radically transform Japanese society by liberating the whole of society from this oppressive masculine capitalist logic. This required the breakdown of gender roles and the dissolution of the oppressive family system respectively.

Building on the successful rallies and demonstrations in Yoyogi park, Yonezu and other women activists organised the first major women-only *ribu* gathering in Shibuya, Tokyo on November 14th, 1970, with about 200 participants from all walks of life (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 72). Similar to the discussion style within the Zenkyōtō movement, endless debates (*eien no tōso*) were taking place moderated by writer Higuchi Keiko with the intention to theorise this new emerging women's liberation movement (*ibid.*, p. 73). A wide range of topics were discussed: "women's complicity in systems of oppression, especially during wartime; the central importance placed on a revolution of *onna's* consciousness; a call to reassess the labour of mothering; the relative importance of women's economic independence; and a call to think seriously about masculinity. [...] issues of women's struggle in the workplace, the politics of participation in sex work, the politics of abortion and the pill, and a call for male comrades" (*ibid.*, p. 73). In March 1971 progressive publisher Aki Shobō published the transcript of the meeting together with manifestos of *ribu* groups and a section on women's liberation in the United States titled "Protesting Sex Discrimination: The Contentions of Ūman Ribu" (*ibid.*, p. 73).

Another event that became a common part of the *ribu* activist calendar were the so-called *ribu* summer camps (*ribu gasshuku*). The first camp took place in Shinshū,

Nagoya, at a ski lodge called Shinnohei from August 21st to August 24th, 1971, where 157 women from all over Japan came together and was organised mainly by 'Group of Fighting Women' and 'Thought Group S.E.X.' (Mizoguchi et al., 1992, p. 316 and Shigematsu, 2012, p. 75). At the loosely organised four-day camp women discussed whatever was on their mind freely in different discussion groups. The call to participants was to "question everything together" and to jointly find out what it means to be *onna* (Mizoguchi et al., 1992, p. 317). The *ribu* camps created spaces to encounter oneself, other *onna* and new philosophies (ibid., p. 315). They were also covered by mainstream newspapers including the Mainichi Shimbun and the Asahi Shimbun and weekly magazines such as the Shūkan Post, Shūkan Bunshū and Shūkan Shinko (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 79). The latter more tabloid like publications reported on the camps rather mockingly using headlines like "The Ribu Camp Became a Gathering for Sex Confessions - Challenging the Middle Class in the Nude" describing *ūman ribu* as an import from the United States and by doing so delegitimizing the movement's local and organic formation (ibid., 2012, p. 79).

Standing out in the media's early coverage of the *ūman ribu* movement was their fixation on Yonezu Tomoko. In order to challenge the public gaze and the erasure of disabled people and their bodies from the public eye Yonezu wore a DIY T-shirt with "Look at Me!" when attending the camp but also later at public demonstrations (ibid., p. 79). Pictures of her in that t-shirt often made it into publications like Shūkan Shinko making her one of the more visible activists within the movement (ibid., p. 79). From May 5th to May 7th, 1972, the first Ribu Conference (*Ribu taikai*) took place in Tokyo with around two thousand people in attendance, again Yonezu was part of the organisation team (ibid., p. 83). It kick-started the movement to build the Ribu Shinjuku Center which subsequently was established September 30th, 1972. Hence, from the very beginning of

the *ūman ribu* taking on concrete forms, Yonezu Tomoko was there right in the epicentre of the movement.

The Ribu Shinjuku Center

In order to be able to understand how the *ūman ribu* movement challenged and intervened into the bio-political order of post-war Japan, we need to examine the principles and structures of their activism. Key to this is examining the main hub of the movement, the Ribu Shinjuku Center. It was home to five groups affiliated with the *ūman ribu* movement: 'Group Fighting Women' (*Gurupu Tatakau Onna*), which as mentioned Tanaka Mitsu was part of, 'Thought Group S.E.X.', 'Fighting Women's League' (*Tatakau Josei Dōmei*), 'The Scarlet Letter' (*Himonji*) and the Tōkyō Komu-une. Tōkyō Komu-une is an adaptation of '*kodomo wo umu*' (to give birth to a child). It was a community of women were raising their children together (Yonezu, 2021, p. 2). Furthermore, this was the group within the movement that supported Nagata Hiroko, the female leader of the URA, during her court trial following her arrest after the Asama Sansō incident in February 1972. The centre also functioned as the dissemination point and publishing house for the *ribu* newspaper "*Ribu nyūsu: konomichi hitosuji* (*Ribu* news: Following one's own path)" and other *ribu* publications (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 85). Over the years other groups found home in the Ribu Shinjuku Center, too, such as a translation group who focussed on translating foreign feminist publications into Japanese and a group that was interested in the situation of women across Asia. The latter particularly became vocal in protest against Kisaeng tourism (sex tourism) of Japanese men to South Korea which *ribu* theorised as a form of reformation of Japanese economic imperialism in Asia, an exploitative system of the sex of other third world Asian women (ibid., p. 94).

The translation efforts were especially promoted by a group of slightly older women than Yonezu surrounding Akiyama Yoko through their connections to activists of

the women's movement in the United States. The group introduced feminist text from outside of Japan to Japanese women and published translations of Japanese materials in English in order to make Japanese women's work more known internationally (Yonezu, 2020a). However, it is important to highlight that contrary to how it was portrayed in the mass media, *ribu's* feminist activism was not based on feminism from abroad. It was very much the reaction of women from various places within Japanese society to the gendered social reality of post-war Japan. As Yonezu states, it was born out of Japanese women feeling bored, uncomfortable, and anxious in many different societal spaces, such as at home, at school or at work because they were women expected to perform their gendered role accordingly. For Yonezu feminist texts from abroad were interesting and she referred to them in her own activism, but she emphasises that with *ribu* they've created a movement out of their own experiences specific to the Japanese context. For her one's own life was one's greatest inspiration (Yonezu, 2020a).

The fact, however, that there were women abroad doing similar things was a very empowering thing to witness for Japanese women. Most of the activists that the women from the *ūman ribu* movement encountered were from the United States, some of them even visited Japan to give talks and seminars. Those campaigners who came to talk about abortion to Japanese women's activists were very insistent on framing abortions as a women's rights issue. Yonezu remembers that she didn't per se disagree with that framing but she felt that it would be difficult to talk about abortions just in terms of rights in the Japanese context due to the explicit Eugenic connotation of reproductive politics (Yonezu, 2020a). This again highlights how the Japanese discourse on reproductive rights, initiated by the revision attempts of the EPL in the early 1970s, required an intersectional approach to critique state intervention into bodies and that approaching it from a gendered liberal rights perspective alone would provide an unsatisfactory solution to

bodily autonomy due to the eugenic implications of the Japanese laws governing reproduction. Yonezu's embodied intersectionality makes her realisation of this a key moment as she becomes a key member within the *ūman ribu* movement and the subsequent reproductive rights movement.

Establishing alliances with other activist groups

Leading up to the Ribu Conference in 1972 the Ribu Shinjuku Center based groups were forging connections with other women groups across the whole of Japan, for example groups based in Sapporo and Kyushu. They exchanged leaflets and other publications via mail and organised joint camps like the 1971 one in Nagano, creating a nation-wide activist network. Regarding its organisational style *ribu* adopted a non-hierarchical structure similar to Zenkyōtō and *Beheiren*, short for *Betonamu ni heiwa o! Shimin rengo*, 'The Citizen's League for Peace in Vietnam' (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 84-85). At the Ribu Conferences the participants from all over Japan came together to exchange ideas. Some of the participants stayed at the Ribu Shinjuku Center afterwards. The Center became not only a physical hub for the women's movement, where women could meet and stay for a few days when in the capital, but also a centre for the exchange of knowledge as they displayed and sold different materials of regional groups. It was very much a safe space for activists from all over the country. Enabled through openness and the feeling of emotional security and belonging within *ribu* Yonezu embraced her disability. Yonezu conceptualises her disability:

[L]ittle by little, I opened up [about myself]. It was a very pleasant experience. It made me a little bit more accepting of my disability, and it made me think about how all these different issues are connected in a way. So, if I hadn't found the *ūman ribu* movement, I would have been living with a

completely different and more negative image of myself. [...]
I understood very well that I am a social being. This is very important. It's not that I personally have a hard life because I'm disabled, but if I have a hard life, it's because of my social circumstances and history. So, you can change the way you think about and see yourself, and to do that you need to change the way society works which is possible. We can change the way people perceive us. I was able to think of it as a social problem, not an individual one. I thought that was a good thing for me.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko, March 5th, 2020

Through her involvement and presence at the forefront of *ribu*, Yonezu's understanding of disability influenced *ribu's* societal critique and, among other things, enabled the movement to develop an intersectional approach to reproduction. Her conception of disability echoes the notions of embodiment theory as outlined by Siebers (2017) and Silvers (2019), especially how Yonezu made sense of her social experiences, as well as the social constructionist notion of disability as a product of her social environment rather than a medical condition. This also translated into *ribu's* conviction that society needed to create the circumstances where people can live a fulfilled life regardless of their gender, sexuality, race, or disability.

However, with the revision attempts of the Eugenic Protection Law (EPL) in the early 1970s *ribu's* politics changed. Next to providing a platform for women to exchange their experiences and organise national conferences and gatherings in support of that, activists at the Ribu Shinjuku Center started organising more meetings and

demonstrations to challenge and stop state intervention into women's bodies directly. Included in these organising efforts were also disabled people's organisations.

At the beginning of *ribu's* campaign against the proposed revisions of the EPL, the movement very much focussed on preserving the 'economic reasons clause' and hence the legal access to abortion for Japanese women (Kato, 2009, p.65 and Mizoguchi et al., 1994, p.176-177). However, throughout *ribu's* campaign against the revision attempts of the EPL their approach evolved. Rather than emphasising women's right to abortion, *ribu's* framing demanded reproductive freedom from state control (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 88). Instrumental in developing this critique were exchanges the movement had with disability activists like the radical cerebral palsy activist group *Aoi shiba no kai* and the presence of disabled people within *ribu*, most prominently that of Yonezu Tomoko who pushed the discourse further (ibid, p. 26 and p. 90).

Founded by Yamakita Atsushi, Kanazawa Eiji and Takayama Hisako at Yaguchi Nursery School in Ota Ward of Tokyo in November 1957, *Aoi shiba no kai* had branches across Japan from Sapporo to Fukuoka and received international attention through Hara Kazuo's documentary film "Sayonara CP!" released in 1972 (Sayonara CP! 1972). The film followed the Kanagawa branch of the group and its members, mostly Yokota Hiroshi (1933-2013) and Yokotsuka Kōichi (1935-1975) both leading voices within *Aoi shiba no kai*, going about their daily tasks and showed them at demonstrations in the streets, as well as provided an intimate insight into their family life. *Aoi shiba no kai* stressed that having a disability should not be seen as something negative and critiqued, similarly to *ribu*, that the main determining value within Japanese society was an ethics of productivity which threatened disabled people's right to exist (Kato, 2009, p. 30 and p. 53 and Mithout, 2022, p. 136). Yokotsuka argued in his writing that for disabled people "[...] self-assertion is the only way to resist oppression and to reclaim their identity as

individuals entitled to equal rights with able-bodied members of society” (Mithout, 2022, p. 136). The group also established the first independent living community in Japan called Mahārāva¹⁶ village colony close to Chiyoda Village (Ibaraki prefecture) on the mountainous premises of Buddhist Kanyozan Gansei Temple (Nagase, 1995, p. x¹⁷). Around thirty people with cerebral palsy lived in the community in a non-medicalised environment, including Yokota and Yokotsuka (Mithout, 2022, p. 135). Through their thought and activism, they also aimed to fundamentally question the socio-cultural institutions that produced the binary of ‘able-bodied’ and ‘disabled’ (Seyama 1988, np).

Thus, the primary aim of the disability movement that emerged in the 1970s was to enable disabled people in Japan to live self-determined lives rather than lives determined by their families or state institutions (Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001, p. 856–857). The movement gained momentum in 1969 through the efforts of *Aoi shiba no kai* and other groups to deinstitutionalise people at the Tokyo Metropolitan Fuchū Medical Centre for the Disabled (*Fuchū ryōiku sentā*) after accounts of ill treatment of residents had become public (Seyama, 1998, np). To be admitted to the Fuchū Medical Centre parents of disabled people had to sign a waiver that enabled medical staff to perform a wide range of surgeries on the residents without requiring their consent, effectively making them “guineapigs [...] for medical research” (Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001, p. 859).

The Centre’s policy and the wider, systematic discrimination of disabled people in Japanese institutions were symptomatic of the social welfare policies of the 1960s and early 1970s, when institutionalisation and segregation of disabled people became the norm (ibid., p. 857). Subsequently, rather than trying to achieve an independent life through economic and personal independence, members of the emerging independent

¹⁶ Mahārāva means ‘loud cry’ in Sanskrit.

¹⁷ It existed from 1963 until 1969.

living movement used welfare, pensions, and allowances as their financial basis and the assistance of volunteer caregivers, such as students and labour union members, to create their own living spaces away from the state-sanctioned institutions (Seyama, 1998, np). The concept of self-determination, an affirmative approach to disability, and community-embedded living arrangements were the central tenets of the movement.

Campaigning against the revision of the EPL in the 1970s

Discrimination of marginalised groups within Japanese society, fundamentally all those who deviated from the standard able-bodied employed male, was identified by the student movement and other social movements of post-war Japan as rooted within the very fabric of societal relations within Japanese society. Based on this realisation and due to their origins in previous social movements, like the student movement, the New Left and *Beheiren*, the women's liberation movement developed their societal critique.

In post-war Japan, as mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the EPL, in its Article 14, set out the provisions for legal abortion, under which a woman could have the procedure performed by a designated doctor:

Item 1 If the person in question or that person's spouse has a mental illness, mental deficiency, psychopathic disorder, hereditary physical ailment or hereditary deformity

Item 2 If a blood relative within the fourth degree of consanguinity of the person in question or that person's spouse has a hereditary mental illness, hereditary mental deficiency, hereditary physical deformity

Item 3 If the person in question or that person's spouse suffers from leprosy

Item 4 If the continuation of pregnancy or childbirth is likely to seriously harm the mother's health for physical or economic reasons

Item 5 If pregnancy results from rape due to assault, coercion, or inability to offer resistance or refusal

Eugenic Protection Law, 1948 as translated in

Norgren, 2001, p. 149

Official government statistics that between 1955 and 1960 than 1 million abortions were performed per year under the EPL (Norgren, 2001, p. 5). Almost 99% of these legal abortions in Japan took place under the economic reasons clause (Kato, 2009, p. 46). The de facto legalisation of abortion coincided with the delay in the legalisation and promotion of birth control in Japan¹⁸ set the tone for the post-war pattern that Norgren (2001) calls 'abortion before birth control', why legislation on access to abortion became a key battleground for reproductive politics, with influential *Nichibo* seeking to protect its profitable business monopoly on abortion provision, while the women's movement saw any attempt to restrict abortion access as an attack on their bodily autonomy (p. 10-11).

Given the high abortion rates throughout the post-war years in Japan, the pro-life group *Seichō no ie*¹⁹ began to systematically lobby government officials and conservative

¹⁸ The intrauterine device (IUD) was only approved for use in Japan by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1974 and the contraceptive pill was only legalised in Japan in 1999 (Norgren, 2001, p. 6).

¹⁹ *Seichō no ie* was founded by Taniguchi Masaharu (1893-1985) in 1929 as an offshoot of new religion Ōmoto-kyō bringing together beliefs and practices from a wide range of other religions including Shintō, Confucianism, and Christianity (Staemmler, 2018, p. 88). The religious movement is widely known in Japan due to its large number of followers, at its height in the 1970s approximately 3.5 million people were members in Japan, with dedicated missionary activities and wide availability of its many publications (Staemmler, 2018, p. 88 and Norgren, 2001, p. 82). In its philosophy *Seichō no ie* centres around "spiritualism, psychoanalysis, and questions about the existence of the soul before birth and after death" (Norgren, 2001, p. 82).

legislators to revise the EPL from the mid to late 1960s in order to reduce the number of legal abortions performed in Japan by providing financial and organisational support for their election campaigns (ibid., p. 60). During this time the pro-life group's main political opponent was *Nichibo*, who saw the tightening of legal abortion access as going against their professional interest and therefore used their political influence on lobby against revising the EPL. After joint negotiation between the two interest groups they reached an accommodation on a draft to revise the EPL: the economic reasons clause would be deleted as demanded by *Seichō no ie* and the so-called 'selective abortion clause', or 'foetal clause' would be added to the law which would have enabled abortions based on the detection of foetal anomalies, an expansion of the law that especially medical professionals welcomed as it would have meant a new profitable service to offer parents-to-be (ibid., p. 61-62). Subsequently, the Ministry for Health and Welfare drafted a bill based on these premises and it was introduced to the Social Affairs and Labour Committee of the Lower House of the Diet in May 1972 (ibid., p. 63).

What had previously been done through backroom lobbying and negotiation between politically influential interest groups was now made public, encouraging the involvement of the opposition parties, family planning organisations, mainstream women's groups, feminist groups, and disability activists, who began campaigning and protesting against the proposed revisions to the EPL (ibid., p. 63). Women across Japanese society feared that the planned changes would effectively ban legal access to abortion. Therefore, their campaign focussed primarily on arguing against the elimination of the economic reasons clause while disregarding the proposed foetal clause and its bio-ethical consequences. In the early stages of the protests, the women's liberation movement's slogan was 'A woman decides whether to have a baby or not'. This was their way of rejecting the state's intervention into women's bodies and reproduction.

Under the Criminal Code abortion was and still is considered a crime, however the EPL provided women with a legal loophole and enabled abortions if certain conditions as mentioned earlier were fulfilled. The proposed revisions of the EPL planned to tighten the conditions further, limiting the access to abortions with the eventual possibility of denying the access to legal abortions entirely. “What the movement was trying to say was that it is wrong for the state to intervene in women’s decision to have or not have children”, as Yonezu explains in retrospect (Yonezu, 2020a). Yet, this stance provoked strident criticism from the disability movement, primarily represented by *Aoi shiba no kai*, as the proposed changes to the EPL also included the addition of a new clause that allowed the abortion of a foetus if pre-natal testing detected a disability (the so-called ‘foetal clause’) to which the *ūman ribu* movement neglected to take up a position in the beginning of their campaign. *Ribu*’s struggle to keep the EPL as it is from the perspective of women’s rights and bodily autonomy, was understood by the disability movement, mainly represented by *Aoi shiba no kai* at this point in time, as reaffirmation of eugenics and the continuous discrimination of disabled people in Japan at first. Thus, the confrontation with disabled people on the issue of the EPL made *ribu* rethink their framing of reproduction and *ribu* members spearheaded by Yonezu engaged in discussions and workshops with disability activists, mainly members from *Aoi shiba no kai*.

Throughout the history of population control women’s bodies have been the centre stage, the main policy target, whether it was to increase or decrease a population or to minimise the birth of disabled children in order to keep the population healthy and productive for economic and imperialist purposes. In her analysis, Yonezu describes this as not only as a human rights violation of the disabled, but this state intervention does also violate the right of self-determination of women and reproductive freedom at the

same time (Yonezu, 2020a). Hence, the two issues become inseparable from one another due to this socio-historical entanglement. Furthermore, Yonezu states that because of this realisation she saw the intersecting problematic nature of the EPL as a fundamental cause of the *ūman ribu* movement to take on (ibid.). As mentioned before, Yonezu was integral to changing *ribu's* approach and formulating an intersectional analysis of reproduction that takes into account people's overlapping identities and how this creates compounding experiences of discrimination by the systems of power at play which cannot be seen from a gender perspective alone. In practise this meant recognising the aforementioned complicity of able-bodied women in the oppression of disabled people in Japan, past and present, and incorporating their experiences into their societal critique of reproduction.

Her position was additionally reinforced when Yonezu took part in meetings of disabled people's groups. At first, she recalled the overwhelmingly male activists to be scary and threatening as they were very harsh in their criticism of her and *ribu's* initial approach to the EPL debate. But gradually she realised that the strong opposition she encountered was rooted in the fact that reproduction was until then framed as a women's issue only. However, as the proposed foetal clause would have wide-ranging societal consequences for disabled life in Japan too and Yonezu understood the need to speak out and work against its ideological implications (ibid.). *Ribu's* approach had to take this into account too.

Yonezu and the disability movement in the 1970s

Yonezu recalls her relationship with her own disability which translates to that with other disabled people as well as a rocky one in the beginning:

I was very scared to meet other disabled people even though I am disabled myself. I didn't want to accept or think about the fact that I was disabled.

When I was walking and I saw myself leaning against a window or a mirror, I was, and still am, nervous and don't want to see myself. When I saw other disabled people, I couldn't honestly believe that I was just like them. So, I felt separated from them, and I couldn't be with them. I didn't approach them.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko in Tokyo, March 2020

Returning to the theories of Michel Foucault, Yonezu's description of her relationship with her disability is where bio-power's mode of action and its impact on the individual, the subject, becomes visible: the established norms, what society considers normal, act as a form of benchmark and othering method for every member of this normalising society. It's this form of internalised ableist bias within disabled people themselves which *Aoi shiba no kai* and their earlier mentioned concept of radical self-assertion tries to combat.

Co-habiting in the Ribu Shinjuku Center made Yonezu feel seen as a woman but also as a disabled person. This stood in contrast to her previous life experiences where she mostly felt ignored, afraid to open up and share her feelings and opinions on things. The community of the members living in the Center gave her confidence in who she was. She recalls how people never mentioned or commented on her appearance in front of her before, that her disability and consequently she as a person were mostly ignored in public spaces or everyday conversations. However, when some of the women made comments about her body such as that her legs look like that of a crane, she felt a sense of joy about their frankness, she felt seen as the whole person that she was.²⁰ To her, the comments

²⁰ In the interview Yonezu emphasises that while this kind of statement about her disability might be understood as teasing or a discriminatory remark, she fundamentally did not perceive it like that.

and wanting to know her opinion about things meant that the other members wanted to get to know her better and that they were interested in her perspective of things.

That opened the door for me little by little. It was a very enjoyable experience. It made me a bit more accepting of myself as a disabled person, and it helped me to make connections between different issues. If I hadn't found the *ūman ribu* movement, I would have been living in a completely different with a more negative image of myself. It was a great thing for me to be able to open up like that. And I understood very well that I am a social being. This is very big. It's not that I personally have a hard life because I'm disabled, but if I have a hard life, it's because of my social background and history. Therefore, we can change the way we think and see ourselves. To do that, we need to change the way society works, and we can do that. We can change the way people see us. You can change the way people see you. I thought that was a good thing for me.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko in Tokyo, March 5th, 2020

The way Yonezu describes and assesses her experiences during her time in the Ribu Shinjuku Center highlights the far-reaching emancipatory potential movements like the *ūman ribu* movement had and continued to have on an individual level. It emphasises the importance of creating spaces for those who are not recognised and cannot express themselves appropriately in mainstream society. These spaces promote the emergence of new voices and establish them over time within the overall socio-political conversation. Thus, it is important to consider and not dismiss such potentials when talking about the successes and the failures of social or radical movements, especially when assessing their societal impact. The desired end-goal of complete transformation of society in *ribu's* case

might not have been achieved, but the lives of the individual members have been radically transformed. Especially, when activists like Yonezu continue to campaign and inspire subsequent movements and activists.

When the revision of the EPL came along, her relationship with disability changed on a political level too. As outlined earlier, the proposed addition of the foetal clause to the law in 1972 would have de facto denied disabled people the right to exist. Furthermore, as briefly mentioned before, disabled people were part of the movement to oppose the EPL revisions and were present at activist meetings, rallies, and demonstrations. The EPL discourse became the first intersection for feminists and disability activists. Yonezu remembers she was scared to be confronted with her own identity as a disabled person, but she wanted to engage with it and talk about it (Yonezu, 2020a). Through the confrontations at the meetings, which sometimes resulted in an argument among attendees, they became closer, with many of the disability activists she even became close personal friends, like with *Aoi shiba no kai's* Yokota Hiroshi.

As mentioned briefly before, in the early 1970s, disabled people's groups like *Aoi shiba no kai* did not trust women and their motives in keeping the EPL how it was to ensure legal access to abortions. The common perception of disability activist groups at the time was that if women were about to have a child with a disability, they prefer to not have it and have an abortion. This reflected the equation of women with mothers or future mothers by the dominance of male activists within the disability movement at the time. They declared that there was a subconscious anti-disability bias that permeated Japanese society, including women too (Kato, 2009, p. 67 and Nagase, 1995, np). Feminists' pre-war, wartime and post-war complicity in the expansion of eugenicist practices to gain more reproductive freedom did not make it easier to establish common ground on the issue. Furthermore, disability activists' suspicions were reinforced by the

highly publicised cases of women who killed their disabled child or children. Whether this increase in media interest in maternal filicide cases stood in relation to the increase of actual cases of such in Japan, is as Castellini (2017) explains, difficult to determine due to the lack of reliable statistical evidence of the number of actual maternal filicides at the time (p. 39). However, it is safe to say that the heightened media attention combined with the personal experiences of disabled people within the disability movement made it a contentious point between the two movements.

Yonezu explains that many of the disabled people who came to meetings had almost been killed by their own mothers or they had heard such stories from someone close to them. This anger was often unloaded on women of the *ūman ribu* movement especially in those meetings:

They saw women as mothers who were trying to kill them, when they were mothers who were supposed to protect them. It was very hard for me because they were pointing that at me and I thought, "I'm not your mother, I'm not trying to kill you, why are you saying that?" Disabled women, in particular, did not have much sympathy for a woman without a disability saying that she should decide for herself whether or not to have a child either. Given that as disabled women they are told not to have a baby, they are forced to have sterilisations, they are told to have an abortion and so they have. They don't have agency over their own bodies. This was very hard for me to hear. I heard the same things in the rallies and demonstrations which made me think "Yes, that's true." In the end, the same way that disabled people are killed or excluded or told not to have children, women are told not to have children or to only have

healthy children. The root cause for it is the same, isn't it? Namely the Eugenic Protection Law.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko, March 5th, 2020

Yonezu's statement highlights the key difference between feminists and disability rights activists on the issue of reproduction as stated by Saxton (2017, p. 74): "the reproductive rights movement [*represented by ribu in this case*] emphasizes the right to have an abortion; the disability rights movement, the right not to have to have an abortion." To bridge this gap, *ribu* activists understood the need to form an alliance to challenge the ideology behind the EPL that takes away the agency of women, able bodied or disabled alike, rather than fighting each other. However, they were not advocating on behalf of disabled people against the foetal clause and the issue of eugenics but incorporated their points of criticism into their framing. The efforts to bring the two movements together and cooperate on topics like challenging eugenics did not stop with the government abandoning their revision attempts of the EPL in 1972. For example, on March 10th, 1973, members of *Aoi shiba no kai* were invited to one of the Ribu Shinjuku Center's Sunday night teach-in sessions to discuss the intersecting nature of the discrimination against women and disabled people (Ribu Shinjuku Center, 2008, p. 12).

[Incorporating disability into the reproduction debate](#)

Disabled activist groups up until the mid-1980s were dominated by male members. For Yonezu, as a disabled woman, the discrimination she experienced by Japanese mainstream society was profoundly that of an intersectional nature. She felt ostracised by society not just because she was a woman or just because she had a disability, but because she was both. For her there was no division within her existence. Based on her intersectional embodiment, she came to understand for example that reproductive issues are not exclusively women's issues, but much more it should be seen

within the context of society as a whole. However, men within the disability movement did not see this intersection. Reflecting on their attitudes towards this over the past decades, Yonezu explains:

Men and disabled men have not changed much [really]. Nowadays, it is common to use prenatal diagnosis to check the foetus and the fertilised eggs to make sure they are healthy, so the child will be born without any disabilities. Disabled men often say that when it comes to this issue it is about women wanting to choose their children. However, this is not a women's or a men's issue per se. I do not want it to be a just a women's issue, men are involved in having children too. Furthermore, women have realised that the discrimination against disabled people and the discrimination against women are interconnected and intersecting. Hence, I strongly believe that men who are reflecting on the discrimination against disabled people should also think about how the two are connected.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko, Tokyo, March 5th, 2020

Yonezu's observation of men's attitudes within the movement not only shows the gendered nature of the reproductive discourse but also hints at the gendered role allocation within Japanese society. The issue of childbearing and nurturing children is widely attributed exclusively to women. Being a woman and motherhood are almost equated with one another; this attitude is also echoed by the way predominantly male disability activists framed women's complicity in denying disabled life to exist at meetings between the two groups. *Ribu* saw the idealisation of women as mothers as an ideological device of the paternalist nationalist capitalist state to incorporate women into the capitalist machinery and regulate their reproductive capacities through the

patriarchal family system for the benefit of capitalist production (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 19). For disabled women, however, this equation does not apply. Their bodies are not deemed appropriate as maternal bodies leaving behind an identity vacuum. In other words, women's bodies were understood either as maternal or non-maternal, either valued as productive or unproductive respectively. This highlights that the discourse on reproduction cannot rely on gender as its only dimension. Looking at gender alone does not deliver a satisfying answer to the bio-ethical questions prompted by the abortion debate. It does not answer why some bodies are deemed maternal and some aren't. Subsequently, issues related to reproduction are entwined with issues related to disability and questions about potential eugenic ulterior motivations behind state intervention into bodies. Hence, legislation governing women's bodies did not only restrict women's bodily autonomy, but it furthermore constituted the manipulation of the population to make it more productive, more beneficial to the persistent power structure, with lethal consequences to disabled lives. This demands an intersectional analysis due to the compounded experiences of discrimination.

What about race in this context? Would the addition of a racial dimension of this framing of reproduction in the Japanese context not deepen its critical analytic potential? Especially in connection with a state that has a long and complex gendered history of colonialism and imperialist expansion. As Setsu Shigematsu has shown, *ribu's* activism draws on the anti-imperialist notions of the New Left and incorporates it into its societal critique (2012, p. 71-72). *Onna* through Japanese history was understood not exclusively as victims of the patriarchal capitalist imperial state but also as accomplice to the exploitation of other Asian women and *ribu* expressed their solidarity to them (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 13). Iijima Aiko who was instrumental in the *ribu* group 'Committee of Asian Women' (*Ajia fujin kaigi*) and organised the conference "Asian Women's

Committee Who Fight Discrimination = Aggression" (*Shinryaku = Sabetsu to tatakau ajia fujin kaigi*) held at Hosei University in Tokyo from August 22nd to August 23rd, 1970, theorised the aims of the conference and demonstrated a clear break from previous women's movements when she articulated sex and gender based discrimination as a fundamental systemic oppression which was no longer a secondary effect of capitalism (ibid., p. 14). This became a core tenet of *ribu's* feminist critique. However, such universalisation of *onna* neglects the significant difference between women, such as class, sexuality, race and/or ethnicity and the intersectional character of discrimination experienced (ibid., p. 15). Furthermore, as building connections to liberation efforts of non-Japanese or ethnic minorities in Japan was not prioritised at the beginning of the *ūman ribu* movement the composition of the movement remained ethnically homogenous (ibid., p. 74).

The discourse on reproduction was approached by the women of the *ūman ribu* movement and disabled women from two antithetic sides of the debate. For *ribu*, state intervention into women's bodies, in essence bio-politics in form of denying abortion access to women, represented the imposition of motherhood on every woman in Japanese society. Women's roles in post-war Japan, their societal contribution, was limited to producing healthy offspring who would later become the smallest cog within the capitalist machinery. They also criticised that the state put pressure and responsibility on women without fulfilling its side of the bargain, making sure that the societal framework was in place to raise children with a good conscience, meaning the welfare infrastructure to raise children adequately to their needs was not provided by the state. However, for disabled women motherhood was very much negated by bio-politics, their bodies deemed inappropriate for reproduction. Consequently, the question of whether or not a disabled woman could have a child and become a mother has been

already answered for them. As a result, motherhood very much is defined by productive parameters. Because of the antithetical approach to reproductive rights, the right to not have children as campaigned for by feminists and the right to have children as campaigned for by disabled women, the alliance between the two groups on the issue didn't come about naturally. As Yonezu explains:

There was the common perception that disabled women should not have children. So, when people who have been deprived of the opportunity to have children, who have been sterilised, who have had their wombs removed, when disabled women want to recover from those violations of their human rights, they don't think too much about not giving birth. They wanted to be able to have a baby.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko, Tokyo, March 18th, 2020

Disabled activists' presence and participation within this debate highlights how the Japanese discourse on reproduction goes beyond bodily autonomy based on gender and sexuality. By adding the dimension of disability to the discourse it questions the very motivation behind state interventions into bodies and essentially the mechanisms of power, bio-power to be more precise. What the women's rights dimension to the question fails to uncover, reproduction is not merely about whether to have children or not, whether or not to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, this approach shows us how the state, bio-power, manipulates the population through the medium of women's bodies for the benefit of capitalist production. In this way, this discourse moves away from liberal concepts of self-determination and creates a much deeper societal critique of the social order and the systems of powers at play.

The Mona Lisa Spray incident as another example of challenging the capitalist logic of productivity

Efforts to foster discourse between the *ūman ribu* movement and the disability movement did not stop in 1974, when the government abandoned their attempts to revise the EPL due to women and disabled people taking to the streets. Neither were these efforts limited to reproductive issues. Another example is the so-called Mona Lisa Spray Incident which formed the introduction of this thesis. During a diplomatic visit to Paris in 1973 the Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei received the permission to exhibit Leonard DaVinci's famous Mona Lisa at the National Museum in Tokyo (The New York Times, 1974, p. 16) and subsequently in the following year the painting was shown to the Japanese public. On the first day of the exhibition, 20 April 1974, Yonezu approached the Mona Lisa and sprayed red paint onto the security glass case while screaming, 'You are excluding the disabled! Show the Mona Lisa to everyone! ... The Mona Lisa is crying because she is witnessing such wrongful discrimination!' (Mainichi Shimbun, 1974a, p. 6). As a result, Yonezu was arrested by police on the scene, detained for a month and after a lengthy court battle convicted of a misdemeanour and sentenced to pay a fine in June 1975 (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 99). Yonezu's protest was directed against the museum's decision to restrict access to the exhibition for those requiring assistance, such as disabled people or women with young children in strollers, to one designated day only. In an interview about the motivations behind her protest action, she stated:

My purpose was [...] to express my outrage at the society which forces [handicapped visitors] to see [the exhibition] alone. Since April 20 'healthy people' have been purchasing tickets and viewing the Mona Lisa, while handicapped people have been turned away. On May 10, the one

day when handicapped people were able to enter the exhibition, 'healthy' people were turned away. In this sense, while my primary motive was to protest discrimination against handicapped people, my gesture was on behalf of 'healthy' people as well, who are also victims of discrimination against the handicapped. In Japanese society, with its emphasis on super-productivity and speed, where every healthy, capable person is more or less worked to the bone, ordinary people will inevitably come to feel that handicapped people are in their way, require too much time, and so forth, and will gradually cool and harden their attitudes towards them ... It is the false barrier that a rapacious industrial machine places between human beings that I want to protest.

(New Asia News, 1974, p. 10)

This protest action highlighted *ribu's* overall critique of Japan's capitalist logic of productivity and the negative impact it has on every member of society while also addressing the pervasive discrimination and othering of disabled people. Furthermore, activists argued that the controversy surrounding the Mona Lisa exhibition was a prime example of how Japanese social infrastructure was constructed around 'the good productive citizen', which was in fact identical with the able-bodied, employed male (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 67).

It could be argued that by granting groups who need special assistance in order to enjoy the art exhibition on a special day of their own, the organisers were in fact trying to accommodate everyone wanting to visit the exhibition and therefore were inclusive in their intention. Yet, when looking at the criticism of *ribu* and the disabled movement, it is made clear that providing special access by limiting their access to one special day only, is not the type of equality or equal treatment either of the two groups were demanding

and advocating for. For *ribu* activists this exceptionalism and the lack of awareness of its problems and problematic implications exposed the multi-layered systematic discrimination of those who do not conform with the ideal of a productive citizen within the capitalist system, in other words the employable able-bodied heterosexual man (Mizoguchi et al., 1992, p. 153). This open rejection of the 'special assistance model' in dealing with disabled people further shows that *ribu* is not interested in mending the faults of the existing system and its infrastructure but their aspirations are transformative, they want to radically redefine the norms, values and infrastructures that shape Japanese society.

The media and the state – Yonezu as a disruption to the social order

In the eyes of the state and the existing power structures, Yonezu represented a disruption to societal harmony. This becomes evident by looking at the Japanese mainstream news media coverage of Yonezu and her protest action. The main focus lies on the spraying, vandalising act of an invaluable artistic masterpiece by a former art student and how she essentially prevented her fellow peers from enjoying this unique piece of art. Yonezu's criticism of the prevailing discriminatory system was not at the centre of the reporting of the incident, neither were further investigations made into *ribu's* claims and about their validity. Rather, the incident was characterised as a disruption of the harmonious Japanese everyday life by a rebellious individual. Her underlying motives were touched upon through interviews with her, yet the reporting stays descriptive and did not engage with her claims on a deeper, analytical level (Mainichi Shimbun, 1974b, p. 18). No follow up investigative journalism took place.

The way Yonezu's protest action was seen and discussed in the public sphere highlights how Japanese mass media was colluding with the state, functioning predominantly as a guardian of the hetero-patriarchal state and its hierarchies, rather

than the independent Fourth Estate within a democratic system that guarantees the separation of powers. As Nester finds due to the high financial and interpersonal dependencies between the ruling elites and the journalists at mass media outlets, “[...] the mainstream press is heavily co-opted and its world view is shaped by the politicians, bureaucrats, and corporate elite” (1989, p. 39).

Krauss ascertains in his analysis of the relationship between news broadcasting and the state in Japan “[i]t is not the journalist who is the watchdog of the public’s interest against the state [...], rather, it is the state itself that acts on behalf of the public, helping to uncover, manage, and respond of the faults, foibles, and frictions inherent in human society” (2000, p. 39). This self-understanding of the state as a ‘conflict manager’ makes an accusation of social grievances by an individual from the public even more of a disruption of day-to-day life, a concrete threat to the persistent social order, as it publicly denounces the state’s problem-solving ability and disqualifies it of its claim of sole responsibility for problem detection and solution. Thus, through her protest action at the Museum Yonezu not only highlighted the systematic exclusion and discrimination of those not complying with the idealised standard. Moreover, she posed a challenge to persisting order in post-war Japan and therefore intervened into the power structure on multiple levels. Albeit pressurising the government, publicly her protest action was more perceived as vandalism, her message did not successfully penetrate mainstream society as intended.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined *ribu* and disabled activist Yonezu Tomoko’s participation and influence within emancipatory social movements, beginning with her engagement in the student movement of the late 1960s up at Tama Arts University until her leading role within the Japanese women’s liberation movement *ūman ribu*. In the

process I have also reflected on the socio-historical environment that conditioned and accompanied these developments. Furthermore, I have analysed the emergence of an intersectional approach to challenging the bio-political order by looking at the reproductive discourse in the 1970s and how the interactions between *ribu* and the disability movement formed an intersectional approach to reproduction in post-war Japan. In the subsequent part of my thesis, I investigate Yonezu's continued challenge to the bio-political order after the dissolution of the *ūman ribu* movement until 1996 the year the EPL was replaced by the MBPL, and eugenic language was erased from the law following decades of intersectional activism and pressure from disability activist groups.

Chapter 4: Challenging bio-power post-ribu – Yonezu’s life and activism after 1977²¹

In this chapter I will investigate post-*ribu* reproductive justice advocacy by following Yonezu’s life and activism after the *ūman ribu* movement formally dispersed in May 1977. In highlighting Yonezu’s important contributions to upholding legal access to abortions and against eugenics within the reproductive discourse, I demonstrate how *ribu*’s reproductive politics transcended the movement itself and expanded the post-war Japanese discourse on bodily autonomy and state intervention into women’s bodies by considering its bio-ethical consequences. Furthermore, I show how the emergence, participation, and organisation of the disability movement, specifically that of the women’s disability movement, played a crucial role in advancing the discourse on reproductive justice and rights.

Again, Yonezu as an individual represents a major figure and intersection between the two. Key to my analysis in this chapter are the personal consequences the aftermath of the closure of the Ribu Shinjuku Center had for Yonezu, the renewed government interest in revising the EPL in 1982 and how the opposition to said changes were framed by women’s groups post-*ribu*. Moreover, I will conclude this chapter with investigating how the eventual change of the EPL to the Maternal Body Protection Law in 1996 was prompted through disabled women’s vocal campaign against eugenics on an international stage that was the United Nations’ International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994. These specific events all provide substantial evidence for my main argument about the personal and political transformative power

²¹ Sections of this chapter are part of the forthcoming book chapter “Vittinghoff, A. 2023. “Feminism and Disability” in the Handbook for Feminisms in Japan, edited by Ulrike Wöhr and Andrea Germer (in press).

the *ūman ribu* movement had on its members and the Japanese reproductive discourse more broadly speaking. Furthermore, it shows that the 1970s formed an important start for activists' intervention into the bio-political order through the issue of reproductive justice, which manifested in the change of the law and the intersectional expansion of the discourse.

May 1977 marked the closure of the Ribu Shinjuku Center and the de facto dissolution of the *ūman ribu* movement. As the main exchange hub of the movement closed its doors for good, *ribu* activists too moved on. But did this mean that simultaneously the resistance to the EPL came to an end too? If not, who continued challenging the EPL and the eugenic ideology it perpetuated? When trying to answer these questions the importance of following Yonezu Tomoko's activist career becomes obvious, which so far has taken up a secondary role in the existing literature centred around main *ribu* theorist and de facto leader Tanaka Mitsu.

Furthermore, looking at the immediate post-*ribu* time and the early 1980s is especially important because it highlights the transition from the revolutionary ambitions of *ribu* and the New Left to a more case driven form of social activism. The intersectional nature of the issue of reproduction that had its beginnings with the *ūman ribu* movement but then through activists like Yonezu manifested via the activist network of the '82 Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law' (*82 Yūsei Hogohō kaiaku soshi renrakukai*), later known as 'SOSHIREN - From My Body, from Women's Bodies' (SOSHIREN - *Onna (watashi) no karada kara*), and then finally in the establishment of the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* (Disabled Women's Network) in 1986. What started as the rejection of state intervention into women's body from a bodily autonomy point of view developed into the intersectional challenge of Japan's bio-political order. To understand how and why the EPL was replaced in 1996, we need to

pay close attention to the evolution of the main actors behind the resistance to it. Through the resistance to the revision attempts of the EPL in 1982/83 reproductive politics opened up as the main battleground of post-war Japan's value system and bioethics. The discourse around the EPL was not limited to a question of women's rights and welfare provisions but it very much led to a fundamental challenge of power and its mode of actions.

Moving on from the Ribu Shinjuku Center

The way the Ribu Shinjuku Center was run fundamentally changed when key *ribu* activists, including Tanaka Mitsu, Wakabayashi Naeko and Takeda Miyuki²² left Japan to live abroad for period of time in 1975 (Shigemastu, 2012, p. 101). The three of them first went to Los Angeles and from there to Mexico (Yonezu, 2021, p. 1), where Tanaka and Wakabayashi went on to attend the United Nations International Women's Day World Conference held in Mexico City in June of the same year (Ribu Shinjuku Sentā Shiryō Hozonkai, 2008, p. iii). Tanaka and Takeda stayed in Mexico and lived there for several years, while Wakabayashi returned to the United States, where she spent a year studying and worked as a health counsellor at the Feminist Women's Health Center in Oakland, California (Wakabayashi, 2008, p. 230); upon her return to Japan, she started a group for women to learn about their bodies and organised a self-help clinic from 1976 to 1982 (Yonezu, 2021, p. 1 and Wakabayashi, 2008, p. 230).

²² Wakabayashi Naeko got polio at a young age too similarly to Yonezu but didn't have any major health complications from her illness (Wakabayashi, 2008, p. 231). She was part of the Translation Group within the Shinjuku Ribu Centre and in 1987 she played an integral role to establish the Regumi Studio, "Japan's first lesbian group aimed at broadening the lesbian network in Japan", a group that is still actively campaigning for lesbians' rights in Japan today (ibid., p. 230 and p. 232). Takeda Miyuki ran the Tōkyō Komune. Sayama Sachi joined the Group of Fighting Onna in 1971 was one of the founding members of the Ribu Shinjuku Center (Shigemastu, 2012, p. 119). She identifies as a lesbian and is now living in San Francisco, California where she has been involved in Japanese diasporic lesbian activism (ibid, p. 224).

Coincidentally, Yonezu and the other two remaining members who previously lived in the Centre, Mori Setsuko and Sayama Sachi²³, started a printshop out of the Ribu Shinjuku Center called 'Aida Kōbō'²⁴. Mori and Yonezu were classmates at Tama Arts University, as mentioned in the previous chapter, where they had founded Thought Group S.E.X. back in 1971 (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 67). When in 1977 the Centre closed for good, which marked the formal end of the *ūman ribu* movement, Aida Kōbō moved to a flat the three women rented in Kagurazawa in Shinjuku-ward where similarly to the *ribu* heydays they shared a living space (Ribu Shinjuku Sentā Shiryō Hozonkai, 2008, p. iii and 190). Yonezu worked there as a typesetter and printer.

The Ribu Shinjuku Center was mainly financed by subscriptions to the Ribu News, sales of pamphlets and donations of members that were part of the movement. However, these earnings did not cover the living expenses of those who lived and worked on the frontlines of the Centre. The in-house members lived off the part-time work most of them did, sharing meals and clothing amongst each other similar to a commune (Yonezu, 2021, p. 1). Yonezu Tomoko herself worked, for example, several part-time jobs at places in the food section of a department store and in the toll booth of a restaurant car park during her time living in the centre (ibid, p. 1). Hence, the closure of the centre therefore also meant that the former members needed a new source of income.

Until 1977 Yonezu had strongly believed in the inevitability of a revolution, that Japanese society had transformed into something else, something nobody could really predict in the late 1960s and early 1970s. When this change didn't materialise, she had

²³ Sayama Sachi joined the Group of Fighting Onna in 1971 was one of the founding members of the Ribu Shinjuku Center (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 119). She identifies as a lesbian and is now living in San Francisco, California where she has been involved in Japanese diasporic lesbian activism (ibid, p. 224). Sayama Sachi is a pseudonym she uses as an activist (Yonezu, 2021, p. 2).

²⁴ The 'kōbō' in 'Aida Kōbō' translates to studio, workshop, atelier, however, I will use the Japanese transcribed name for the printshop.

to come up with a way to make a living independently, which she did with Aida Kōbō. The print shop functioned as a space where former *ribu* members who were still active in the post-*ribu* women's movement would come by to visit and keep in touch. Thus, the Ribu Shinjuku Center as central physical hub for activists involved with the women's movement across the country was replaced by interpersonal connections in the aftermath of its closure. People like Yonezu, Wakabayashi, Sayama or Mori were central figures that let the spirit of *ūman ribu* live on since then.

The state of the New Left and social activism in the late 1970s

Would re-joining New Left group be an alternative for the activists like Yonezu to bring about the desired transformation of Japanese society after *ūman ribu* came to an end? What was the state of the New Left in the 1970s in Japan? The internal purge and the subsequent violent arrests of the remaining URA members after the Asama Sansō incident on February 28th, 1972, were not the only violent incidents that characterised the New Left in the early 1970s. On August 30th, 1974, the Anti-Japanese Front planted two self-made explosive devices in front of the headquarters of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Tokyo leaving about 400 people injured and killed 8 people in the attack (Knaut, 2020, p. 398-399). The group's motivation behind the attack was to demonstrate Japanese white collar workers' complicity in the exploitation of other Asians described the aforementioned Japanese white collar workers as 'parasites in the centres of Japanese imperialism' which as Knaut (2020) assesses marked a major paradigm shift in the Japanese New Left, namely its departure from class politics (p. 399). The liberation of society as a whole was taken over by the idea of liberating specific societal groups (Knaut, 2016, p. 330-331).

Subsequently, social activism after Japan's long 1968 embraced a more single-issue orientated approach. As the desired communist revolution failed to materialise,

activists of the New Left either turned inwards, splintering into smaller movements, or the more militant members of the movement turned towards anti-Japanese violence (Knaut, 2016, p. 338). Thus, the New Left movements addressing the problems of the ‘controlled society’ such as Zenkyōtō, Beheiren or the young worker’s movement (*Hansen seinen iinkai* The Anti-war Youth Committee) saw a rapid decline in influence and participation in the 1970s (Ando, 2014, p. 7 and p. 15-16). The disappointment and disenfranchisement with the New Left’s direct-action approach is also demonstrated the general mood of young people towards the end of the 1970s who thought that public protest and opinion had little impact on national politics (Gerteis, 2021, p. 75). The 1978 NHK Value Orientation Survey showed that 59.1 percent of young men between 16 and 29 years old and among the same age group of young women, 56 percent, thought mass demonstrations and political protests were ineffective tools to produce political change (ibid., p. 75).

As Ando (2014) explains in the late 1960s many activists of the New Left believed that “[...] personal transformation would lead to broader social change” (p. 112). However, through the state’s violent response to communal organising like the vacation of the university barricades in 1969 and later the arrests of the URA following the Asama Sanso incident, spaces to explore actions as a community, a movement were more and more falling away. For most activists and revolutionaries turning inwards, into the personal remained as the only option to practise self-consciousness. As a result, activists in the late 1970s focussed on self-development and gave up on societal transformation while community-based activism took over.

Post-*ribu* blues – Finding her footing after the end of *ūman ribu*

The time right after the *ūman ribu* movement marked a very tough period in Yonezu’s personal life. She had thoroughly enjoyed the sense of community of *ribu*, living

together with other women in the Ribu Shinjuku Center. However, once the movement officially disbanded, former members quickly dispersed and moved on with their personal and professional lives, some moving to the United States or Mexico as mentioned before. The absence of the daily discussions of their ideas produced marked distance between the former members. Ideas started to shift among them. This rapid change of pace, the dissolution of the movement and its sisterhood, led to Yonezu having a physical break down (Yonezu, 2020a).

She felt mentally exhausted from pushing herself too hard following the end of *ribu*, felt tired and had troubles with her breathing. The progression of polio can vary from person to person and its symptoms can differ. Sometimes they are restricted to when the actual infection takes place resulting in temporary or permanent paralyses without any further health implications. In other cases, affected people develop post-polio syndrome gradually over many years which include persistent fatigue, muscle weakness, the shrinking of muscles, muscle and joint pain, as well as sleep apnoea (NHS, 2022). So, due to her symptoms, Yonezu suspected that she was affected by this post-polio syndrome. Upon medical examination, however, it was then discovered that she was in fact born with a hole in the wall between the top of the four chambers of her heart, what is medically known as an 'atrial septal defect'. She decided to take some time off work at the printshop to rest and recover. But, unlike at the Ribu Shinjuku Center, at Aida Kōbō their communal living situation did not encompass sharing every aspect of their lives together. It was more like a flat share than a commune. They each had their own private space and went on about their days mostly independently from each other. Hence, when Yonezu's sickness prevented her from working at the printshop, her two flatmates were unable to fully support her. Subsequently, she left Aida Kōbō and moved back in with her parents. Giving up the ideal of women working and living together, this ideal of

mutual aid and communal cohabitation, was tough for Yonezu but she had no other choice given her circumstances (Yonezu, 2020a).

In 1981, after she had recovered and felt confident enough to make her way independently again, she went back to Aida Kōbō to resume her part in the print business. But things between the three women in the printshop had changed, dissonances in their thinking had emerged.²⁵ Consequently, later in 1982, they decided to part ways and disband their business (ibid.).

1982 - Putting revision of the EPL back on the political agenda

Just before the three members of Aida Kōbō decided to close the print shop for good, on March 15th, 1982, one of Yonezu's close friends noticed a small article on the front page of the evening edition of the Yomiuri Shimbun. The article announced a question-and-answer session in the Diet discussing the expungement of the economic reasons clause from the EPL (Yomiuri Shimbun, 1982, p. 1). The legal access to abortions was under threat again. The article further reported that the Minister of Health and Welfare Morishita Motoharu (1922-2014) stated his intentions at a meeting of the Health and Welfare Committee on March 15th “[...] to examine the Eugenic Protection Law, which permits abortion for economic reasons, and propose an amendment to it as soon as possible” (ibid., p. 1). The Ministry of Health and Welfare was once again spurred on by politicians who had close ties with the religious, pro-life group *Seichō no ie* (Truth of Life), a key player in the revision attempts already a decade earlier (Norgren, 2001, p. 69).

Furthermore, in support of the campaign to restrict abortion access in Japan LDP legislator and member of the House of Councillors Murakami Masakuni (1932-2020), a politician backed by *Seichō no ie*, published a pamphlet on June 1st, 1982, titled “Why the

²⁵ There are no clear indications about the nature of the dissonances that developed between the women in particular.

Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law Must be Urged” (*Yūseihogohō no kaisei wo isoganakerebanaranaika*) with the subtitle “To Save the Japanese Nation from the Path to Extinction” (*Nippon minzoku wo shinutsue no michikara sukūe tameni*) which focuses on the following five points:

- 1) Correct the basis of the respect for life.
- 2) The Eugenic Protection Law has led Japan to become an “abortion heaven” [*daitai tengoku*].
- 3) The tragic reality of abortion.
- 4) Mass abortions leads to a decline in national vitality.
- 5) The phrase “economic reasons”, which is the main cause of abortion being allowed to continue unchecked, should be removed.

Higuchi, 1982, p. 14

Further down in the pamphlet Murakami stated that “[...] in a world where abortion is easily available, it is creating a climate of sexual disorder and disregard for life, so let's solve this problem by making it harder to have an abortion” (Atsushi, 1982, p. 16). Statement echoed the common perception amongst conservative politicians and commentators that with women’s emancipation sexual delinquency was also increasing.

Murakami’s pamphlet clearly laid out the main arguments for the EPL revision attempts and followed arguments similar to the ones presented in the 1970s. Hence, to Yonezu and other activists this felt like a *déjà vu*, something that *ribu* successfully fought against was once again threatening to happen 10 years later under new pretences. Being able to retrieve some of the materials from the 1970s, Yonezu made a leaflet about the planned revision of the EPL and distributed it among people who were still actively campaigning for women’s issues in the 1980s.

Why was there a renewed political interest to revise the EPL in 1982? Alongside *Seichō no ie*'s continued religious right-wing agenda to eliminate the loophole for legal abortions, the overwhelming majority of the LDP in both houses of the National Diet in 1980 ushered in a conservative era, especially in terms of social policy. Furthermore, Japan's fertility rate fell below the population replacement level of 2.08 in 1980 (Schoppa, 2011, p. 151). This was at first attributed to women postponing childbirth into later stages of their lives by demographers with the projection that later on in the 1980s this trend would be reversed (ibid., p. 151-152). Nevertheless, once again one of the assumptions behind Japan's welfare capitalism that of the demographic structure would remain relatively young was under threat (Estevez-Abe, 2008, p. 199). Conservative law makers blamed the increased participation of women in the labour market as one of the main reasons for declining birth rates. They accused women of abandoning their main role as mothers and caregivers for individual fulfilment.

Premier Minister Ōhira Masayoshi's cabinet (1978-1980) published in 1980 the 'Policy to Strengthen the Foundations of the Family' (*Katei kiban jūjitsu seisaku*) promoting the traditional family unit as the main foundation of Japanese society and reducing women's primary role in society to caregivers for children and the elderly (Norgren, 2001, p. 69). This set the tone for the upcoming rescaling of social welfare in Japan with shifting responsibility from the state to the individual, in social care from the state to women. The calls for the creation of this so-called 'Japanese-style welfare society' where women take on the majority of social care responsibility for free went hand in hand with large administrative reforms to decrease over-all government spending (Campbell, 1992, p. 220-221). Part of these measures was the introduction of the so-called 'zero-ceiling' budgetary policy in 1982 that meant that government ministries were not allowed to request a budget above the budget already authorised for the on-going year

(Miyazaki, 2006, p. 126). The 'zero-ceiling' policy was followed by the 'minus ceiling' policy in the subsequent year, further tightening the ministries' expenditures.

This overall conservative political climate provided a window of opportunity for LDP upper House representative Murakami to make a very dramatic appeal to revise the EPL in the House of Councillors Budget Committee meeting on March 15th, 1982. Murakami stood up and sang an anti-abortion song '*Keihō dai 212-jō*' named after the section of the Penal Code that criminalises abortions (Proceedings of the House of Councillors Budget Committee Meeting, no. 8). This song had first surfaced during the early 1970s and was discussed in a pamphlet by the Chiba University group 'Group Female Ninja' (*Shūdan kunoichi*) criticising the harsh blame it puts on women who are forced by society to have an abortion (Mizoguchi et al., 1994, p. 154-155). He then continued with a comprehensive discussion of his anti-abortion views referencing the 'national shame' that Japan's reputation as an 'abortion paradise' has caused, which as described by Norgren (2001) was a tactic often used in the 1960s and 1970s by anti-abortion campaigners to pressure the government (p. 71).

Resisting revision attempts after *ribu*

Alarmed by these renewed revision attempts, Yonezu and people from different other activist groups founded the '82 Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law', which after 1996 (the year the EPL was changed) was renamed into 'SOSHIREN – From My Body, from Women's Bodies'. Members ranged from former *ribu* activists and people who were part of opposing the 1972-74 changes to the EPL but also a younger generation of activists, including university students and part-time workers who weren't previously involved in the campaigns in the 1970s. The committee held weekly meetings and published information pamphlet on a regular basis as part of their campaigning efforts. In the beginning the group focussed on keeping the EPL the way it

was ergo preserving once again the legal access to abortion. The idea of creating completely new legislation only emerged later in the early 1990s. The group's first meeting took place at the Shibuya Yamate Church in Tokyo on November 3rd, 1982. About 40 different women's organisations, including the Women's Democratic Club,²⁶ the L.F. Centre²⁷, WIFE²⁸, the Asian Women's Association, Feminist Therapy, the Japan Women's Conference, with a total of about 1100 people came together to discuss the planned revisions of the EPL (Yonezu, 2021, p. 3).

After the first gathering of the '82 Liaison Group, the group published an information pamphlet about the event. This inaugural pamphlet featured a mechanic girl doll or puppet on the cover whose movements are visibly controlled by someone else: A symbol of how women, their bodies specifically, are controlled by someone else, metaphorically here the state, criticising the lack of agency and the state intervention into women's bodies. The illustration was chosen by Asatori Sumie who had a large collection of publications and artworks created by women which she had collected during her travels in the United States in the late 1970s.²⁹ The pamphlet sold very well and turned out to be a great financial support for the group's further campaign activities.

²⁶ The Women's Democratic Club was an organisation founded in 1946 by Miyamoto Yuriko, Sata Inako, Yamamuro Tamiko, Seki Kaneko, Hani Yukiko, Matsuoka Yoko, Kato Shizue, and others.

²⁷ The L.F. Centre was a lesbian feminist centre founded in sometimes around 1980, date is unclear. The members involved in the L.F. Centre later founded the Tokyo Rape Relief Centre (Mizoguchi et al., 1995, p. 56).

²⁸ WIFE was a group of women who were housewives seeking independence (Yonezu, 2021, p. 3).

²⁹ Asatori Sumie founded a space for women in Ginza in the 1970s and participated in the planning and production of the 'Witches Concert'. Upon her return to Japan in 1982, she founded the publishing house Workshop for Women 'JO-JO Project' to spread information about women and began publishing a yearly women's information handbook, a calendar called 'The First Feminists in Japan (*Shimaitachiyo onna no koyomi*)' since 1987 and a nationwide 'Women's guide' (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 228). She was part of the campaign against the revision attempts of the EPL and against the criminalising of abortions. She was also part of the international women's health movement. After working to provide victims of sexual violence with the appropriate medical care, she became a member of the Steering Committee of the Support and Education Center for Women's Safety and Health in 1999. As of 2012 she is living in a communal women's house in Chiba, which she helped establishing (Shigematsu, 2012, p. 228).

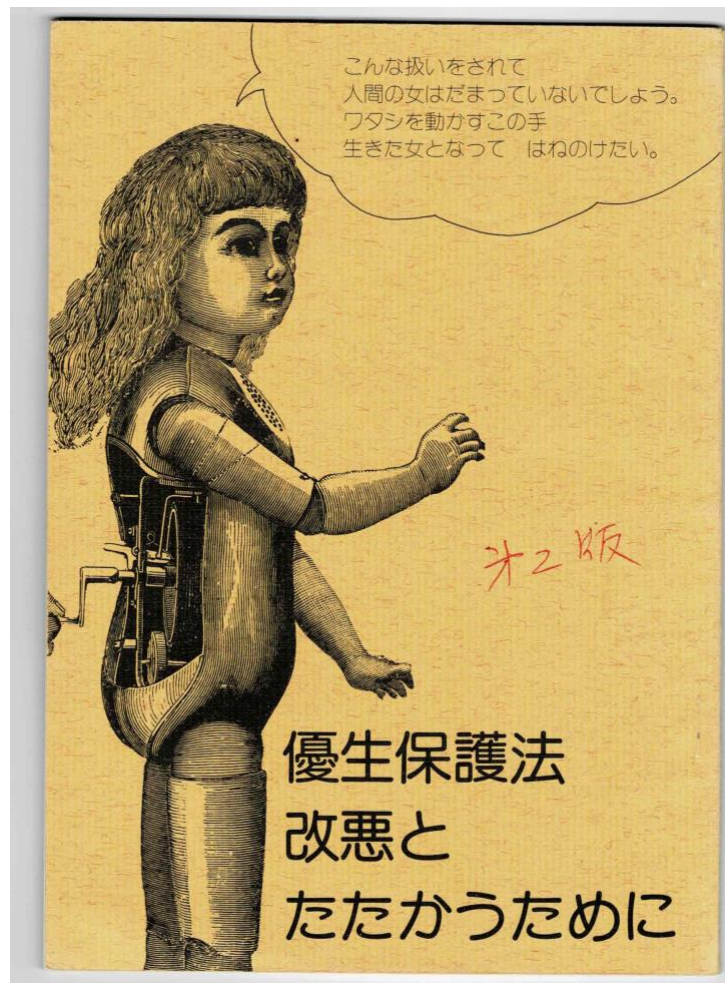


Figure 1 Translation: No human woman who's treated like this should be silent. I want to remove the hand that controls me and become a woman who lives. – Fighting against the revision of the Eugenic Protection Law.

At the very beginning of their pamphlet the group declaring their unequivocal position on seven key points, namely: 1) The freedom to choose whether or not to bear children is a fundamental human right of women; 2) Abortion is a woman's last resort; 3) Decriminalise abortion and repeal the Eugenic Protection Law; 4) The removal of the economic reasons clause [from the EPL] reinforces eugenic ideology; 5) Don't sacrifice teenage sex; 6) Change the sexist society; and 7) Constitutional revision and Policy to Strengthen the Foundations of the Family (82 Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law, 1982, p. 1-5).

Relating to point one, the group states that the decision to have children or not to have children is an individual decision and the state should not interfere with this

decision. But by criminalising abortion since the Meiji Constitution the Japanese state has exactly done that. Such state intervention curtails women's bodily autonomy and incorporates their body into the body politic: "We believe that a woman's right to determine her own life cannot be realised without the freedom to choose whether or not to give birth!" (82 Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law, 1982, p. 1). Subsequently under the point 'Abortion is a woman's last resort' the group explains that only legal abortions are safe abortions and frames them as crucial health care to decrease maternal mortality. For the group drastically limiting women's access to legal abortions would result in increasing maternal mortality rates, secret abortions, infanticide, and abandoning new-borns. These two points clearly reflect and explain *ribu's* societal critique of the co-option of women's bodies into capitalist production. This is further echoed by the distinct incorporation of disability and strong anti-eugenics stance into their mission statement when reading the group's explanation of their third point "Decriminalise abortion and repeal the Eugenic Protection Law":

The Eugenic Protection Act is based on the National Eugenic Law, which was created during World War II in imitation of Nazi Germany's abortive laws - the elimination of defective offspring. The law itself is based on the idea of eliminating 'recessive heredity', which deprives women of their right to bear children. The forces pushing for these changes talk a lot about respect for life, but if respect for life is to be taken seriously, it is eugenic ideology that denies the right to life to the disabled that should be called into question. We women must not allow this kind of eugenics (discrimination against people with disabilities). We women must not tolerate such eugenics and discrimination against the disabled and

believe that eugenic laws should be abolished along with decriminalising abortion.

82 Liaison Group to Block the

Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law, 1982, p. 4

Here the group clearly advocated for an alliance between the women's movement and the disability movement. Inclusion of disability issues became a key pillar in their fight for reproductive justice. However, as described earlier tensions between the two groups prevailed due to the gendered role discourse among predominantly male disability activists who saw women primarily as mothers. Similar to what women student activists did in the late 1960s when they broke away to form the women's liberation movement and how that effected the liberation discourses by including a previously ignored gender perspective, the emergence of the female disabled voice was key in forming intersectional alliances between the two activist movements.

Subsequently, they continued their challenge of eugenics in Japanese society in the next point titled "The removal of the economic reasons clause [*from the EPL*] reinforces eugenic ideology" (ibid., p. 4). The group understood the planned removal of the economic reasons clause as an explicit attack on disabled people's right to exist as the eugenic reasons for abortions would now take centre stage within the legislation. They argued that without the clause the legislation was clearly discriminating against fetuses with potential disabilities as abortions were only legal due to physical malformations or defects. Furthermore, they accused the state of only caring about human rights when it is in the state interest. It was the group's opinion that the combination of the planned revision of the EPL and amendments to the Criminal Code was intended to eliminate disabled people from Japanese society.

The fifth point related to the fact that anti-abortion groups were campaigning to minimise legal abortion access as a way to combat increasing teenage sexual delinquency. In response to that the group highlighted in their pamphlet the hypocrisy of Japanese society that grants men the spaces to explore their sexuality and fantasies through pornography and prostitution, while on the other hand enforces chastity on women and commodifies their sexuality. Furthermore, they explained deficient sexual education for women as one of the problems that re-enforces such stereotypes. Only if teenagers are taught empowering and safe sexual practices can sexual delinquency be avoided according to the Yonezu and her peers. They claimed in order to achieve this goal society and education must be free from sexism.

Under the point of “Change the sexist society” they similarly to their argument made under point number four highlight that population policy in the 20th century historically is linked to eugenic ideology and was used to reinforce gender roles in support of the existing power relation within Japanese society.

Lastly, concerning point number seven, the group describes that during the debates surrounding constitutional reform in 1980, conservative lawmakers were not exclusively focussing on the Constitution's war-renouncing Article 9 but also mentioned Article 24 in the same breath. Article 24 meant the dissolution of the pre-war family system and the formal establishment of equality between men and women within family life before the law. Under the Meiji Constitution, the family system formed the foundation of social mobilisation for Japan's imperialist expansion and war efforts and constitutionally enshrined the gendered division of labour. For the group policy initiatives like the aforementioned “Policy to Strengthen the Foundations of the Family” were designed to strengthen and more importantly revive the abolished family system in support of militarism, covering up social contradictions and the Japanese economy (82

Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law, 1982, p. 5). As a result, women would become exclusively responsible for housework, childcare, and caring for the elderly, while being forced to stay at home isolated from society and deprived of their newly built community (ibid., p. 5). The group therefore positioned the revision attempts of the EPL within the broader conservative agenda to dismantle social welfare for which reinstating the gendered division of labour was a key prerequisite, a world where “[...] women are at home (behind the leadership) and men are at work (on the battlefield)” (ibid., p. 5). Hence, state intervention into women’s bodies becomes a crucial piece within the bigger puzzle of social engineering and the manipulation of the population for capitalist production.

Alongside Yonezu’s group there were four other main blocks which together compromised the resistance to the EPL revision attempts, all five blocks opposed the deletion of the economic reasons clause from the law. There was the ‘Liaison Conference to Block the Eugenic Protection Law Revisions’ (*Yūsei hogohō “kaisei” soshi renrakukyōgikai*) organised by the Family Planning Federation of Japan that brought together well-established, politically well-connected groups, like the Young Women’s Christian Association, the Japan Women’s Christian Temperance Union, the Society of Japanese Women Physicians, the Japan Midwives Association, the Japan Nurses Association, and the Federation of Health Centres for Mothers and Children (Norgren, 2001, p. 73-74). This group had the most political influence, but their interest was in keeping the legal situation regarding reproductive rights as it was. The third block was represented by small, grass-roots women’s groups all-over Japan who did not have any prior experiences in social activism made up of around 5000 women who felt women’s self-determination over their bodies threatened by the planned revision (Amemiya, 1993, p. 345-346 and Asahi Shimbun, 1982, p. 14). Women involved in this block also had ties

to Yonezu's groups, attending meetings and establishing personal relationships of trust between members (Yonezu, 2021, p. 3). Block number four comprised organisations of doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals who were worried about losing major sources of income if legal abortion access would have been further limited, while the last block was made up of organisations involved with maternal and child health (Yonezu, 2021, p. 2). Representing a broad consensus among women in Japanese society on the issue, the three blocks involving women's groups were seen as a serious threat to electoral politics by LDP elites who feared losing female voters nationwide over the issue. This political leverage combined with the very effective political strategies to organise for issuing resolutions against the planned revisions especially in local council assemblies, played a big part in the government's decision to abandon their revision efforts (Norgren, 2001, p. 73-77). The cooperation between the different blocks was a rather pragmatic alliance in keeping the status quo, only Yonezu's group had more far reaching anti-eugenic reform ambitions thereafter. However, rather than concentrating on who and in what way the revision attempts were defeated, my investigation focuses only on the liaison group's efforts and their rhetoric surrounding the EPL debate at the time.

In 1982 the planned changes to the EPL did not include a foetal clause, the focus laid on erasing the economic reasons clause. This was most likely due to the heightened political attention disability issues received internationally due to the United Nations' 'International Year of Disabled Persons' (IYDP) the year before. As a result, at the beginning of the 1982 campaign the main actors were women's groups. Nevertheless, disabled people were not absent from protests and campaigns against the planned revisions. Fearing that further down the line the government might propose amendments like the foetal clause in the 1970s, disability activists often joined rallies or demonstrations of the group. Distrust towards the motivation behind women's groups

campaigns to uphold the EPL by disability rights activists still persisted. However, with disabled people continuing to speak out about issues related to the foetal clause and their experiences with maternal killings. At this point in time there was no specific advocacy or activist group for women with disabilities. Yonezu recalls that disabled people, especially men at the forefront of the disability movement, and women during the 1970s and 1980s had some fundamental disagreements to overcome between one another:

[...] I don't know if we really understood each other. You know, the men in disabled people's groups were very much opposed to women's group, making themselves out to be the unborn babies, or as if they were little children who had been born with disabilities and who might be killed by their parents [because of that]. It was very difficult to overcome that and to have a discussion.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko, 2020, March 18th

There was a fundamental misunderstanding between the two groups:

What the women's movement meant when they said that women should decide whether to give birth or not is that "the state should not control women. We thought we were saying to the state, "Don't let the state tell a woman whether she should give birth or not. However, I think now that we should have been a little more aware that if we said that women should decide whether or not to give birth under the foetal clause, it would not have been taken as a statement directed only at the state, as we thought. In other words, we were only talking about whether or not to have children. We were telling the government not to intervene in our lives, but when the world saw and heard about the technology that would allow women to choose whether or not to have children with

disabilities, it sounded as if it was a woman's decision to choose whether or not to have children with disabilities. So, when Aoi shiba no kai were confronting us about the latter, I thought “Oh that’s what it means” and I thought about a lot after it.

Yonezu in conversation with Yokota, 2004, p. 73-74

This also reflected Yonezu’s intersectional embodiment regarding the issue of reproduction and the personal internal conflict that is conditioned at such encounters:

I am always conflicted inside myself because I am both a woman and a disabled person. [...] No matter which side I try to lean towards, one side criticizes the other [*on this issue*]. For example, when I say something to a disabled person from a woman's point of view, as I did when I complained about Yokota-san, I feel very scared. When I went to meetings of the women's movement that were not so sensitive to eugenic thought, I felt very bitter about myself as a disabled person.

Yonezu in conversation with Yokota, 2004, p. 70-71

At one meeting discussing eugenics and reproductive rights in Yokohama where members of *Aoi shiba no kai* participated too, the group’s de facto leader Yokota attacked Yonezu when she suggested that women should not be equated with mothers and jumped on the fact that she mentioned legal abortions are necessary for women who do not want to become mothers. After the event someone also in attendance of the meeting sent her a postcard expressing their sympathy with her saying: “That’s a shame, Yonezu, I feel for you” (Yokota, 2004, p. 71). However, as time went on and discussions continued the two groups did eventually overcome these communicational hurdles and formed personal friendships like that between Yonezu and Yokota even though she perceived him as very intimidating at the beginning of their interactions (ibid., p. 71).

What started as a liaison committee in 1982 with different organisations sending out representatives to meetings, gradually became a gathering of individuals due to the deepening trust and personal relationships of the attendees. The group inherited the idea represented by the *ūman ribu* movement that population policy dominated women, that the state controlled the reproduction of the individual. This highlighted how ultimately *ribu's* campaign against state intervention into reproduction and women's bodies represented an intervention into bio-politics and how their legacy continued with the liaison committee, that later became SOSHIREN. The continuous link is thereby embodied by Yonezu Tomoko.

The announcement that there would be no revision or amendments to the EPL in 1983 did not mark the end of the group. Although, the law continued to be problematic and was understood as such by activists like Yonezu, it also represented the only option for a legal abortion for Japanese women as the Penal Code still criminalised the termination of a pregnancy. Furthermore, women were still not allowed to make their own choices. They required their spouse's consent or a doctor's approval to go through with the procedure. The EPL's highly discriminatory language and overall bias against disabled people became the reason for the push for the creation of a new legislation in the 1990s. This coincided with the emergence of the nation-wide disability movement but also with increased international focus on issues surrounding the rights of disabled people following the IYDP in 1981 and the foundation of the Disabled People International (DPI) which also had a chapter in Japan.

As mentioned before the EPL was not the only legislation that governed reproduction at the time. Another law with eugenic intentions and key in population control was the Maternal and Child Health Care Act. Although the law did not feature any explicitly eugenic language, the very fact that women are expected to give birth to

'healthy' children imply a eugenic ideology. In 1983, just when it was still uncertain whether lawmakers had abandoned their plan to revise the EPL or not, the Central Child Welfare Council, an advisory body to the Minister of Health and Welfare, began to consider the future of the Maternal and Child Health Care Act. Out of fear of revision attempts to this legislature as well, the group around Yonezu started to publicly highlight how this legislature is working in tandem with the EPL and the criminalisation of abortions laid out in the Penal Code as a mechanism to incorporate women's bodies and reproduction into population and eugenic policies (Yonezu, 2021, p. 4). This served as a catalyst for the groups continued activism and challenge the bio-political order.

The disability movement in the 1980s

Prior to the 1980s and international exchanges with disability activists from overseas, groups like *Aoi shiba no kai* had already started the discourse on disabled people living an independent life outside of medical institutions with their Mahārāva village commune. 1979 saw the visit of so-called "father of the independent living movement" Ed Roberts, a quadriplegic respirator user, giving a lecture on disability empowerment (Bookman, 2021, p. 177-178).³⁰ As previously mentioned, 1981 marked the IYDP and the establishment of the DPI, "the world's first successful cross-disability endeavour to convert the talk about full and equal participation of persons with disabilities into action" (Disabled Peoples' International, 2022). As part of the celebrations, international exchange programmes were initiated. In 1983, in the context of 'Independent Living Seminars', prominent members of the independent living movement in the United States came to visit Japan and shared their experiences with

³⁰ Ed Roberts (1939-1995) was one of the founders and driving forces behind the Center for Independent Living (CIL) in Berkeley. In May 1983 Roberts also co-founded together with Judy Heumann and Joan Leon the World Institute on Disability in Berkeley, "a private non-profit corporation focusing on major policies derived from the perspective of the disability community" (WID, 2022).

communities all over Japan (Bookman, 2021, p. 184). Among them were the aforementioned Ed Roberts, Michael Winter, and Judy Heumann³¹, who were both involved in the organisation of the Center for Independent Living in Berkley, California, in the early 1970s (Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001, p. 865) Attendees of these seminars were not limited to the disability community but also included welfare experts, policy makers, and ordinary citizens (Bookman, 2021, p. 185).

Reactions from Japanese disability activists to the seminars were mixed; reproducing the U.S. American model of independent living in Japan was deemed problematic, if not impossible, mainly due to different educational prospects for Japanese disabled people and differing cultural expectations regarding remuneration for human resources (ibid., p. 185-186). As pointed out by activist Saito Akiko “American advocates often graduated from high school, learned that they needed expert knowledge to argue with authorities, and then pursued college degrees later in life” (ibid., p. 186), this however was not possible for their Japanese counterparts due to disabled people’s exclusion from mainstream educational life courses and the lack of educational infrastructure for disabled people in general. Another activist, Kubo Kōzō, explained how “[...] the United States functioned on a for-profit (albeit subsidized) service model which saw disabled people as consumers, while Japan operated on a volunteer basis” (ibid., p. 186). The lack of employability of Japanese disabled people, and therefore the lack of

³¹ Michael Winter (1951-2013) was a vocal advocate and activist for disability rights who was part of the protest action called “Capitol Crawl” in Washington D.C. on May 12th, 1990. During the protest demanding the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) disability activists abandoned their wheelchairs and other mobility aids and crawled up the steps of the Capitol building. Judith “Judy” Heumann (19-) is a pioneering disability rights activist co-founder of Disabled in Action in New York 1970, and later became a board member as well as deputy director of the CIL in Berkley. From 1993 to 2001 Heumann served as assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Education in the Clinton administration, and from 2010 to 2017 as special advisor for International Disability Rights at the U.S. State Department in the Obama administration (UC Berkeley, 2012). Heumann was also famously part of the 504 Sit in in San Francisco in 1977 which saw the occupation of the department of Health Education welfare building for 26 days to get the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 passed and a key campaigner in passing the ADA in 1990. Similar to Winter, she took part in the Capitol Crawl in 1990.

their own income to pay for services and become a consumer, hindered the U.S. model to be implemented in the Japanese context without large scale welfare and care reforms.

In the following years in order to further learn about the independent living model, scholarships were offered for Japanese disabled people to go to the United States to study at centres like the one in Berkley (Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001, p. 866). Asaka Junko (also known as Asaka Yūho), who became a central actor in the replacement of the EPL a decade later, for example, spent six months in Berkley in 1983. Five years after the IYDP, Japan's first independent living centre opened in Hachiōji, a city in Western Tokyo. The centre, named the Human Care Network (*Hyūman kea kyōkai*), was established by disability activist Nakanishi Shōji (Bookman, 2021., p. 188).³² Human Care Network was largely based on Nakanishi's findings based on research trips to ILCs on the east coast of the United States and staffed mainly with people who were trained in the United States too (ibid., p. 187 and Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001, p. 866). One of the key pillars of the services provided at the centre was peer counselling, a support practise where "[...] staff with disabilities help empower others with disabilities by sharing resources, knowledge of living with a disability, and goal setting" (CIL, 2022). This counselling practice was first introduced to Japan by Asaka after she returned from her stay at the CIL in Berkley. The services available to disabled individuals through the centre were offered for profit and two years after its establishment it served 100 clients (Bookman, 2021, p. 188).

For disabled women it was almost impossible to have children and raise them independently prior to the 1980s. Japanese society was de facto segregated: there was an able bodied and a disabled pathway to life in Japan, as most of disabled life took place in

³² Nakanishi Shōji (1944-) is a leading disability activist and founder of the Human Care Network in 1986. He served at the speaker of the DPI Japan from 1990 to 1997 and was elected as Councillor to DPI World Congress and DPI Asia-Pacific Region in 1994 (Ars Vivendi, 2010b).

institutions and behind the closed doors of family homes separated from mainstream society. As mentioned in the previous chapter, until the mid-1970s, throughout the height of the *ūman ribu* movement, the disability movement was very much dominated by male activists. However, this began to change with the establishment of disabled women's self-help groups, which emerged from female members' discomfort with the male-centeredness of the movement and was fuelled by their anger about the conservative attempts to revise the EPL in 1972 together with the common medical practice of performing forced hysterectomies on disabled women (Seyama, 1988, np.). One of these self-help groups was the Cerebral Palsy, short CP, Women's Association (*CP Onna no kai*), established in 1974, which started as a women's club within *Aoi shiba no kai* before it began to launch independent activities (ibid., np.).

The group received heightened public attention in 1987, for their protest of how the media covered the so-called 'Hachiōji incident', involving the suicide of the sixteen-year-old male high-school student Tamura Riki, whose parents both had disabilities (Asahi Shimbun, 1987a, p. 15). The media portrayed the boy's suicide as a reaction to the 'burden' of caring for his parents, especially for his mother, who was bed-ridden due to CP and unable to do any housework, and it blamed the parents for their son's isolation from his peers (Asahi Shimbun, 1987b, p. 15). The CP Women's Association protested and rebuked the image of the disabled parents' dependency on their able-bodied son, arguing that this kind of media portrayal of disabled mothers was indicative of society's refusal to grant disabled women the right to become mothers (Seyama, 1998, np.). The Association further argued that this attitude was also reflected in the eugenic practice of forced hysterectomies performed under the EPL. Disabled women living in institutions were urged to undergo hysterectomies as they would then stop menstruating, making it less labour intensive to care for them. If they refused, staff would often acquire

permission from their parents. In other cases, the procedures were performed without informing the woman or even attempting to obtain her consent (Hayashi and Okuhira, 2001, p. 857). These examples illustrate how disabled women's bodies were not treated as potential maternal bodies based on productive parameters. They are not included in the dominant discourse on motherhood as they are not able to fully devote themselves to child rearing and household duties due to their need of assistance. The role reversal that took place in the 'Hachiōji incident' where the young child takes on care responsibilities for their parents, specifically for their mother, confirms mainstream society's rejection of disabled motherhood. Hence, as highlighted in the context of the opposition to the EPL revision attempts in the 1970s earlier, contrasting feminists' demand of the right to terminate a pregnancy, most disabled women approached the question of reproductive rights from the opposite end, namely demanding the right to become mothers.

With the emergence of the independent living movement in Japan in the early 1980s, more disabled people were able to visibly partake in society as it provided them with more access to their communities through independently living in their own homes rather than being locked away in institutions or family homes (ibid., p. 857). While we do not have official statistics from the 1980s, Stevens (2013) has compiled available statistical data about physically, intellectually, and psychiatrically disabled people living at home and those institutionalised from 1999 to 2006 which shows a general trend we can assume started in the 1980s (p. 29). Amongst physically disabled people 94.6% lived at home and 5.4% were institutionalised in 1999. The number of institutionalised people further decreased over the following years and reached 2.4% in 2006. The numbers amongst intellectually disabled people and those who have psychiatric disabilities remained rather steady, with the former slightly decreasing from 28.3% in 1999 to 23.4% in 2006, and the latter also decreasing from 13.3% in 1999 to 11.7% in 2006 (Stevens,

2013, p. 29). People leaving institutionalised care facilities behind also meant that lived experiences could be shared more broadly among women across a wider spectrum of society. One topic women could share their experiences on was menstruation, a topic that is generally not discussed openly in Japanese society due to stigma and where experts especially in care facilities usually decide for disabled women without much consultation with them.

Yonezu remembers that in 1983 she was approached by a group of people who did a study about menstruation and how it affected women differently (Yonezu, 2020b). Central to the study was the lived experience of people rather than engaging with it from the medical experts' objective and strictly factual point of view. The study included the experiences of disabled women too. Yonezu was asked to be part of the project which ultimately resulted in the publication of their findings as a book titled "Women's rhythm: Menstruation and Messages from the Body" (*Onnatachi no rizumu: seiri, karadakara no mesēji*) (Tsutsumi, 2018, p. 42). Tsutsumi Aiko, who was familiar with the *ūman ribu* movement, yet from a slightly younger generation of activists than Yonezu, Mori, and other former *ribu* members, was involved with the project too and became a strong voice within the discussion around periods.³³ It was over the course of this book project that Yonezu learned about the common practise of the removal of women's wombs within institutions for disabled people (Yonezu, 2020b).

Some disabled people cannot take care of themselves when they menstruate. Due to their disability, they cannot change their sanitary pads or tampons independently and therefore rely on the help of a nurse or carer; disabled people in familial care get

³³ Tsutsumi Aiko is a member of SOSHIREN and the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* advocating for the rights of victims of forced hysterectomies. She advocated and campaigned for the abolition of the EPL for over two decades until in 1996 the EPL changed to the MBPL (Tsutsumi, 2018, p. 41).

assistance in most cases from their mothers. Menstrual care for such institutionalised individuals is rather labour intensive for the institution as it requires multiple daily checks of the menstruating individual that in some cases cannot be medically standardised. From the institution administration's point of view, as a potential pregnancy and with that motherhood for these patients is ruled out by default, their body not deemed fit for becoming a mother, their menstruation is an unnecessary nuisance whose elimination would be beneficial to minimise care costs and labour. Hence, it was presented to the individuals as something that would make their daily life easier, even though this surgical practice was illegal at the time. Only sterilisations were legal under the EPL. In cases where family members were caring for their disabled relative at home, medical professionals were also recommending a hysterectomy for the disabled relative (Yonezu, 2020a, p. 11).

At one of the gatherings in relation to the book project, Yonezu although she wasn't present herself at the specific meeting, recalls a non-disabled woman speaking about her experience of having her uterus removed voluntarily. She argued that deciding whether or not one wanted to have a period is a question of self-determination, something that was deemed empowering if enabled, rather than something that would promote discrimination (Yonezu, 2020a, p. 11). Her statement sparked discussions among the people present at the meeting, with people questioning if the comprehensive legalisation of the procedure, meaning that consent did not have to be obtained from either patient or relative, was beneficial to some and the best way to prevent such surgeries from happening without the explicit consent for others, or whether or not this practice in general was problematic. Tsutsumi was especially enraged by the woman's assertion and an argument between the two erupted at the meeting.

However, this opinion was prominent amongst disabled women too. In the chapter “Hysterectomies of disabled women born from eugenic ideology: Forced sterilisation in Japan” (2018) Tsutsumi recounted the experiences a 46-year-old disabled woman with cerebral palsy described to her as part of the ‘Women’s rhythm’ project (p. 42). At the time of experiencing her first period this woman was 23 years old and only had them two more times accompanied by severe cramps each time.

At that time, I must have gone through puberty, even though it was a little later than usual. I was really distressed. I bit and tore at my father’s kimono. I was complaining to my father “I used to bite and tear at my father's kimono, asking him why he had brought me up until I was so old, that I wouldn't have had to go through all this trouble if he had just killed me before I could remember, and that I didn't want to be accused of being a murderer.” [... Her mother advised her] “You have no female siblings, so after my death, your menstruation will be taken care of by your brother’s wife, who is a stranger to you. With your temperament, you may not be able to endure it.”

Tsutsumi, 2018, p. 43

Consequently, the woman underwent a hysterectomy as recommended by her mother and she states that she has not regretted the undergoing the procedure since (ibid., p. 43).

Tsutsumi also described an institutionalised woman’s experiences in her chapter who similarly to the woman mentioned above underwent surgery at some point in the 1950s and 1960s:

I thought that being smitten was a different world. When I thought I had nowhere else to go but here, I thought it didn't matter if I had such a hard period. I thought it didn't matter. I thought that if I couldn't get out of

here, I would have to break all the dreams, longings, marriages, and wedding dresses that healthy girls have up until now, by having my uterus removed. By having the operation, I wanted to tell myself that I would live here as a disabled person for the rest of my life.

(Omission) What made me sad after the operation was that the operation itself was sad, but after the operation, the head of the dormitory and the staff said to me, "You're so brave". I felt really bad and sad that the housemaster and staff, who are both women, didn't know how I felt, didn't know what I was going through, and said to me, "You're so brave". I was very disappointed and sad that they said, "I wish everyone was like you", as a matter of fact since my surgery the number of other people having surgery has increased in the institution.

Tsutsumi, 2018, p. 44

According to Tsutsumi's analysis, the women's statements demonstrate how disabled women had a negative image about their bodies and saw their period as something that is dirty, shameful and should be treated as something that does not exist (2018, p. 44-45). Furthermore, their accounts showed for her how eugenic ideas, especially the perception that disabled women should not have children was also internalised by disabled women themselves. This of course echoes *Aoi shiba no kai's* analysis of ableism and the need to question one's own subjectivity as mentioned in the chapter before.

Hysterectomies were not exclusively used on physically disabled women as a method to make providing care for them easier, but they were also performed on mentally disabled women. For example, in 1989 such a case was reported in the *Asahi Shimbun* titled "'Mental instability during menstruation', disabled woman's uterus removed at facility in Okayama" (p. 27). Though the disabled woman in question did have

cerebral palsy and as a result of that had mobility issues, the surgery was conducted with the approval by the woman's family in order to "calm her down", "prevent monthly tantrums" the woman threw due to her period, and therefore make her body and mind more "docile" for everyday care in the clinic (ibid., p. 27). The case received the attention of the Subcommittee of the National Federation of Disabled Persons (*Zensawaren zenkoku shisetsu shōiinkai*) after the surgery was presented as a case study by medical professionals from the facility at the National Research Conference on Treatment and Care Facilities for the Physically Disabled (*Zenkoku shintaishōgaisha ryōgoshisetsu kenkyū kyōgi taikai*) in 1984. Mizuguchi Eiichi, a member of the aforementioned subcommittee, official statement to the woman's case was quoted as follows:

It is questionable whether the only way was to remove the uterus. Surgery in which the relationship between treatment and effectiveness has not been medically proven is tantamount to human experimentation. The idea of short-circuiting the uterus is the same as lobotomising the mentally disabled.

Asahi Shimbun, 1989, November 18th, p. 27

The article is concluded by a reaction of a former lawyer involved in the Sapporo Lobotomy Lawsuit³⁴, Kunio Takano, which states:

[... T]he person's consent in a facility environment may not amount to true consent. This is an issue that calls into question the morals of the facility and the doctors. Both the purpose and method of treatment

³⁴ The Sapporo Lobotomy Lawsuit refers to case at Hokuzen Hospital in Sapporo where physician Dr Takeda Takeshi performed a series of lobotomies on patient Katō Naonobu (pseudonym) without their consent throughout the year 1973. As part of the investigations of Katō's case a series of other cases of medical neglect were uncovered at the facility too. Katō and their family filed a lawsuit against the hospital in 1973 and eventually won the case in 1978 (Ars Vivendi, 2011).

exceed the socially acceptable range and are strongly suspected of being illegal.

Asahi Shimbun, 1989, November 18th, p. 27

Confrontations like the one involving Tsutsumi and the able bodied woman at the meeting and exchanges Tsutsumi recalled in her book chapter were important to further the conversation on reproductive health and to develop an intersectional approach in their reproductive politics that included disabled women's experiences in their analysis too.

Another prominent case of this medical malpractice this time involving hysterectomies performed on able bodied women was at the Fujimi Obstetrics and Gynaecological Hospital in Tokorozawa city, Saitama Prefecture which first received nationwide media attention on September 12th, 1980, in the morning edition of the Asahi Shimbun (p. 15). The case saw former head of Fuyokai medical cooperation Kitano Sanae, who did not possess a medical license, and his wife Chikako, the former director of the hospital, deceive patients by advising them to get their reproductive organs removed in order to avoid developing cancer later on in life. As a result, a number of women underwent the unnecessary procedure and got their healthy ovaries and wombs removed in the hospital. Though the surgeries were not performed based on eugenic motivations, the case represented an infringement of women's bodily autonomy and the danger EPL posed for it as it enabled the nullification of women's agency over their own bodies.

As Nakanishi Toyoko stated in an interview for Sarah Buckley's book project "Broken Silence – Voices of Japanese Feminism" (1997), Japanese women, disabled and able bodied alike, were lacking the language to express their experiences of their own bodies until the 1970s when activists like *ribu* and what came after opened up spaces for

discussions about topics like abortions, menstruation, and female sexuality; they were lacking the vocabulary to question medical diagnosis which together with the widely established societal trust in the medical profession led them to undergo procedures not knowing what their consequences might entail.³⁵ Obstetricians and gynaecologists of course profited from this lack of education of women as for them it made selling surgical procedures easier and they held great power over female patients (p. 191). The virtual taboo-isation of female bodily functions and the de facto monopolised decision-making power that medical professionals had over surgical interventions into female bodies, can be seen as reason why cases of medical malpractice like that at the Fujimi Obstetrics and Gynaecological Hospital could happen.

There were other galvanising moments for the reproductive rights movement and the disabled women's movement, too. Around the same time SOSHIREN (1982) came into existence, there was a magazine article published describing the foetal diagnosis in an exclusively positive light. The two groups joined forces and protested together against the biased reporting on the issue. SOSHIREN understood prenatal diagnosis of the foetus and selective abortion as the exclusion of the disabled through women's bodies (Hayashi, 2009, p. 115). They saw similarly to *ribu* in the 1970s the Japanese government's population policy as a tool to expand the state control over women's bodies.

Prenatal diagnosis in the broad sense is there to support the smooth growth of the fetus and the health of the pregnant woman, and also provides additional information necessary for appropriate and prompt medical response after delivery. However, depending on how this technique is conceptualized it can not only protect the health of

³⁵ Nakanishi Toyoko founded the Japan Women's Bookstore (*Shōkadō*) first established in Kyōtō but which was later relocated to Osaka under new ownership. She was also central to the translation and publication of "Our Bodies, Ourselves" into Japanese in the 1980s (Buckley, 1997, p. 185).

the pregnant woman and ensure the fetus' vitality in the womb, it can also be used to prevent the birth of a disabled individual which SOSHIREN and the disability movement deemed problematic. Tests like the maternal serum marker tests on pregnant women's blood indicate the probability that the fetus may have a neural tube closure disorder such as Down syndrome or spina bifida (Ibid., p. 119). Hayashi argues that with prenatal diagnosis as a way of preventing the birth of disabled people a shift takes place that sees eugenic politics shift from the state level to the private realm, a privatization of the eugenics so to speak (ibid., p. 121). For this kind of shift women's bodies are co-opted by bio-politics and women become the main agent, hence SOSHIREN with their pledge to challenge eugenics and work towards the elimination of such are rejecting prenatal diagnosis and selective abortions.

1996 - The EPL becomes the Maternal Body Protection Law – The end of eugenics?

The mid-1980s saw increased organising of disabled people in Japan, and in 1986 disabled activist Higuchi Keiko, vice-chairperson of the DPI Japan Conference, established the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* (DPI Disabled Women's Network), which is still active today and aims to promote networking and to share experiences among disabled women. Like Asaka, Higuchi had, in 1984, spent some time studying at the CIL in Berkley. At their first camp, held in September 1986, network members decided that the main purpose of the newly established group should be “[...] the promotion of disabled women's independence and the elimination of the Eugenic Protection Law” (DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku*, 2022). From the late 1980s until the mid-1990s the Network held yearly exchange camps (*kōryū gasshuku*) and campaigned for the removal of the EPL. They also held joint camps and workshops with SOSHIREN (Yonezu, 2020a).

In 1987 members of the 1982 alliance against the planned revision of the EPL and thus the attempt to prohibit legal abortion in Japan organised a conference titled “Starting

from a Female Body” (*Watashi/onna no karada kara*) where participants discussed reproductive freedom (Ōhashi, 2008, p. 225). As remembered by Ōhashi, the term ‘rights’ in this context was heavily debated among women as some of them, like disabled women, did not have choice about pregnancy or termination of such (ibid., p. 226).³⁶

In mid- 1990s, the group “Women's Association for Laws about Body and Gender” (*Karada to sei no hōritsu wo tsukuru onna no kai*) was established to work on drafting a law to finally replace the ableist and problematic EPL with. This was around the same time when rumours surfaced that there were efforts to amend the EPL again in the Diet. Contrary to the previous revision attempts of politically well-connected right-wing religious groups, this time the planned changes to the law were motivated by broader domestic policy endeavours such as the 1993 Standard Law for the Disabled (*Shōgaisha kihon hō*) and the government’s 1995 plan that aimed to eliminate legislation that fostered prejudice and discrimination against disabled people in Japan (Norgren, 2001, p. 77). These governmental efforts were driven by the targeted international pressure (*gaiatsu*) that the alliance of the women’s movement represented by groups like SOSHIREN and the disability activists like the DPI Disabled Women’s Network mounted on the government.³⁷ As the issue of discrimination of the disabled and campaigns against that didn’t attract much political leverage domestically, activist started to publicly engage with the topic at international conferences prompting the international press’ attention and negative headlines for the Japanese political elites (Norgren, 2001, p. 77).

The most determining international appearance of a Japanese disability activist denouncing ableism at an international event was Asaka Yūho’s speech in Cairo in 1994.

³⁶ Ōhashi Yukako is a member of SOSHIREN and works as a freelance writer and editor (Ōhashi, 2008, p. 225).

³⁷ *Gaiatsu* is typically a tactic employed by the Japanese state which sees the state using foreign pressure as “a shield to push reform measures that benefit select economic sectors and businesses while muffling the complaints of interest groups that oppose them” (Yoda, 2000, p. 637).

SOSHIREN and other Japanese NGOs participated in the NGO Forum at the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, in 1994, and disability activist Asaka travelled as part of the Japanese delegation to Egypt. At the NGO forum, Japanese representatives were asked in what ways the EPL was violating the human rights of disabled people in Japan. Asaka described the cases where disabled women's wombs were removed without their consent or knowledge. Asaka's statement was picked up by a reporter from a foreign newspaper and the article prompted a huge international and national response. The Japanese government, especially the Ministry of Health and Welfare, were shocked that such negative coverage of the issue emerged in the international news media. This provided a strong impetus for government officials to change the existing legislation. The next year both groups, SOSHIREN and the DPI Disabled Women's Network, sent representatives to the United Nation Women's Conference in Beijing further exerting pressure on policy makers back at home in Japan. Besides creating *gaiatsu*, activists were able to further develop their approach and argument regarding women's reproductive health by engaging with their international counterparts at these conferences who often advocated for the replacement of the "coercive, top-down, demographically targeted family planning approach" with a "more holistic, voluntary, and individual-centred paradigm for women's health and social development" (ibid., p. 79).

As revision of the EPL was becoming more and more a political reality other interest groups like *Nichibo* (the National Association of Obstetrician-gynaecologists), pro-life group 'Respect for life day' executive committee (*Seimei sonchō no hi jikkō iinkai*), as well as larger nationwide disability advocacy groups such as Japan Council on Disability (*Nihon shōgaisha kyōgikai*) and the National Federation of Families of the Mentally Ill in Japan (*Zenkoku seishinshōgaisha kazokukai rengōkai*), short *Zenkaren*, also

got involved in the discourse on replacing the EPL and promoted their respective agendas.³⁸ *Nichibo* saw in the imminent change of the law an opportunity to expand their provided services and thus increase their profits. They lobbied for a reconsideration of the introduction of a foetal conditions clause and selective abortions in cases where fertility treatments resulted in multiple embryos (ibid., p. 79-80). However, none of the expansion of the law manifested and law makers only removed the eugenic components of the legislation. Hence, in 1996 the EPL was replaced by the Maternal Body Protection Law (MBPL).

As Yonezu has argued eugenic ideas did not formally cease to exist within Japan with the replacement of the EPL as the idea of determining people's value based on their productivity remains within a capitalist framework intact. When it comes to the new legislation, the MBPL, while heavily based on its predecessor, does not include any explicitly eugenic language anymore. Passages with any clear mentions of the word 'eugenic' or 'eugenics' (*yūsei* in Japanese) have been deleted and instead, as also reflected by the new name of the legislation, the focus on the health of the mother together with the strong emphasis on giving birth to a 'healthy' baby has been added. As Ogino notes the focus on the protection of mothers for a law that sets out the legal framework for legal abortions and sterilisations is rather strange (1996, p. 137). This is due to the hasty replacement of the EPL in the National Diet as a result of the international backlash the Japanese government experienced as a result of Asaka's speech and pressure from the organisation of families of the disabled (ibid., p. 137). Without taking into account the historical development of reproductive legislation in Japan, these additions and changes

³⁸ Established on April 19th, 1980, as part of the celebrations of the IYDP the Japan Council on Disability (JD) developed various projects across Japan with the aim of overcoming differences in disabilities, positions, and ideas, and concretely realizing the ideals of "full participation and equality", as well as "normalization" for people with disabilities in society (Ars Vivendi, 2010a).

to the legislation appear positive and harmless. However, for activists like Yonezu this emphasis is a subtle reference to the eugenics that was previously the main component of the legislation, and they interpret it as a form of continuity with the underlying eugenic ideology of the previous legislation:

[T]he main idea this law is based on is that a woman's body should be taken care of in order to give birth to a healthy child, which comes quite close to eugenic thinking.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko, March 18th, 2020.

This assumed continued eugenic message of the legislature governing all women's bodies, disabled and able-bodied alike, served as one of the main motivators for Yonezu's and SOSHIREN's persisting activism in order to achieve bodily autonomy for women, ergo abolish or change the MBPL and legalise abortions in the Criminal Code.

I want[*ed*] to see the Eugenic Protection Law eliminated, replaced with other laws, laws that allow abortion and that allow women to make their own decisions about abortions and sterilizations independent from eugenic reasons. I want abortions to be decriminalised. That's what SOSHIREN campaigns for. But the government rarely listened to us, our voices were rarely heard.

Interview with Yonezu Tomoko on March 18th, 2020,

Their rejection of state intervention into and manipulation of women's bodies, as articulated through Yonezu's lifelong activism, represents a direct intervention into the mechanisms of bio-politics, as they continue to advance the discourse of reproductive justice in Japan through their present day activities as an activist group. These activities include regular updates to the membership on news stories relating to reproductive

issues, publications, protest actions, group meetings, workshops, and policy consultations via SOSHIREN's mailing list and social media channels.

Conclusion

Hence, as I illustrated in this chapter of my thesis, the intersectional resistance to the EPL did not abruptly end with the dissolution of the *ūman ribu* movement in the late 1970s. Activist groups were challenging and protesting eugenic ideology and practises enshrined in the law up until 1996 when the EPL was eventually replaced by the MBPL and continue to do so to this very day. Mainly responsible for this were first and foremost disabled women activists and their respective activist groups who asserted tremendous national and international pressure on the government. And here is where the legacies of *ūman ribu* become most visible: The space that the movement created where women could exchange their experiences and foster understanding with groups that have different experiences to their own, continued to exist and was replicated by activists involved or associated with *ribu* in the following decades. Through further engaging with disability activists the heirs of the *ribu* movement, most prominently SOSHIREN due to Yonezu Tomoko's leadership within the group, kept developing their approach to reproductive politics and justice. Bio-ethical considerations relating to the motives of abortions became a continuous part of this approach as reflected by the group's position on prenatal diagnosis and selective abortions. Yonezu's emancipatory development, her engagement with her own embodiment and potential contradictions that arose from her positionality as investigated in this chapter demonstrate the crucial transformative impact movements like the *ūman ribu* movement had on their participants long after they concluded.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Legacies of the EPL, *ūman ribu*, and the disability movement in the 21st century

Perhaps the most brutal manifestation of the most lethal aspects of eugenic ideology for disabled people in recent Japanese history was the so-called Sagami-hara Massacre in 2016. It represents the most extreme form of ableist violence and in a way exemplified to disability activists the persistent hostility and rejection by mainstream society due to productivity being the main determinant of human value.

On July 26th, 2016, then 26-year old Uematsu Satoshi stabbed to death 19 disabled people while injuring another 26 people at care facility Tsukui Lily Garden (*Tsukui yamayuri en*) in the town of Sagami-hara in Kanagawa prefecture. The crime of the former care giver at the facility was declared as a ‘disability hate crime’ by the authorities and the media. While nobody could have predicted this ideologically motivated massacre, there were warning signs regarding the culprit’s eugenic ideas and potential danger to the disabled community which were taken rather complacently by the responsible authorities. When working at Tsukui Lily Garden from 2012 until 2016 he reportedly said to a fellow female nurse that he felt sorry for disabled people, declared their life to be useless and expressed to her that he thought it’d be better to euthanise disabled people (Asahi Shimbun, 2016a, p. 29). Before resigning 4 days later from his job as a nurse, Uematsu had gone to the residence of the Speaker of the House of Representatives Ōshima Tadamori on February 15th, 2016, and after two failed attempts to speak to someone at the house in person posted a letter addressed to Ōshima (Asahi Shimbun, 2016b, p. 29). In the letter, Uematsu stated that he could eliminate 470 disabled people and in detail laid out the attack that he would commit 5 months later while also advocating for the government to issue legislation to euthanise disabled people in Japan

(Inose, 2020, p. 197). On March 16th, 2020, Uematsu was sentenced to death by the Yokohama District Court after admitting to the charges in the trial, however on April 29th, 2022, his lawyers were seeking retrial arguing that Uematsu “[...] should not be held responsible for his actions due to mental incompetence” (Japan Times, 2022).³⁹

Uematsu’s gruesome massacre of disabled people at the care home drastically highlighted the very real danger that eugenic ideology poses to disabled people and their lives in Japanese society not only indirectly through former legislation such as the EPL but also directly through the hands of other members of society. It further revealed disabled people’s vulnerability in institutions like the Tsukui Lily Garden where they are separated from their communities and in its most violent form the abuse and violations individuals experienced by the hands of those who supposedly are there to care for them.

In response the DPI Japan issued a protest statement signed by chairperson Hirano Midori on July 27th offering condolences to the families of the victims and condemning the eugenic motivations of Uematsu⁴⁰:

There was also a report that the suspect was saying that “[Society would be] better OFF without people with disabilities” to the Kanagawa Police investigation. If this was true, the act is purely caused by the eugenics that questions the existence of persons with disabilities. We, DPI-JAPAN, reaffirm our commitment to fight against eugenics with great anger and grief. During the recent years, there are increased incidents of hate crime and hate speech against persons with disabilities and other minority groups. This particular incident should not be overlooked. Now, more

³⁹ Uematsu’s retrial appeal is still pending in courts in November 2022 at the time of submission of this doctoral thesis.

⁴⁰ At this point in time, the motivations of Uematsu were not yet officially confirmed.

than ever, the need to create an inclusive society which does not allow hate crime or hate speech.

Hirano, 2016

The statement echoed ideas that disability movement had already voiced in the 1970s and 1980s, namely the dismantling of the persistent eugenic ideology that spawned hate crime and hate speech against disabled people, as well as the intersectional nature of discrimination of other minorities too. The Sagamihara case further demonstrated that eugenic ideologies are not necessarily tangible and traceable back to policies alone but are perpetuated through the mechanisms of the normalising society. Hence, to eliminate discrimination of disabled people comprehensive measures have to be taken that impact society, its values, and norms, as a whole. Fundamental intervention into the bio-political order is necessary and as argued in this thesis *ūman ribu* and the disability movement started these in the reproductive arena in the 1970s. Furthermore, inclusivity and the dissolution of segregating societal mechanisms such as institutionalisation and the limitation of contact points between disabled and able bodied communities are hereby key, something that disability activists have been arguing for nearly over five decades.

The Japanese government has formally committed to promote the inclusion of disabled people in Japanese society by ratifying the United Nation's General Assembly's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016 which explicitly states that disabled people should have the opportunity to choose their place of residence and should not be forced to live in a living arrangement not of their choosing (Inose, 2020, p. 199). However, the comprehensive implementation of this is yet to be realised in Japan as elsewhere around the world.

In the light of the 5th anniversary of the massacre DPI Japan further published a memorandum on their website reminding the public that there are still persisting social

injustices negatively impacting disabled people's lives and experiences in Japan such as a number of new cases of abuse of disabled people in social care institutions that surfaced since the attack in 2016 and the stagnating, almost regressing progress of the transition of disabled people from institutions into communities (DPI, 2021). Specifically, the DPI piece mentioned the discovery of the cycle of abuse that inpatients were subjected to by medical and care staff at Kande Hospital in Kobe in February 2020 (ibid.). Moreover, they urged legislators to expand the already existing 'Act on the Prevention of Abuse of Persons with Disabilities and Support for Caregivers' (*Shōgaisha gyakutai no bōshi, shōgaisha no yōgoshani taisuru shientōni kansuru hōritsu*) enacted in 2011 to include hospitals and schools in purview of mandatory reporting when such abuse occurs as disabled individuals are particularly vulnerable in those public spaces (ibid.). So far this policy demand has not yet been met.

As a possible solution to prevent abuse from happening, the organisation strongly advocated for the expansion of the infrastructure that enables disabled individuals to live in communities similar to what the independent living movement argued for in the 1980s. Disabled people among their peers with assistance provided as needed, would enable sharing experience amongst the community for example. Furthermore, the statement mentioned the importance inclusive education has in promoting an inclusive society and how this is something that Japan still has major needs for improvement. The point of educational inclusivity and the regressive developments of such were also a concern raised by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in their report on Japan's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Jonas Ruskus, committee expert and country Co-Rapporteur, mentioned the introduction of "[...] some new national legislation [*that*] promoted special segregated education of children with disabilities, subjecting them to a medical assessment, resulting

in the denial of inclusive education” (United Nations, 2022). Ruskus further noted that the number of disabled children living in special care institutions was steadily increasing year by year, at the time of the meeting official statistics showed that 8,727 children were institutionalised (ibid.).

In the same report the compensation payments to victims of forced sterilisation under the EPL was highlighted as a step into the right direction in terms of improving the situation of disabled people in Japan. Under the EPL, between 1948 and 1996, about 16,477 people were forcibly sterilised in Japan (Havhannisyanyan, 2020, p. 1 and DPI Women’s Network Japan, 2012, p. 12)⁴¹. More specifically, 5,164 of them were male and 11,313 of them were female according to official numbers obtained by the DPI *Josei Shōgaisha Nettowāku* (DPI Women’s Network Japan, 2012, p. 12). As part of the aftermath of the Sagami-hara massacre and the public discourse on eugenics and Japan’s legacy of it, a year later in 2017 a number of victims came forward and told their stories publicly. Subsequently in January 2018, Satō Yumi (pseudonym) became the first person to sue to the Japanese government over her forced sterilisation at age 15, several others including the spouses of victims followed suit increasing the number of current lawsuits to 24 (ibid., p. 3).

During my fieldwork in Tokyo in March 2020, just before the shutdown due to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 crisis, I had the opportunity to join a rally in support of plaintiff Kita Saburō (pseudonym) at his court hearing at the Tokyo District Court on March 17th, 2020. The event was facilitated by the “Association for demanding an apology for eugenic surgeries” (*Yūseishujutsu ni taisuru shazai wo motomeru kai*; short *Motomeru kai*) for which Yonezu Tomoko is one of the main campaigners and organisers. *Motomeru*

⁴¹ In the newspaper article by Tanaka (2020) the number of victims is stated as 25,000 people. However, the majority of reports on the number of victims quotes 16,500.

kai organises similar events in support of victims of the EPL and their lawsuits across the whole of Japan and have established a broad network amongst different stake holders involved in the EPL lawsuits, including lawyers, disability activists, reproductive justice activists, researchers, and journalists to name a few. Next to Yonezu Tomoko other SOSHIREN members are also part of the group, as well as prominent members of the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* like Usui Kumiko. In order to inform members of upcoming events and outcomes of the lawsuits the group is operating a mailing list and google group with access to all the information material produced by members. Yonezu and Usui are frequent contributors to and points of reference of the content of the mailing list. The diverse group of people involved in the network reflects the far reaching consequences the former legislation had on Japanese society and its societal fabric and continues to have today. It was not just a provision of legal abortion access that it represented but it also defined who was and who wasn't deemed of value within the post-war bio-political order.

Kita-san was sterilised as a 14-years old student at *Shūyō Gakuen* in Miyagi prefecture, a facility for delinquent youths (*furyō shōnen* or *hikō shōnen*), without having any disability listed in the EPL (ibid., p. 3). As Hovhannisyan (2020) explains such delinquent youths were attributed to factors including poverty, family and the individual's social environment, genetics, socio-economic status, occupation, as well as physical and mental health (p. 4). However, at the time this was also associated with "feeble-mindedness" (*seishin hakujaku*), today described as intellectual disability and developmental disability. Thus, intellectually disabled people were also targeted by the normalising society's tools as they were seen as not in control of their sexuality and unable to look after themselves and therefore were subjected to sterilisation (ibid., p. 5). In his interview with Hovhannisyan (2020) Kita-san stated that before he read about

Satō's lawsuit in the paper, he was not aware that the authorities had performed his sterilisation but was living under the impression that his parents had made this choice for him without his consent. Reaching out to the hotline established so that other victims could come forward like Satō did in 2018, he was connected to a team of lawyers in Tokyo who subsequently helped him to file his lawsuit against the Japanese government (ibid., p. 9). When asked about what his desired outcome of his lawsuit was, Kita-san said:

To be honest, the compensation is not that important to me, I just want the authorities to apologize for the injustice. There are thousands of us, who were sterilized under this law. If we act alone, they can break us like disposable chopsticks. But if we unite, we will become a large tree, and no one can break us.

Kita Saburō in an interview with Hovhannisyan, 2020, p. 9

Members of the *Motomeru kai* network in cooperation with SOSHIREN have also published a book titled 'The Crimes Committed by the Eugenic Protection Law: Testimonies of People Deprived of Having Children' in 2018 to further raise awareness of the bio-ethical issues surrounding the now defunct law by collecting different affected people's experiences. The book also includes testimonies from people who were victims of forced sterilisation in Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands. As one of the main editors of the book, Yonezu wrote the epilogue, highlighting the universal (in Japan and abroad in Europe) anxiety and hesitation the victims of forced sterilisation felt in connection with going public with their experiences and demanding compensation for what was done to them without their informed consent (Yonezu, 2018, p. 322). She also stressed that discrimination could create an inescapable sense of humiliation, fear, and powerlessness that silences victims as it is a system that divides people from different standpoints and exacerbate solving problems (ibid., p. 322-323). Furthermore, she

referred to the differences and conflicts between the women's movement and the disability movement in relation to the EPL as an example of the wedge that discrimination can drive between two marginalised groups working towards similar goals but approaching it from different perspectives (ibid., p. 324).

Her reflections in the epilogue clearly demonstrate the necessity of an intersectional approach to reproductive justice that includes different perspectives and experiences of the issue, as well as cooperation between disability advocates and women's movements. It shows that Yonezu sits on the intersection of disability and gender on the issue and embodies an important link between the two since her activities with the *ūman ribu* movement in the 1970s until today. With the establishment of the *Motomeru kai* and Yonezu's leading position within it shows how she is dedicated to creating spaces to bring the two together and promote collaboration and solidarity among them.

The group also published a written demand letter to the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare (MHLW) which they included in the aforementioned book and asked people to endorse it since the government refused to respond to *Motomeru kai* repeated negotiation attempts and continued demand to issue an official apology and compensation for the victims who were forcibly sterilised under the EPL (ibid., p. 324). The group has been campaigning and lobbying for this since its establishment in September 1997 which was inspired by the revelations of the 'Eugenic scandal' in Sweden which exposed the Scandinavian country's large scale eugenic sterilisation programme (Ichinokawa, 2018, p. 4-5). A series of articles in the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter revealed that from 1934 until its abolition in 1976 around 60,000 people were sterilised by the government on eugenic, social, and economic grounds (Butler, 1997). *Motomeru kai* was hoping to instigate similar revelations in Japanese society, however it took two

more decades for the first victims to come forward and tell their experiences publicly. Similarly, to the Swedish context, media coverage of the testimonies was not limited to Japan, but it was picked up by all major news outlets across the globe, including the Guardian (McCurry, 2018), the BBC (BBC, 2018) and Al-Jazeera (Henderson and Ambrose, 2018) to name a few.

Reacting to the national and international public outcry over eugenic surgeries under the EPL, the Japanese government finally enacted the 'Law for the Provision of Compensation Payments for Persons who were subjected to Eugenic Surgeries under the former Eugenic Protection Law' (*Kyūyūseihogohō ni motodzuku yūseishujutsutō wo uketamono ni taisuru ichijikin no shikyūtō ni kansuru hōritsu*) on April 24th, 2019, which enabled victims to claim up to 3.2 million yen as compensation (ibid., p.3). As a reaction to the government finally taking action, *Motomeru kai* published a statement on the SOSHIREN website on the same day stating welcoming the law's enactment but also voicing regret for the delayed action by the government since the EPL was replaced in 1996 and demanding a comprehensive investigation into the EPL and its consequences as well as an increase of the lump sum compensation victims could apply for (*Yūseishujutsu ni taisuru shazai wo motomeru kai*, 2019). Furthermore, they called for an official confirmation of the right of disabled people to decide for themselves whether or not to have children and the expansion of medical care, welfare, and educational provisions across the country (ibid.).

Motomeru kai and other activist groups' call for a thorough inquiry into the EPL the forced sterilisations performed under it was heard and on January 17th, 2020, the Diet announced that they had ordered an investigation to be conducted into the damage caused by the sterilisation of disabled people under the EPL and to examine the background of these human rights violations caused by the now defunct law (Tanaka,

2020). The enquiry is set to take three years and involves widespread research into the EPL, such as investigations into the legislative process of the EPL, the implementation of the law and eugenic surgeries through literature and data research, as well as interviews with organisations representing victims and impacted individuals themselves (ibid.). This plan demonstrates a certain degree of willingness of the Japanese government to account for the past and engage with Japan's eugenic legacies. However, it remains to be seen how radical and far reaching the report will be given the intersections of eugenics and the bio-political order within Japan's systems of power as I have demonstrated in my analysis of the reproductive discourse in post-war Japan. Nevertheless, this willingness should be conceptualised as progress for promoting and materialising disability and reproductive justice as it is an admission of discriminatory practices perpetrated by the state forming an important first step.

Continued intersectional challenges to the persistent bio-political order in Japan

Following the replacement of the EPL by the MBPL the fight for reproductive justice has not stopped as abortion is still a criminal offense under the Criminal Code and even under the MBPL medical professionals have to be consulted and give their permission for the procedure before a woman can undergo the surgery. Women are not yet given bodily autonomy under the existing legal framework. Groups like SOSHIREN and the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* are still campaigning for more education on reproductive health and justice, as well as challenging eugenics in everyday life in Japan. Members of both groups are as mentioned before part of several networks across the country, such as the aforementioned *Motomeru kai*, to support the lawsuits of victims of forced sterilisation under the now defunct EPL. They organise protests, rallies, and information events leading up, during, and after court dates of the victims like the meeting at Kita Saburō's case hearing before the Tokyo District Court in March 2020.

Nonetheless, SOSHIREN's activism is not limited to joint events in support of the EPL's victims' law cases and members' involvement in *Motomeru kai*. As mentioned in chapter 3 of this thesis, the replacement of the EPL in 1996 did not establish bodily autonomy since the Penal Code still criminalises abortions in Japan today. Furthermore, core to SOSHIREN's activism since the establishment of the group in 1982 was also their public scepticism towards assisted reproductive technologies and prenatal testing. Compared to other countries like Germany or the United States, Japanese authorities are more reluctant to expand such technologies even though influential groups like *Nichibo* are lobbying for the expansion of existing legislature sensing lucrative business opportunities for medical professionals. One of the reasons for this reluctance is the historically strong opposition of the disability movement and women's groups like SOSHIREN which catalyse public discussions and stall policy making (Ogino, 2015, p. 114).

While in other contexts pro-choice women's groups are more welcoming to reproductive technologies, SOSHIREN argues that "[...] just as women's right to abortion was conveniently used by the state to control the quantity of the population in the post-war era, with prenatal screening, the individual woman's "choice" is used to voluntarily control the quality of the human being to be born" (ibid., p. 115). Thus, co-opting women for population manipulation purposes makes them a collaborator, knowingly or not, in upholding the bio-political order.

Abortion after prenatal screening is conducted, not because pregnancy itself is unwanted, but in expectation of having a baby. It is a deed to decide whether to welcome that child or not, depending on existence or nonexistence of defects. I think that a foetus is neither an independent life nor a part of [a] woman's body. It is not the same as a person after

birth but has a potentiality to become one. Just as discrimination against a living human being because of her or his attributes is wrong, so is discrimination against a foetus. ... Notwithstanding the fact that it is society's unkindness to people with disabilities that makes their lives difficult, proponents of prenatal diagnosis pretend there is no such liability and try to induce women to select their children, designating such selection a woman's "right" to be practiced at her own responsibility. That is exactly a new trend of eugenics and is nothing but an infringement of women's reproductive rights.

Yonezu Tomoko, as quoted in Ogino, 2015, p. 115

Yonezu's quote shows how the reproductive rights question in Japan as approached by SOSHIREN is informed by the idea that women have the right to choose to become a parent or not. For this the provision of safe and effective contraception is prerequisite which also has to include legal abortions (ibid., p. 115). This understanding is informed by the decade long interactions and debates with the disability movement which of course were not always harmonious as illustrated in Chapter 2 and 3 of this doctoral thesis. According to Yonezu and SOSHIREN prenatal screening and selective abortion could only then be normalised, albeit strictly regulated, "[i]f there exist conditions under which one can bring up a child with [a] disability in a manner not entirely different from that of an ordinary child, then we will be able to choose not to choose our children" (ibid., p. 116).

Following 1996 and the enactment of the MBPL, DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* focussed on expanding their joint activities with other women's groups such as the "Women's Bodies Camp" (*Onna no karada kara gasshuku*) co-organised with SOSHIREN in November 1997. Other groups the network cooperates with are the "Japan Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women NGO Network” (*Nihon joseisabetsu teppai jōyaku NGO nettowāku*) and the “Action to Realise the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women” (*Joseisabetsu teppai jōyaku jitsugen akushon*) highlighting the intersectional alliance on the issue of gender based discrimination across activist networks in Japan (Usui, 2021). The network also promoted international co-operation with other Asian counterparts as well as attending conferences in Japan and abroad organised by the DPI such as the DPI World Council Meeting in Mexico in December 1998 (DPI Josei shōgaisha nettowāku, 2021).

After reduced activities between 2001 to 2006 as founding members focussed on establishing and running independent living centres across Japan as well as providing peer counselling to members of the community, the network was officially relaunched in 2007 motivated by international developments such as the adoption of the “United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” in 2006 and the DPI World Assembly in South Korea in 2007 (Usui, 2020). However, the core tenets of the network remained the same:

[The network] aims to empower women with disabilities and to create a society where individuals are respected, and human rights are protected. As a voluntary organization of individual members, we hold monthly meetings, run a mailing list with more than 230 registered members, and collect, provide, and exchange national and international information on women with disabilities. We also make recommendations on domestic laws and policies, and sometimes travel to international conferences and the United Nations for lobbying purposes. Policy proposals we are working on since April [2020] include the "Public Comments on the Draft Guidelines for Disaster Prevention

and Recovery from the Perspective of Gender Equality" and the "Request on the Rights of Women with Disabilities and the Maintenance of their Lives under the Spread of the New Coronavirus".

Interview with Usui Kumiko, May 18th, 2020

Many members of the network are involved in independent living centres, and half of the board members of the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* are either employees of independent living centers or involved as carers (Usui, 2021). This enables the network to incorporate the lived experiences of the disability community when consulting government agencies on policy propositions. On the one hand, this represents the group's successful establishment as an advocacy group within the existing political structure of Japan, something that started with the replacement of the EPL in 1996. On the other hand, this can be further understood as the fusion of the single-issue orientation of social activism following the turbulent 1970s as described by Gerteis (2021) and the continuity of the intersectional analysis of the interlocking systems of discrimination as started by *ūman ribu* in the early 1970s. The latter was reinforced by a comprehensive survey conducted by the DPI *Josei shōgaisha nettowāku* which investigated the complex nature of discrimination experienced by their members and was published as an official report in 2012 (DPI Josei shōgaisha nettowāku, 2012).

Yonezu Tomoko remains a key voice in both networks and hence, as demonstrated throughout my analysis functions as the embodiment of the intersectional nature of reproductive justice and its politics as well as the connecting link between the radical politics of the 1970s and the present. Through her involvement in the persistent challenge of eugenics in everyday Japanese life and evolving the intersectional analysis of the reproductive discourse by integrating bio-ethical concerns, she crucially not only

expanded the reproductive discourse in Japan but consequently intervened into the bio-political order and continues to do so today.

Recapturing my thesis

By following the life and work of life-long social activist Yonezu Tomoko, my doctoral thesis reconstructed the evolution of reproductive politics and reproductive justice in post-war Japan and reconceptualised them as interventions into the bio-political order. Yonezu formed the embodied intersection between the gendered and bio-ethical consequences of reproductive politics and state sanctioned interventions into bodies. She also represents the continuity of the *ūman ribu* movement's legacy and its important contributions to reframing the reproductive discourse.

By looking at the role of state interventions into bodies and how this tool functions within the power structure of bio-politics, chapter two laid the necessary theoretical basis for my investigation. It analysed the establishment of the bio-political order within post-war Japan and its organisation around the capitalist logic of productivity which valued human life according to its productive capacities. Moreover, this section of my thesis focussed on how the Eugenic Protection Law enacted in 1948 represented an important instrument of the normalising society to control the population, quantitatively and qualitatively. Its eugenic language clearly set out a hierarchy amongst the population with widespread bio-ethical consequences for disabled life. It framed it as less desirable and divergent from the norm.

Moving on, chapter three looked at the specific challenges to the bio-political order by the *ūman ribu* movement following the revision attempts of the EPL in the early 1970s. Furthermore, it provided crucial socio-political context for the emergence of the movement, the gendered tensions of the student movement and the campus based New Left, which influenced their societal critique and politics. It introduced Yonezu Tomoko

and her positionality within post-war radical activism, as well as reflected on her embodied intersectional experience of the tensions set out by Japan's bio-political order centred around productivity. Analysing the tensions between *ribu* and the disability movement, primarily represented by *Aoi shiba no kai*, on the issue of reproduction, I expounded the groundwork necessary to the development of an intersectional approach to reproductive justice and bodily autonomy as represented by groups such as SOSHIREN in the subsequent decades of feminist activism. Some fundamental differences remained over the decades but only through further encounter and continuous engagement can they be resolved in the future.

Chapter four centred around the reproductive justice activism spurred on by the renewed revision attempts of the EPL in the post-*ribu* socio-political landscape of the early 1980s and the role intersectional alliances between groups like the '82 Liaison Group to Block the Revision of the Eugenic Protection Law' and the disability movement. The chapter also shed light on the circumstances of the emergence of female disabled voices within the Japanese disability movement which were promoted by the IYD in 1981 and the advent of the independent living movement in Japan. The case study of the discourse on menstrual health highlights how through the increased participation of disabled people in mainstream society following the campaigns against institutionalisation and for a more community based living more spaces opened up for sharing experiences and incorporating more diverse experiences into gender based activism. Promoting a more inclusive society served as a catalyst for more intersectional analysis of societal relations and the bio-political order in Japan. Finally, I examined the most tangible outcome of the joint intersectional alliance between feminists and disability activists which started with *ūman ribu* in the 1970s, namely the replacement of the EPL with the MBPL in 1996. It demonstrated how activists throughout two decades

of organising and the help of international pressure at last successfully intervened into the bio-political order and changed the legal framework governing bodies in post-war Japan.

However, the change of the law in 1996, the erasure of explicitly eugenic language from the new legislation does not mean that eugenic ideology no longer exists within Japanese society. The core tenet that human life is valued due to its productivity and its contribution to society by mainly their labour, this is still upheld today, not only in Japan but in the majority of liberal democracies around the globe. As highlighted in the beginning of my conclusion by looking at the Sagami-hara massacre, eugenic ideologies reproduced consciously or subconsciously within a society are a direct threat to disabled life everywhere. Working towards the realisation of an inclusive society is therefore crucial to overcome prejudice and stigma. Accounting for past systematic discrimination and human rights violations are important steps in the right direction. But responsibility needs to be taken on a deeper level than just semiotically like with the replacement of the EPL by the MBPL in 1996. Similarly, to how the 1980s served as a catalyst to exchange ideas and experiences between feminist and disabled women due to the establishment of joint spaces and the promotion of community based independent living rather than institutionalisation, only by expanding accessibility in living and working spaces can we achieve this and overcome differences to work towards eradicating eugenics and ableist biases sustainably.

Recently, the successful campaigns of the Reiwa Shinsengumi party in the 2019 Upper House elections indicated that *ūman ribu's* societal critique that opposed a society where human life is valued based on its productivity made it into the mainstream political discourse. Campaigning on the belief that “[...] productivity is no way to measure people’s value and that it is the role of politics to create a society in which existing is enough to

have worth [...]”, two disabled candidates secured a seat in the Japanese Diet, Funago Yasuhiro, who is largely paralysed due to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and Kimura Eiko, who has cerebral palsy (Mainichi Shimbun, 2019). The two candidates’ triumphant entry to the Japanese parliament constituted an important victory for the representation of disabled people and amplified their voices on an institutional level. Even though, there are no obvious historical or ideological connections between this new political party and the *ūman ribu* movement as far as we know, and the socio-economic circumstances are different today than they were in the early 1970s, it should not come as a surprise that the logic of productivity is being scrutinised on a national level in 21st century Japan.

After the Lost Decades of the 1990s, economic stagnation and hardship affecting the majority of the Japanese population, the exacerbation of the wealth gap and eroding of social welfare services due to decades of neoliberal policy making, the rapidly ageing population and the question of who is going to provide the desperately needed social care or where the pensions will come from, precarity in the labour market, and the rising number of environmental disasters, the structural foundation that upheld the post-war bio-political order has started to show severe cracks. As more and more people are falling through those cracks in contemporary Japanese society, reformist political agendas as presented by the Reiwa Shinsengumi party become more and more attractive to a growing amount of people. However, as of now the Reiwa Shinsengumi party is still a rather small opposition party within Japanese national politics, and it remains to be seen if they can gain momentum and shift the political discourse to create a more inclusive society where everyone’s needs are addressed regardless of their gendered productivity.

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Figures

Figure 1

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