

JAPANESE MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISE STUDY GROUP (JMNESG)

Research Exchange with Japanese Manufacturing Companies in Germany

WHO WE ARE

JMNESG was established in 1983 by Professor Tetsuo Abo and colleagues to study how Japanese management and production systems are transferred, adapted, and embedded internationally. Since 1986, the group has conducted comparative field research in more than 700 overseas manufacturing plants. Today, researchers from Japan, South Korea, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Poland collaborate under the chairmanship of Professor Wooseok Juhn of Chukyo University. JMNESG collaborates with the Management Geography Research Group ([ManGeo](#)) to examine how managerial practices are shaped by spatial, institutional, and regional conditions.

CURRENT PROJECT: THE NEXT GENERATION OF THE JAPANESE HYBRID FACTORY

Our current European project examines how Japanese manufacturers combine Lean Production, Kaizen, workforce capabilities, and local adaptation with digitalization, automation, and Industry 4.0. We are particularly interested in how technology can strengthen operational flexibility, quality, knowledge transfer, and resilience without weakening the human and organizational foundations of Japanese manufacturing.

VALUE FOR A COMPANY EXCHANGE	POSSIBLE THEMES FOR DISCUSSION
• Independent international perspective based on four decades of factory research • Benchmarking of Japanese production practices across countries and regions • Discussion of digitalization, Lean Production, Kaizen, and human-machine collaboration • Reflection on local embeddedness, knowledge transfer, and intercultural management in Germany	• How digital technologies can reinforce rather than replace Lean capabilities • How German sites adapt Japanese production and management practices • How headquarters-subsidiary knowledge transfer supports innovation and resilience • How workforce participation and continuous improvement evolve during digital transformation

PROPOSED FORMAT

We would welcome a short company visit and exchange with managers and specialists from production, digitalization, engineering, human resources, or corporate communications. We would also be pleased to offer a 30-minute research presentation, “The Next Generation of the Japanese Hybrid Factory: Integrating Lean Production with Industry 4.0,” followed by an informal discussion. The format can be adapted to the company’s interests and available time.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2026 GERMANY FIELD STUDY

Katsuo Yamazaki — Professor Emeritus, Shizuoka Sangyo University	Youngkyo Suh — Professor Kanagawa University
Yoshikazu Shusa — Professor Yokohama National University	Ken Kamoche — Professor University of Nottingham
Rolf D. Schlunze — Professor Dr., Ritsumeikan University	Joey Soehardjojo , Ph.D. — Independent Researcher;
Wooseok Juhn — Professor at Chukyo University ; Chair of JMNESG	Jiaxin Huang — Researcher and doctoral thesis at Meiji University
Chikako Hironaka , PhD — Professor at Chukyo University	Xuesong Wang — Ph.D. Candidate, Ritsumeikan University
Masato Itohisa — Professor at Hosei University	

Major Publications of JMNESG & [ManGeo](#) research group in English

Abo, Tetsuo (ed.), Japanese Hybrid Factories, A Comparison of Global Production Strategies, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007

Abo, Tetsuo (ed.), Hybrid Factory: The Japanese Production System in the United States, Oxford Univ. Press, 1994

Itagaki, Hiroshi (Ed.), The Japanese Production System: Hybrid Factories in East Asia, Macmillan, 1997.

Kumon, Hiroshi and Tetsuo Abo, (eds.), The Hybrid Factory in Europe: The Japanese Management and Production System Transferred, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004.

Schlunze, Rolf, Hybrid-Manager in Japan: Weg zum interkulturellen Erfolg. [Hybrid Manager in Japan: Path to Intercultural Success] in: David Chiavacci und Iris Wiczorek (Hrsg.), Japan 2016 – Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, München, IUDICIUM Verlag (VSJF), 166-190.

Schlunze, Rolf Dieter, Tomasz Dorożyński, and Xuesong Wang, Sand in the gears: A case of a Japanese MNE in Poland. In: Asian Business & Management (online); <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41291-026-00345-9>

Suwala, Lech, Piotr Pachura, and Rolf Schlunze, Management Geography - Making Place for Space in Management Thought. Polish Journal of Management Studies 2022; 25 (2): 323-340.

Taira, Atsushi and Rolf Schlunze (eds.), Management Geography - Asian Perspectives Focusing on Japan and Surrounding Regions Management Geography. International Perspectives in Geography (IPG, volume 19), Springer Nature, 2022.

Yamazaki, Katsuo, Wooseok Juhn and Tetsuo Abo (eds.), Hybrid Factories in Latin America: Japanese Management Transferred, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Contact: Prof. Dr. Rolf D. Schlunze, Ritsumeikan University | on behalf of JMNESG

[ManGeo](#) Research Laboratory, Ritsumeikan University Osaka Ibaraki Campus (OIC),
College of Business Administration, 2-150 Iwakura-cho, Ibaraki, Osaka 567-8570 Japan

Tel. +81-72-665-2353, FAX. +81-72-665-2099;

E-mail: drds309@ba.ritsumei.ac.jp or rolf@mangeo.org

