

Annual VSJF Conference 2023 Program

Labor and (Im)mobility in Japan and East and Southeast Asia: Transnational, Regional and Rural-Urban Perspectives

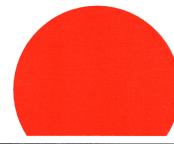
Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB), November 3-5, 2023

Lifetime full-time employment and the male breadwinner model have been recognized as key characteristics of the Japanese employment system. Nevertheless, demographic change, urbanization, and deregulation in employment have led to adjustments in the employment system, including the integration of women, the elderly, and international and internal migrants. At the same time, gendered forms of regular and irregular employment continue to persist in the Japanese labor market. This phenomenon is not unique to Japan, but can also be observed in other Asian economies, such as South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore, which are exposed to similar economic, demographic and social changes. Some Asian economies undergo internal migration from rural to industrial or business centers or experience international migration from economically developing countries. Furthermore, travel restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic and economic and social uncertainties have led to career, geographical, and social (im)mobility within and beyond borders. To shed light on these developments, this conference reconsiders how workers experience (im)mobility within/beyond borders, how they grapple with new work styles (such as remote work) and how employers, governments, or other non-state actors shape labor and employment in contemporary East and Southeast Asia.

The conference examines the complex interlinkages of (im)mobility and labor with demographic change, rural decline, the emergence of global cities and (offshore) economic zones, and the subsequent socio-cultural change in East and Southeast Asia. It provides a platform for discussing emerging trends and unexpected developments captured by empirical research on labor and (im)mobility within East and Southeast Asian economies. Doing so the conference aims at driving theoretical advancements of the way socio-economic, cultural and demographic changes are interwoven and mutually affecting. This interdisciplinary, multifaceted approach problematizes simplistic dichotomies such as migration from the Global South to the Global North or upward social mobility through rural-urban migration. The conference seeks to disentangle local/municipal, national, and transnational processes of labor and (im)mobility in Japan and the wider region.

The conference is organized by Ruth Achenbach (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany), Helena Hof (University of Zurich / Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany), Aimi Muranaka (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany), Joohyun Justine Park (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany), Megha Wadhwa (Free University of Berlin, Germany), JDZB and VSJF.

The conference is partially funded by Toshiba International Foundation.



Friday, November 3

14:00-14:30 Welcome and Opening

14:30-15:30 Keynote Speech

- Biao Xiang (Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany) “Systemic Involution: Cynicism and Faith in Transnational Labor Outmigration from China to Other Asian countries”

15:30-16:00 Coffee Break

16:00-17:30 Panel 1: Internal Migration in Japan

Chair: Megha Wadhwa (Free University of Berlin, Germany)

- Wolfram Manzenreiter (University of Vienna, Austria) “Who’s Working the Fields? Rural Labor Mobility in Japan”
- Cornelia Reiher (Free University of Berlin, Germany) “(In)visible Newcomers: Migrants in Rural Japan”
- Lynn Ng (Free University of Berlin, Germany) “The Role of Entrepreneurs in Revitalizing Fukushima’s Former Exclusion Zones”

18:00-20:30 Welcome Dinner

Saturday, November 4

9:00-10:30 Panel 2: Transnational (Labor) Migration

Chair: Joohyun Justine Park (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

- David Chiavacci (University of Zurich, Switzerland) “Controlled Opening: Immigration Policy in East Asia”
- Fabian Jintae Froese (University of Göttingen, Germany) “Challenges and Opportunities for Female Expatriates in Asia”
- Sonya Sunyoung Park (University of Bamberg, Germany): “Forming My Own Transnationalism: Identity Contestation and Negotiation of Korean Migrants in Germany during COVID-19 Restrictions in 2020”
- Sakura Yamamura (RWTH Aachen University, Germany) “Transnational Labor Migration in Asia and Beyond: Dynamics of Global Urbanization and Mobilities”

10:30-11:00 Coffee Break

11:00-12:30 Panel 3: “Gender/Intersectionality”

Chair: Aimi Muranaka (University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany)

- Yuki Seidler (University of Vienna, Austria) “An Immigrant Mother of a European Child: Perinatal Acculturation Experiences, Dual Identity Change and Implication to Career (Im)mobility among East Asian Women in Austria”
- Nanase Shiota (University of Cambridge, UK) “Precarious Stepping-Stones: Japanese Hostesses in London and their Labour, Career and Mobility”
- An Huy Tran (Bielefeld University, Germany) “The Myth of Gender Mobility in Transnational Migration: the Case of Male Vietnamese Migrants in Contemporary Japan”
- Lenka Vyletalova (Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic) “Mapping the Transnational Migration of Highly Skilled Japanese Women in Dual Career Couple Context: a Conflict or a Confluence of Career and Family Trajectories?”

12:30-14:00 Lunch

14:00-16:00 VSJF Fachgruppen/VSJF Section Meetings

16:00-16:30 Coffee Break

16:30-18:00 General Meeting of the VSJF

18:00-20:00 Buffet Reception

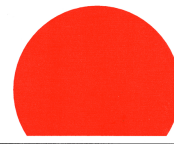
Sunday, November 5

09:30-11:00 Panel 4: Youth Mobility/Immobility

Chair: Ruth Achenbach (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany)

- Maria Nolan (University of London, UK) “Studying Abroad and Staying ‘at Home’: Reflections on International Higher Education and Migration among Students and Young Graduates in Urban China
- Vanessa Tkotzyk (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany) “Japanese Students and Working Holiday Makers: Study and Working Holiday Visa as Means to Permanent Settlement”
- Ruixin Wei (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany) “Middling Student Mobility: the Shifting Infrastructures of Chinese Students Studying in South Korea”

11:00-11:30 Coffee Break



11:30-13:00 Roundtable: Labor and (Im)mobility in Japan and East and Southeast Asia

Chair: Helena Hof (University of Zurich / Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany)

- Dong-Hoon Seol (Jeonbuk National University, South Korea)
- Hirohisa Takenoshita (Keio University, Japan)
- Yen-Fen Tseng (National Taiwan University, Taiwan)

13:00-13:30 Concluding Remarks