

# Migrant Support Organizations in Japan – A Mixed-Method Approach

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*The number of foreigners in Japan is increasing. So is the number of migrant support organizations. But what exactly is it that migrant support organizations in Japan do? And what conclusions can we draw from the content and character of their activism for the »state of civil society« in Japan?*

*The paper at hand addresses these questions with a mixed-method approach. First, we introduce findings from a survey conducted among 100 migrant support organizations in early 2007. Secondly, we provide a close-up look at one of the largest migrant support organizations in Japan, Ijuren. Both the results from the quantitative and the qualitative research approach lead us to argue that migrant support organizations reflect the dual structure of Japan's civil society in general: they are highly active in service provision, and highly passive in political advocacy. Most migrant support organizations are concerned with improving the living and working conditions of migrants rather than revising immigration policy and/or the legal framework of migration to Japan. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of the organizations are rooted in local activism; almost none of them – not even the larger ones such as Ijuren – expand their range of action to the national or transnational level. Migrant support organizations, as many other civil society organizations in Japan, too, find their range of action bound by Japan's tight political opportunity structure. At this moment, however, it seems they do not seek to strengthen their level of transnational activism, which – as contemporary social movement literature argues – would be a step toward greater independence from restrictions laid upon them by a strong state. This would also be a step toward taking over more responsibility in the policymaking process itself.*

## 1 Introduction

In 2005, the number of foreign residents living and working in Japan topped the benchmark of two million, meaning that roughly 1.6% of Japan's overall population are foreigners (MOJ 2005, Internet). By OECD standards, however this is an extremely low percentage of foreign residents. Japan is not a classical country of immigration. Yet, facing rapid demographic change, and the shrinking of its workforce in particular, labor migration to Japan as a form of replacement migration has recently become a widely discussed issue in both economic and in public circles alike. Political elites, however, tend to view (potentially) rising numbers of foreigners mainly as a threat to Japan's national security (terrorism) and public safety (crime).

So far, Japan's migration policy has been almost exclusively concerned with immigration control. Only in the fall of 2006 did the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication – as the first government agency in Japan – start to take the concept of the integration (*tōgō*) of foreigners into account when formulating its migration policy. Up until last year, the integration of foreigners living and working in Japan was no matter of political concern. This political vacuum has been filled by numerous migrant support organizations. These civil society organizations (CSOs) are the ones that have »their feet on the ground«, i. e., they know the living and working conditions foreigners in Japan have to cope with. With Japan's migration policy facing reform, more and more CSOs – according to their self-perception – are now trying to influence the policy-making process itself, in order to actively shape the legal framework determining the realities of being a foreigner in Japan. How successful are CSOs in Japan in their quest of political advocacy for foreigners?

This paper tries to answer the question by applying quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. Section two will explain the theoretical background to our mixed-method research approach. Section three will introduce the findings that a survey among migrant support organizations in Japan, which we conducted in spring 2007, shows with regard to the question of how these groups engage in (contentious) activism. Section four will provide a case study of one exemplified CSO in the field by applying four concepts of CSO activism: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics.<sup>1</sup> Section five offers some preliminary conclusions.

1. This case study on CSO activism was previously presented at the International Political Science Association's (IPSA) meeting in Fukuoka in July 2006. The authors are indebted to the audience at this conference, and especially to Patricia Boling, for their most helpful comments.

## 2 Theoretical Background

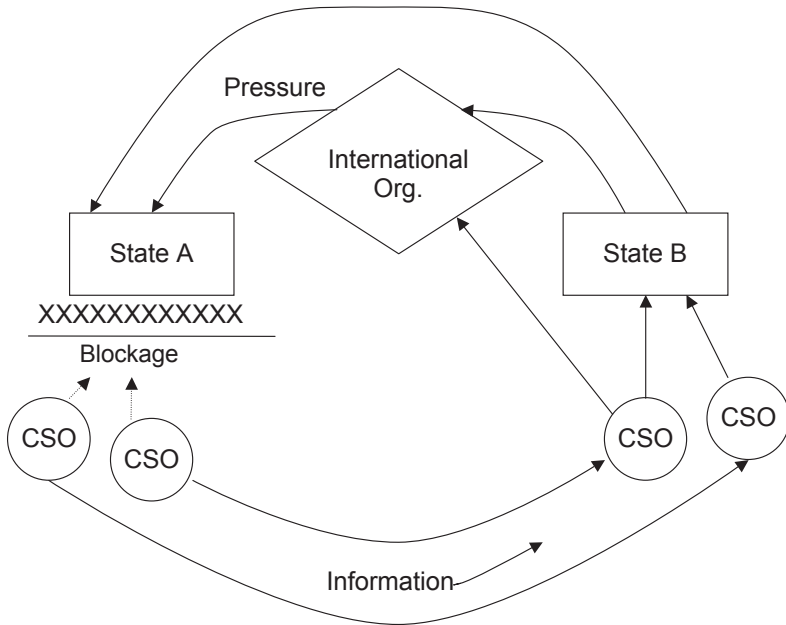
The *migration systems theory* hints at the importance of combining the macro- and micro-structures of migration, i. e. the large-scale institutional factors, and the networks and practices of migrants themselves. This double perspective also takes into account the importance of, for example, cultural and multi-level political factors when explaining migration movements. Building on the *migration systems theory*, we argue that it is the so-called meso-structures, and the transnational meso-structures in particular, that are of importance in shaping current migration realities, and to some degree migration policies themselves. Meso-structures are intermediate mechanisms linking the macro- and micro-levels of migration structures. They mediate between political or economic institutions and migrants. Focusing on the meso-structures of migration puts CSOs at the center of this study, since they are the intermediating links between migrants and national as well as local political elites.

Understanding the ways these intermediating links help shape new immigration policies and improve the living and working conditions of migrants in Japan requires in-depth research not only on the actors themselves, but also on the political opportunity structure the actors find themselves situated in. Both a CSO's internal structures, as well as its political setting (and how the CSOs make use of it), are crucial factors for its success. Social movement literature used to argue that a CSO's life cycle follows a circular model. Social movement researcher Sidney Tarrow calls this model the *cycle of contention*. According to Tarrow (1998: 141–150), every cycle consists of a mobilization phase and a demobilization phase. Each of the two phases consists of three sub-stages: The mobilization phase starts with *conflict and diffusion*, i. e. a certain issue is at some point perceived as contentious by a critical number of people. Once this perception spreads among like-minded people, unrelated groups or even antagonists, a social movement may be sparked. The second stage of the mobilization phase is called *repertoires and frames*. Its most important tasks are to create symbols, frame meanings, and produce ideologies in order to justify collective action. *Increased information and interaction* consummate the mobilization phase: the rise in quantity and quality of information on a social movement, and the interaction between its supporters and the authorities in place, cause political tension to heighten. At this point, new centers of power might evolve. With this step the path toward a polarization of society is already laid. *Exhaustion and polarization* comprise the first stage of the demobilization phase. Exhaustion comes about because of the weariness and disillusionment of social movement activists; polarization due to a decline of participation and the factionalization of the move-

ment. *Violence and institutionalization* follow, i. e. a movement splits into radicals and moderates, often in a conflict over violence. The state reacts toward these developments in the form of *facilitation and repression*. A state's political control of a movement may lead to a sharp rift between a movement's factions: some will take part in negotiations with government authorities, others will split, radicalize further, and eventually be either suppressed or – in rare cases – lead to a revolutionary turn-over of the government.

How can social movements break out of this *cycle of contention*? In other words, how can they persevere despite internal conflicts and state pressure? Recent social movement literature calls our attention to the transnationalization of CSO activism as one way to overcome the seemingly predestined downfall of a contentious movement. According to Tarrow, it has been the spread of mass communications and travel technology that has »sped up the process of transnational diffusion and given organizers new weapons of mobilization« (TARROW 1998: 208). One may ask how these »new weapons of mobilization« function. Social movement researchers Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink argue that transnationalization of CSO activism »can amplify the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena« (KECK and SIKKINK 1998: 13). They call the process by which a CSO intensifies its pressure on the national government via transnational alliance building a *boomerang pattern*. The *boomerang pattern* can prove particularly useful to CSOs in so-called strong states, i. e. in states with a restrictive political opportunity structure. For CSOs in a setting where they are blocked from direct lobbying of state authorities, information exchange and cooperation with CSOs in other states may open up new ways of putting pressure on the targeted government. Demands for responsiveness from this state can be expressed by other states or by international organizations – either way, CSOs in other states can initiate this process of interaction. Keck and Sikkink's *boomerang pattern* – in a slightly revised version (wording and design) – is shown in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: *Boomerang pattern of CSO activism*



Source: KECK and SIKKINK 1998: 13; revisions in wording and design by authors.

In this paper, we will analyze the attempts of Japanese CSOs to revise the nation’s immigration policy and to improve the migrants’ living and working conditions by exposing the processes of transnationalization involved. Our research question is whether Japanese CSOs indeed follow suit by using the new methods of activism that CSOs in other democracies apply.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, do Japanese CSOs make use of transnational activism as a »new weapon[s] of mobilization« (TARROW 1998: 208) which promises to open to them a new avenue of activism aside from the state’s regulatory efforts? Or are Japanese CSOs, in contrast, much more what political scientist Robert Pekkanen (2006) calls »members without advocates«? In other words, is their range of action still tightly controlled by traditional political elites? For the case of Japan, PEKKANEN (2003: 116) argues:

2. The list of case studies on transnational CSO activism is far too long to even attempt to provide a list of relevant literature here. KHAGRAM, RIKER and SIKKINK (2002) might, however, serve as a useful introduction to this topic.

*State structuring of incentives accounts for the pattern of civil society development found today, with state actions promoting one type of group at the same time they have hindered another. Specifically, small, local groups such as neighborhood associations have been promoted by the state; large, independent, professionalized groups such as Greenpeace have faced a much more hostile legal environment.*

Under the state's influence of »molding Japanese civil society«, CSOs in Japan tend to grow large on the local level, the micro-level of activism. There they are strongly backed by high numbers of volunteers, and on a case to case basis may cooperate willingly with state authorities. In certain issue areas such as health care for the elderly, CSOs in Japan openly act as »subcontractors« of the state, i. e. for relatively low fees *borantia* [volunteer] groups perform tasks the state is no longer willing or capable of performing itself.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, CSOs that take up issues of national importance, and attempt to work as advocates for a specific issue group in confrontation with state authorities, also tend to be weakened by how the state shapes and »molds« the political opportunity structure they find themselves situated in. The political opportunity structure may refer, for example, to the legal status CSOs can or cannot obtain – an issue which has been prominently discussed in Japan ever since the Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities (NPO Law) was enacted in 1998.<sup>4</sup> To describe this divergent structure within Japan's CSOs, in his 2006 book Pekkanen coins the phrase »Japan's Dual Civil Society«. A civil society that is strong on a local level, especially when it comes to day-to-day tasks such as service provision, but is weak on a national level of, for example, policy-formation activities, might be expected to show only very few activities in a transnational realm.

Are Japan's CSOs, as Pekkanen argues, indeed confined to this structure of not expanding the strength they show on a local level to the national and transnational sphere? We address this question by highlighting the current debate and activism evolving around immigration policy and improving the living and working conditions of migrants in Japan. Given that immigration is a transnational issue per se, immigration surely is among the first issues, which one could expect transnational activism to occur. The border-crossing movement of people can be expected to bring about border-crossing activism with all its various implications. From this forefront issue this »new weapon[s]« (TARROW 1998: 208) of activism might then diffuse into other issues, bound in a national territory.

3. On the role of NPOs in elderly care in Japan, for example POTTER (forthcoming).

4. For an introduction into the NPO Law, for example, see PEKKANEN (2003: 116–134).

### 3 Survey of Migrant Support Organizations

In February and March 2007, the authors conducted a survey of one hundred migrant support organizations in Japan, previously identified via Internet research. We contacted organizations in the wider Kantō and Kansai areas as well as in numerous other parts of Japan, such as, for example, in the prefectures of Fukuoka and Niigata. We were thus able to collect a sample of organizations from various regions of Japan. In addition, our sample included various kinds of migrant support organizations. Political scientist Apichai Shipper (2006: 275–281) distinguishes six groups of migrant support organizations in Japan: Christian NGOs, community workers' unions, women's support groups, medical NGOs, lawyers' NGOs, and concerned citizen groups. For our survey, we contacted organizations that fitted into any of these groups, in order to gain as broad a picture of migration support activism as possible. We received 22 responses. Of these, two organizations that perceived themselves to be community workers' unions and one women's support group, returned our questionnaire refusing to cooperate. In particular, they refused to lay open data on their networking activities. Thus, we analyzed a sample of 19 organizations.

Our survey contained 28 questions (in English language only). We started with questions addressing the size of the organizations, their budgets and goals, in order to be able to roughly categorize the organizations themselves. The following set of questions inquired into their legal status. We aimed at identifying in particular whether or not obtaining an NPO status – often said to be a watershed event for CSOs in Japan – would indeed have any impact on the size, budgets and goals of the organizations. With the next set of questions we aimed at mapping the networks that the organizations maintained to other organizations. Then, we explicitly inquired on their contacts to political elites, i. e. their lobbying activities. Finally, we asked questions dealing with the self-assessment of the organizations and their evaluations of the general living and working conditions of migrants in Japan.

In the following, we will introduce a few selected survey questions and their results in the form of graphs. We will interpret these results against the background of our research question on the internal structures and methods of activism of CSOs in Japan.<sup>5</sup>

5. The full survey is available in the DIJ Working Paper Series (VOGT and LERSCH 2007).

FIGURE 2: *What is the purpose of your organization?*

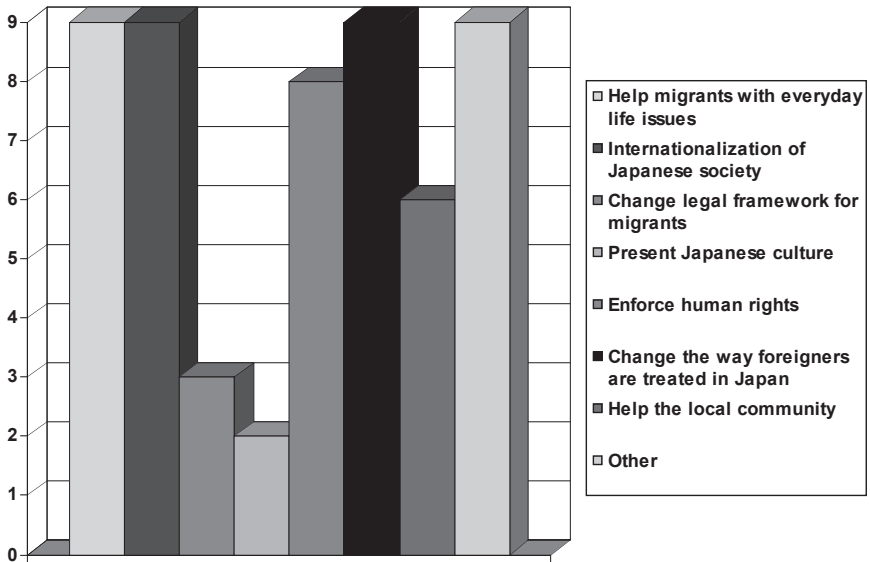


FIGURE 3: *Which means do you apply to achieve your purposes?*

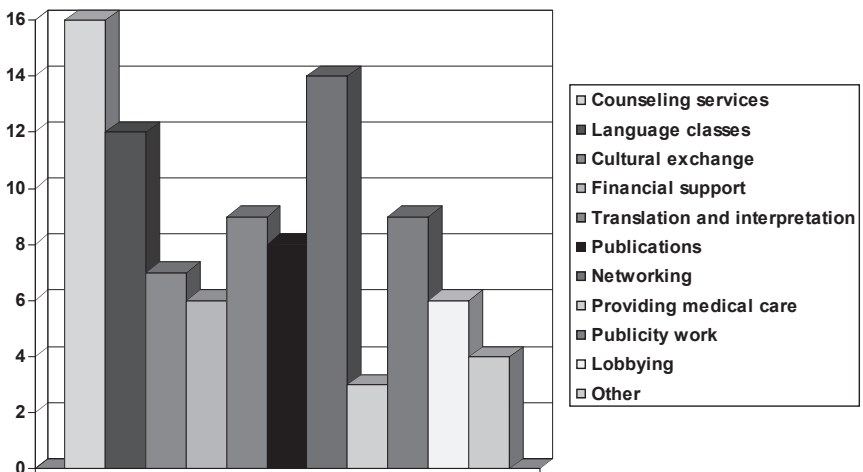
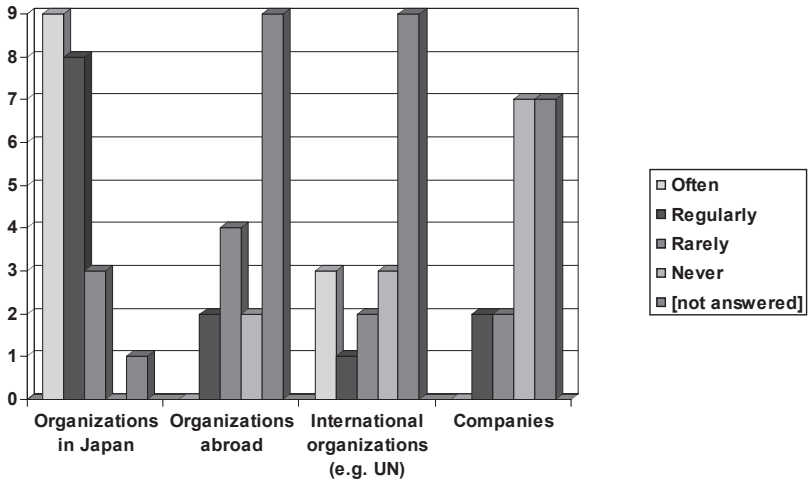




FIGURE 4: Which of the following groups are you working with?



The majority of organizations in our survey gave »help migrants with everyday life issues«, »internationalization of Japanese society«, and »change the way foreigners are treated in Japan« as their main purposes of activism. These three most often ticked purposes are directly linked to improving the living and working conditions of foreigners in Japan. Most of the groups (53%) had initially assessed the general living conditions for foreigners in Japan to be either »bad« or »very bad«. Thus concentrating their activities on improving this situation is a consistent decision. Furthermore, Figure 2 tells us that the organizations put less effort into purposes such as »change legal framework for migrants« or »enforce human rights«. This means, rather than acting as migrants' advocates within the political decision making process, the organizations engage in activities of service provision at a grass-roots-level. The domestic political process (»change legal framework for migrants«) is even less cared for or maybe less accessible than the international one (»enforce human rights«). There might be two reasons for this divergence: First, the engagement in activities that evolve around securing compliance of national politics with international norms brings with it a high national and international reputation, which is desirable for CSOs. This holds true especially since many CSOs in Japan are struggling with issues of credibility. Secondly, engagement in these activities is more likely to succeed than engagement in activities solely around national issues,

since it offers many opportunities for transnational alliance building with CSOs facing similar issues abroad.

Most organizations (84%) name »counselling services« as a means they employ to achieve their purposes. 63% of them provide language classes. Again, this shows that migrant support organizations in Japan are much more concerned with the day-to-day needs of migrants than with the actual policy formation process shaping the living and working conditions of migrants. Rather surprisingly, 74% of all organizations name »networking« as a means to achieve their purposes. Digging deeper into the concept of networking, we asked which groups the organizations were working with. 89% responded that they were »often« or »regularly« cooperating with »organizations in Japan«. Hardly any of them, however, cooperated with »organizations abroad«, »international organizations« or »companies«. This shows that migrant support organizations in Japan not only perceive themselves to be service-providing institutions but also seek help and cooperation from organizations that are geographically, structurally and ideologically »close-by«.

With regard to the goals they pursue, the means they employ and the cooperation partners they choose, Japanese migrant support organizations seem to be very much »down-to-earth«. They choose local and small-scale activities rather than nationwide or even transnational engagement in larger or more abstract activism. In order to explore this hypothesis further, we examined the cross-relations between the networking and/or lobbying activities of organizations, and their respective number of volunteers, salaried staff, and funding.

FIGURE 5: *Contact to political actors by number of volunteers*

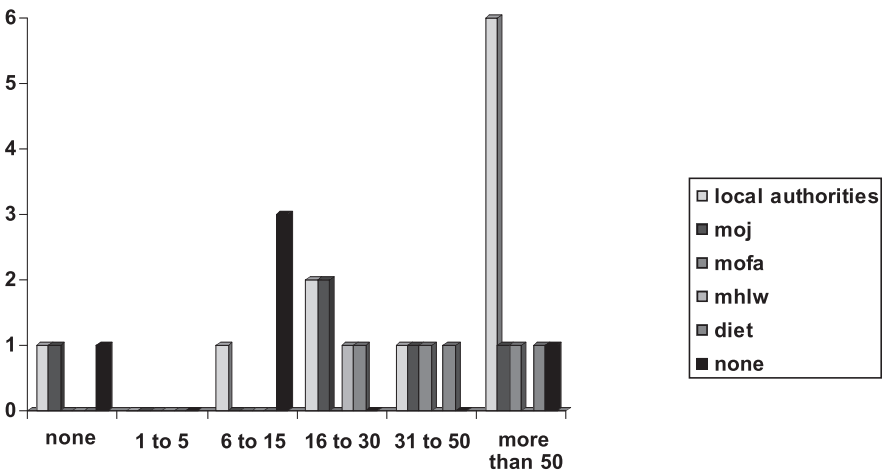


FIGURE 6: *Contact to political actors by number of salaried staff*

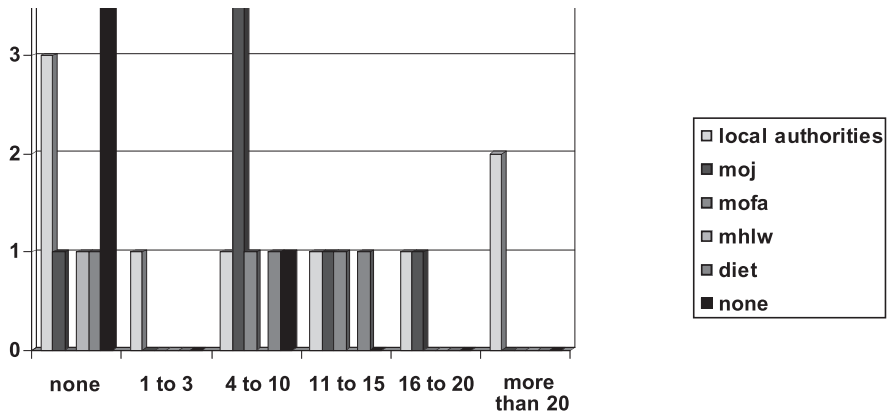


FIGURE 7: *Number of salaried staff and funding*

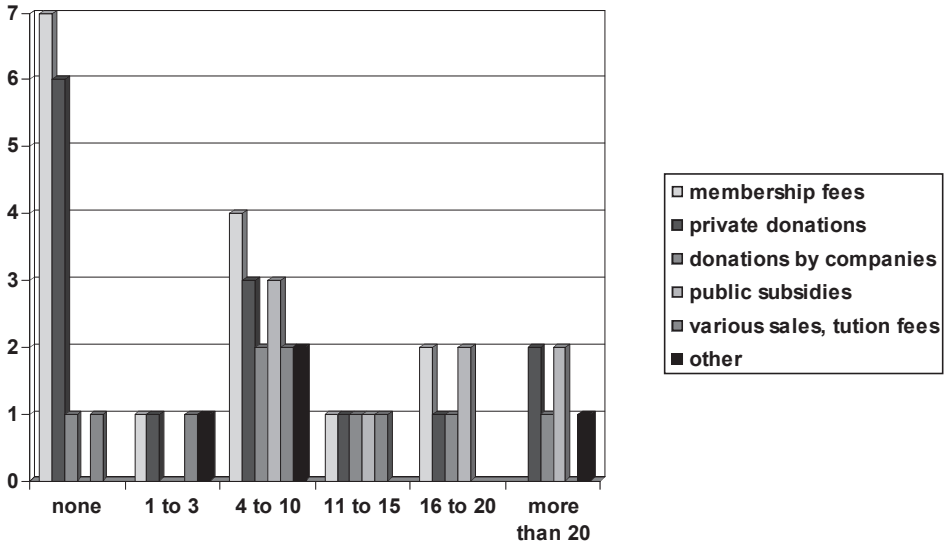


Figure 5 shows an increase in contacts to local authorities paralleling an increase in the numbers of volunteers of migrant support organizations. There might be two reasons for this correlation: First, an increasing number of volunteers means an organization has more resources at its disposal. These are resources in terms of »workforce« and/or finances – assuming that membership fees are a significant part of an organization's income, which Figure 7 hints at. With the number of volunteers increasing, organizations will become more and more able to implement larger projects that may include local authorities. Secondly, shifting our viewpoint toward the local authorities, they will be more interested in cooperating with organizations with high numbers of volunteers. These organizations seem to be popular, and more credible and reliable than smaller groups. They are, thus, a better partner in cooperation when it comes, for example, to service provision in the local areas.

An increase in salaried staff does not clearly show the same effects. We cannot observe an increase in contacts between organizations and local authorities with a rising number of salaried staff; although there is a slight tendency of an increase in contacts between organizations and government agencies (mainly the Ministry of Justice) which correlates with rising numbers of salaried staff. And yet the correlation is not as clear as one might have expected. Our survey results show that even rising numbers of salaried staff do not necessarily mean a rising level of professionalism in terms of lobbying activities to local and national political actors.<sup>6</sup> Figure 7 shows some financial connections in terms of public subsidies between state authorities and organizations with more than four salaried staff members. These connections, however, are not reflected in how these organizations choose their cooperation partners.

The picture of migrant support organizations in Japan gained through our survey shows organizations that choose to address issues that are important in terms of improving the living and working conditions of migrants rather than revising immigration policy and/or the legal framework of migration to Japan. The organizations are deeply rooted in their service-providing character, and rarely seek to act as political advocates. They almost exclusively cooperate on a case-to-case basis with other organizations within Japan. While organizations with more than 50 volunteers tend to have frequent contact with the local authorities, neither they nor organizations with salaried staff have much contact with national political actors. This again leads us to conclude that service provision on a local level is what these organizations choose to do rather than political advocacy. We need to ask the

6. This result stands in contrast to Pekkanen's findings on increasing numbers of salaried staff members generally triggering a higher level of professional advocacy activities (PEKKANEN 2006: 32–46).

following question: Is this choice a voluntary one, or is it much more the result of opting for the only available avenue to participate in migrant support? Are the organizations simply blocked from lobbying activities through a tight political opportunity structure? In answer to our survey question on whether or not organizations try to influence political decision making processes with their work, 63% answered that they do. Thus, it seems that the the political opportunity structure that actually prevents them from acting as political advocates. This holds true for small, ad-hoc groups and organizations incorporated as NPOs alike. We were unable to identify discrepancies in terms of advocacy activities between NPOs and other organizations. Incorporation under the NPO Law does not seem to necessarily provide a more direct lobbying access to political actors.

#### 4 Case Study of Ijuren

Having drawn the general picture of the character of Japan's migration support organizations, we will turn to a case study that highlights a CSO in this field, which explicitly defines itself as an advocacy network rather than a group concerned with tasks of service provision: the Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan [translation by the group] (SMJ). The Japanese name of this organization reads *Ijuren*, short for *Ijurōdōsha to rentai suru zenkoku nettowāku* (Nationwide network for solidarity with migrant workers). It was founded in 1997 in response to a nationwide conference held in Fukuoka in 1996 which focused on the issue of how to improve the working and living conditions of foreigners in Japan.<sup>7</sup> *Ijuren* has not yet applied for NPO status; it operates as an informal network supported by individuals and CSOs. The organization has one full-time staff member, co-founder and chairperson Manami Yano<sup>8</sup>; several volunteers work for the group, one or two of them work in the main office (located in the *Tomisaka Christian Center* in Tokyo's Bunko ward), and a larger number of volunteers work from home or »out in the field«. There are several co-representatives in *Ijuren*, namely Keiko Otsu of *Women's Shelter HELP*, Masao Niwa of *RINK (Rights of Immigrants Network in Kansai)*, Satoshi Murayama of *Kanagawa City Union*, Kazumi Moriki of *Asian Women's Empowerment Project*, Shigeru Yui of *Asian Labor Solidarity* and Hidetoshi Watanabe of *Kalabaw-No-Kai*.

7. The Fukuoka national conference followed in the tradition of several regional conferences on related issues, the first one of which was held in Japan's Kantō region in 1991. Since 1996 nationwide conferences have been held on a yearly basis; the most recent one took place in Tokyo on June 9/10, 2007.

8. In summer 2007 Torii Ippei, head of Zentōitsu Workers' Union, took over as *Ijuren's* chairperson.

*Ijuren* states the following three goals as its mission: »*tsukuru / tsunagaru / tsu-taeru*.« It translates this mission statement into English as »advocacy / networking / publicity.« By »advocacy« *Ijuren* means it wants to be a public voice that is heard, on the state level, in the debate on reforming immigration policies, i. e. it seeks to lobby relevant political parties and ministries. It also desires to empower local groups involved in the day to day, grassroots level work of creating decent living and working conditions for foreigners. *Ijuren* explains »networking«, the second field of its engagement, as »*zenkoku fōramu, ajia nettowāku ni yoru kyanpēn nado*« [campaigning through a nationwide forum and an Asian network]. *Ijuren* elaborates on its border-crossing activities as follows:

»*Nihon kokunai no NGO dake de ha naku, ajia chiiki no nettowāku soshiki ya kaigai no dantai, NGO to jōhō kōkan ya kyanpēn ya ibento kaisai nado wo okonatte imasu.*«<sup>9</sup>

The third main field of *Ijuren*'s activities is dedicated to »publicity«. The group maintains its own website, which provides information on the issue of foreign workers in Japan; ongoing events; the texts of national laws and international conventions; a FAQ section; an exhaustive collection of links to obtain further information. *Ijuren*'s (2007, Internet) website operates in four languages – Japanese, English, Korean, and Tagalog. However, the quantity of information available in each language varies, as does the frequency of updates of the various sites. Furthermore, *Ijuren*'s active or supporting members receive a free subscription to the group's bimonthly newsletter, the so-called »Migrant's Netto« [Migrant's net], and access to an e-mailing list, called »migrant-j«, which *Ijuren* maintains. Annual membership fees are 12 000 Yen for groups, and 6 000 Yen for individuals. Membership fees and donations are *Ijuren*'s main source of income; in addition, they also rely on contributions in kind by church organizations and private citizens.

We shall have a closer look at *Ijuren*'s activities according to the four key concepts of CSO activism – information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. Bearing in mind the *boomerang pattern* as a »new weapon[s] of mobilization« (TARROW 1998: 208), we will focus particularly on *Ijuren*'s transnational activities. By means of qualitative content analysis, we examine *Ijuren*'s publications (»Migrant Netto«; »migrant-j«; website updates) from March to June 2006, the time frame during which there was intensified debate in the public and political arenas on revising Japan's immigration policy.

9. Authors' translation: »We exchange information, share campaigns and hold events not only with NGOs all over Japan, but also with network organizations in Asian regions and with other overseas groups.«

Information provided by CSOs generally needs to meet two criteria: First, it must be reliable and well documented in order to be credible. Secondly, it also has to be dramatic and timely in order to gain attention. *Ijuren* seems to meet both these requirements: its website is updated with information on ongoing events on a regular basis, the bimonthly »Migrant Netto« sums up and discusses the latest political developments in migration policy, and »migrant-j«, *Ijuren's* e-mailing-list, sends out an average of three to four messages a day to keep its members informed again about ongoing events, such as conferences and demonstrations, as well as to call for their participation. The list is unmoderated, i. e. information can be sent not only by *Ijuren's* chairperson, but also by any of its members, many of whom are activists in other CSOs. Only hours after the Upper House's May 9 hearings on revisions of Japan's Immigration Law, which follows some of the US counter-terrorism measures, such as fingerprinting of foreigners upon arrival to Japan, one member of the e-mailing-list, himself an activist with the Saitama-based »119 Network for Foreigners«, posted his own personal minutes of the hearing, i. e. of the Q&A between Justice Minister Seiken Sugiura and selected members of the Upper House's juridical consulting committee, namely Shōzen Tanigawa, Kantarō Koba, Keiko Chiba, Tōru Matsuoka, Sōhei Nihi, and Ikuo Kamei. In short, the data available via this e-mailing list is very rich. Bearing in mind that both the magazine and the e-mailing list are, however, available only to *Ijuren's* members, the amount of information the group provides to the general public is significantly lower than the amount provided to persons sympathetic to its activities. This members-only type of information politics proves problematic, once the political struggle over information becomes, as it has today, a defining force in the distribution of power among political actors. Moreover, it is also not favorable for initiating *conflict and diffusion*, i. e. spreading knowledge on a contentious issue, which – according to Tarrow's concept of *cycles of contention*, introduced in section two – has the potential to spark off a broad social movement. Given a CSO's setting in the political opportunity structure, in which access to and distribution of information are crucial factors in shaping public opinion and setting the political agenda domestically and transnationally, the policy of withholding information from public access comes as a surprise.

Closely connected to information politics is the second of the four aspects to be discussed here, namely symbolic politics. Shaping symbols of activism or interpreting symbolic events can become a catalyst for the growth of networks. This means that symbols and symbolic events are part of the process of issue framing a CSO undergoes in what Tarrow calls its mobilization phase. KECK and SIKKINK (1998: 22) classify symbolic interpretation as a »process of persuasion by which networks

create awareness and expand their constituencies.« The Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) campaign against visa overstayers as shown in Figure 8, makes some use of the power of symbols when it illustrates a walking man – an undocumented foreigner coming to Japan? – in the shape of what is to be understood as the Chinese character 人 [person]. The pamphlet claims that there are 220,000 undocumented foreigners currently in Japan. Although the number has recently fallen, it is still considered to be a threat to Japan, as signaled by the red color of the eye-catching combination of Latin numbers, Chinese character and the picture/character of the walking man. *Ijuren's* work on symbolic politics contrasts strongly with MOJ's pamphlet. In its pamphlets as well as in its bimonthly magazine, the main symbolic element *Ijuren* chooses are portraits of smiling non-Japanese, thus sending the message that multiculturalism is interesting, sympathetic, in short: positive. However, *Ijuren* has no strong and eye-catching symbol for its activism that could have the power to trigger attention among the general public in Japan, and/or in the migrant's countries of origins. Its banner is a yellowish square in which »SMJ« is written in large letters; it includes its full name in English and Japanese in smaller letters. A curved orange stripe runs through the larger letters, which could possibly be interpreted as a shooting star. *Ijuren's* rather neutral banner can, among others, be found on the top page of the *Asian Migrant Centre's* website (2007, Internet), thus linking *Ijuren* to this Asia-wide setting of transnationally engaged CSOs.

Thirdly, leverage politics measures the effectiveness of a CSO, i. e. it is a tool for determining to what degree a CSO's target actors (government agencies, private corporations, and international organizations) respond to their demands. Social movement literature distinguishes between material leverage and moral leverage. Material leverage links the issue at stake to money or goods; moral leverage involves the »mobilization of shame« (KECK and SIKKINK 1998: 23), i. e. the target actor and its responsiveness are forced into the spotlight of (international) media coverage. The more vulnerable a state is toward this material and moral pressure, the more effective a CSO can be. Issues that revolve around either bodily harm to vulnerable individuals or legal equality of opportunity generally trigger the highest responsiveness in states, since they exert moral pressure in terms of normative and juridical logic. Living and working conditions of foreigners in Japan is an issue which combines both the normative and the juridical aspects. *Ijuren* has managed to make public its engagement in combating human rights violations against foreigners in Japan by being included in the list of Asian CSOs that actively promote the quality of life of migrants. This list is provided by *humantrafficking.org*, an online platform implemented by the *Academy for International Development* (2007, Internet), an institution funded by the US State Department. However, *Ijuren* – and



FIGURE 8: MOJ campaign against illegal foreign workers: sample pamphlet

それでも、

Year	Number of Illegal Foreign Workers (Estimated)
2001	23.5
2002	22.8
2003	22.0
2004	21.5
2005	20.5

22万人

## ルールを守って国際化

外国人の不法就労防止にご協力ください。

年々減少の傾向にあります。それでも不法滞在外国人は220,000人（うち不法残留者は193,000人）にのぼると推定されています。これは日本における中都市の人口と同程度の数であり、その多くが不法就労に従事していると推定されています。

**2006** 法務省入国管理局

**不法就労外国人対策キャンペーン**

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other CSOs in the field – have not managed to frame the issue of foreigners in Japan, as well as Japanese immigration policy, contentiously enough to increase domestic public concern toward government policies. Transnational issue framing has also had little impact so far on the target actors, here mainly MOJ's, reactions or on general public opinion. On the contrary, an opinion poll conducted by the Prime Minister's Office (2004, Internet) in May 2004 showed that the majority (53.1%) of Japanese view the »*gaikokujin rōdōsha mondai*« [issue of foreign workers] with great concern. This is up from 49% in 2001, and 48.6% in 1991. The steady increase in Japanese citizens who perceive foreign workers in Japan as a threat to public safety and national security, reflects the government's stance on this issue, and supports the government's argument for the need of a stricter immigration policy. *Ijuren's* and other CSO's activities in terms of leverage politics (whether material or moral) have not managed to impose strong pressure on its target actors.

Fourth, accountability politics can be seen as a follow-up to leverage politics: A target actor has to be put under material and moral pressure strong enough to move him to make public statements on policy guidelines; if he does not follow these guidelines, the pressuring CSO can »expose the distance between discourse and practice« (KECK and SIKKINK 1998: 24), thus embarrassing the target actor in the eyes of the public. In short, neither *Ijuren* nor other CSOs in the area of immigration policy have so far managed to impose accountability politics onto one of their target actors. A public statement by MOJ in mid-June 2006 which offered to hear the opinions of those concerned about the revision of Japan's immigration policies is the closest Japan's CSOs have come in terms of accountability politics. MOJ (2006b, Internet) has made the preliminary results of its in-house commission under Senior Vice-Justice Minister Tarō Kōno publicly available as a PDF file on its website. The site that provides the link to the PDF file also contains a call for sending in opinions on these suggested revisions of the Immigration Law. However, hearing somebody's opinion (*minnasama no goiken wo matometai to kangaete imasu*) is still a long way from showing responsiveness toward external political pressure.

To sum up this brief case study on *Ijuren's* activities in the area of shaping new immigration policy in Japan, we need to ask mainly whether, and if so, how, they make use of transnational exchange of information and building of alliances, i. e. is the *boomerang pattern* relevant to them? *Ijuren* attempts to put pressure on the target actors in question, not so much by following on government agencies themselves, but on the members of Japan's Lower and Upper Houses, and on the members of the respective juridical consulting committees in particular. Right before the meeting of the Upper House juridical consulting committees on April 27<sup>th</sup> and May

9<sup>th</sup> in 2006, for example, *Ijuren*'s supporters initiated demonstrations and sought personal interviews with committee members, in particular with those belonging to parties other than the LDP. This is because those members' responsiveness is – according to YANO (2006/4/10, Interview) – generally higher than that of the members of the ruling party/parties. Given the limited (financial) resources of the group and Japan's political opportunity structure, which is generally tight for non-state actors, direct lobbying access for *Ijuren* is limited. To some degree, the group makes use of transnational exchange of information and alliance building; its activities are, however, not coercive enough to put pressure on the national government in form of a *boomerang pattern*. One could, for example, have expected the group to join the bandwagon of press coverage on the Diène report on xenophobia in Japan, which triggered some public interest in Japan when it was published.<sup>10</sup> This did not happen. Neither direct CSO pressure on the national government, (i. e. domestically), nor indirect pressure, (i. e. transnationally,) trigger the target actors' responsiveness at this point.

## 5 Conclusions

The in-depth look at *Ijuren* as one of the main CSOs in advocating for issues revolving around foreigners in Japan backs the results of our survey in spring 2007: CSOs in Japan mainly »act local and think local«. This holds true even for migrant support organizations. Given the fact that immigration and emigration are border-crossing issues per se, an approach of »act transnational and think transnational« would seem to be the more natural choice for them. Yet, we found that migrant support organizations mainly focus their activities on local-level service provision. Political advocacy occurs on a case to case basis, and also on a local level. It rarely occurs on a national or even transnational level, not even among CSOs with salaried staff, which could be expected to move more skilfully within the political realm.

Migrant support organizations barely make use of transnational advocacy, a method of CSO mobilization and activism that, as comparative research from other

10. UNHCHR special rapporteur Doudou Diène, who visited Japan in summer 2005, published his research results in January 2006 in a final report titled *Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and all Forms of Discrimination* (UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS 2006, Internet). The report concludes that there is racism, (racial) discrimination and xenophobia in Japan. It calls upon the Japanese government to acknowledge its existence and to show the political will to combat it. In addition, a national anti-discrimination law should be passed and implemented, and a commission for equality and human rights be established. Finally, Diène asks the Japanese government to revise its policies regarding the writing and teaching of history.

regions shows, indeed seems to be a »new weapon[s]« (TARROW 1998: 208) for CSOs struggling to act as the counterparts of strong states. To some degree migrant support organizations even engage in contentious activism and not solely service-provision activities, but they seem to be stuck in Tarrow's *cycle of contention*, i. e. a movement's mobilization around a specific topic is generally followed by its demobilization through state pressure. Japan's civil society indeed reflects a dual structure (PEKKANEN 2006): highly active in service provision, highly passive in advocacy. This duality is the result far less of a choice made by the CSOs, but much more of restrictions imposed by Japan's tight political opportunity structure. The crux of the matter, however, is that in order to bypass this political opportunity structure, CSOs would need to expand their range of activism beyond the local level – a step toward transnationalism, which seems to be a step too far ahead for today's CSOs in Japan.

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