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## VSJF ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

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# LABOR AND (IM)MOBILITY IN JAPAN AND EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA: TRANSNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND RURAL-URBAN PERSPECTIVES

Organized by

**Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA)**

and

**German Association for Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF)**

in cooperation with

**Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB)**

**Friday–Sunday, November 3–5, 2023**

**Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB)**

**Saargemünder Str. 2, 14195 Berlin**



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## THE CONFERENCE

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 and Taiwan, 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),

and **VSJF**, in cooperation with **JDZB**.

The conference is partially funded by the **German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)**, the **German Research Foundation (DFG)** and **Toshiba International Foundation**.



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## Friday, November 3, 2023

13:30 Registration

### 14:00–14:30 **Welcome and Opening**

JDZB: Julia Münch

VSJF: Harald Conrad and Anna Wiemann

QuaMaFA: Aimi Muranaka

### 14:30–15:30 **Keynote Speech**

Moderator: Helena Hof

#### **Systemic Involution: Cynicism and Faith in Transnational Labor Out-migration from China to other Asian Countries**

Biao Xiang *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany*

15:30–16:00 Coffee Break

### 16:00–17:30 **Panel 1: Internal Migration in Japan**

Chair: Megha Wadhwa *Free University of Berlin, Germany*

#### **Who's Working the Fields? Rural Labor Mobility in Japan**

Wolfram Manzenreiter *University of Vienna, Austria*

#### **(In)visible Newcomers: Migrants in Rural Japan**

Cornelia Reiher *Free University of Berlin, Germany*

#### **The Role of Entrepreneurs in Revitalizing Fukushima's Former Exclusion Zones**

Lynn Ng *Free University of Berlin, Germany*

18:00–20:30 Welcome Dinner

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## Saturday, November 4, 2023

### 9:00–10:30 **Panel 2: Transnational (Labor) Migration**

Chair: Joohyun Justine Park *Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany*

#### **Controlled Opening: Immigration Policy in East Asia**

David Chiavacci *University of Zurich, Switzerland*

#### **Challenges and Opportunities for Female Expatriates in Asia**

Fabian Jintae Froese *University of Göttingen, Germany*

#### **Forming My Own Transnationalism: Identity Contestation and Negotiation of Korean Migrants in Germany during COVID-19 Restrictions in 2020–2021**

Sonya Sunyoung Park *University of Bamberg, Germany*

#### **Transnational Labor Migration in Asia and Beyond: Dynamics of Global Urbanization and Mobilities**

Sakura Yamamura *RWTH Aachen University, Germany*

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

### 11:00–12:30 **Panel 3: Gender/Intersectionality**

Chair: Aimi Muranaka *University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany*

#### **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**

Yuki Seidler *University of Vienna, Austria*

#### **Precarious Stepping-Stones: Japanese Hostesses in London and Their Labour, Career and Mobility**

Nanase Shirota *University of Cambridge, UK*

#### **The Myth of Gender Mobility in Transnational Migration: the Case of Male Vietnamese Migrants in Contemporary Japan**

An Huy Tran *Bielefeld University, Germany*

#### **Mapping the Transnational Migration of Highly Skilled Japanese Women in Dual Career Couple Context: a Conflict or a Confluence of Career and Family Trajectories?**

Lenka Vyleťalová *Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic*

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



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## Sunday, November 5, 2023

### 9:30–11:00 **Panel 4: Youth Mobility/Immobility**

Chair: Ruth Achenbach *Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany*

#### **Studying Abroad and Staying ‘at Home’: Reflections on International Higher Education and Migration among Students and Young Graduates in Urban China**

Maria Nolan *University of London, UK*

#### **Japanese Students and Working Holiday Makers: Student and Working Holiday Visa as Means to Permanent Settlement?**

Vanessa Tkotzyk *Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany*

#### **Middling Student Mobility: the Shifting Infrastructures of Chinese Students Studying in South Korea**

Ruixin Wei *Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany*

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**

Ruth Achenbach

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### ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHIES

**Biao Xiang** 项飙 is Director of the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Germany. He has worked on migration and political economy, and is currently exploring a “common concerns” approach in social research.

#### ***Systemic Involution: Cynicism and Faith in Transnational Labour Outmigration from China to other Asian Countries***

**Abstract:** Labour migration from China to other Asian countries since the 1990s, particularly to Japan, South Korea, and Singapore, is managed by complicated government regulations and long chains of commercial brokers. Migrants and low-level brokers are cynical about this structure: they are convinced that everyone wants to gain the most from others, including by circumventing rules. But, as resentful as they are towards other (higher-level) brokers and government regulators, migrants and low-level brokers believe that the system is fundamentally just and is able to redressing injustice.

This article tackles how this situation came about through the notion of “systemic involution”: the trend that the recruitment process becomes ever more complicated, and that both migrants and brokers invest in the elaboration rather than breaking with it and are therefore trapped in the system. Apart from the built-in self-perpetuating tendency in hierarchical relations that contributes to systemic involution, a distinct feature in the present case is constant policy adjustments by the central government. These policy changes are to a great extent responses to societal demands, particularly for widening the access to overseas job market and for providing better protection to migrants. These changes enhance state legitimacy. But the goals (more migrants and better protection) are contradictory in practice. In order to implement both, government complicate the procedures of recruitment, for instance allowing for more commercial brokers and at the same time differentiating them according to their capacities and subjecting them to different, detailed regulations. This prolonged the chains of brokers, gave more power to some brokers as gatekeepers, and increased migrants’ cost. Migrants however continue relying on brokers partly because they believe that the state will step in to help if they are mistreated, a faith that they know is not guaranteed but they do not want to give up. Everyone is cynical about each other, but collectively they believe in the system. Individual ambition is converted into investment in maintaining the systemic order.



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**Wolfram Manzenreiter** (Ph.D., Vienna) is Professor of Japanese Studies and Head of Department of East Asian Studies, University of Vienna. He is author of several books and numerous articles and book chapter on social and anthropological aspects of sports, emotions, work and migration in contemporary Japan. His current research interests include happiness, mobilities and the diversity of lifeways in the peripheries of a globalized world. He recently published the co-edited volumes on *Japan's New Ruralities. Coping with Decline in the Periphery* (Routledge 2020), and *Japan through the Lens of the Tokyo Olympics* (Routledge 2020).

### ***Who's Working the Fields? Rural Labor Mobility in Japan***

**Abstract:** For many decades Japan's agricultural system suffered from the double impact of social aging and rural outmigration. The steady increase of farm operations terminating business and large areas of abandoned farmland have enhanced general concerns about the country's low level of food self-sufficiency. To address the structural problems of Japan's agricultural production system based on owner farm households, the Japanese government introduced numerous reforms over the past 15 years to rise efficiency levels and productivity base of farming units. To some degree, the sharp decline in self-employed farmers is met by a new interest in rural life and a drastic change in immigration politics to meet the growing demand for employed labour. To understand who is working the fields in these turbulent years of change, I will analyse government statistics (mainly from the agricultural census and the national census) for regional and other structural patterns. The goal of this presentation is to grasp characteristics of the changing population of regular and seasonal workers on the farms and the fluidity of rural labor mobility in the newly emerging farm labour market.

**Cornelia Reiher** is professor of Japanese Studies at Freie Universität Berlin and PI of the research project "Urban-rural migration and rural revitalization in Japan" that is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Her main research interests include rural Japan, migration, food studies, globalization, digitalization and method education. Recent publications include the co-edited methods handbook (with Nora Kottmann) *Studying Japan: Handbook of research designs, fieldwork and methods* (2020) as well as book chapters and journal articles on urban-rural migration, transnational food activism and Berlin's Japanese foodscapes.

### ***(In)visible Newcomers: Migrants in Rural Japan***

**Abstract:** The population in Japan in general and in rural areas in particular is declining. Among many other problems, this results in a shortage of labor. To revitalize rural areas, Japanese central and local governments are trying to attract new residents to live and work in the countryside. However, there is wide variation in support for migrants and their experiences, depending on their nationality. While a complex support system for domestic urban-rural migrants exists, who receive subsidies to cover relocation costs, for example, migrants from outside Japan are not eligible for many of these subsidies. While migrants from the "West" often bring with them the financial means to support themselves, open their own businesses and receive some recognition for their contributions to the rural economy and society, most of those who live and work in rural Japan as technical interns



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from Southeast Asia are invisible because they do not have the same financial, linguistic and legal resources as domestic migrants and foreigners from Europe or North America. This paper is based on digital and onsite fieldwork in Kyūshū where local governments have just begun to focus on the wellbeing of foreign migrants in the countryside. By presenting the experiences of and support for different migrant groups in rural Japan from the perspective of (in)visibility, I will address the hierarchies among migrants in rural Japan to explore how and why domestic and foreign migrants are treated differently in the countryside and what this means for the future of rural Japan.

**Lynn Ng** is a Ph.D. student at the Graduate School of East Asian Studies at Freie Universität Berlin. Her thesis the changing meanings of “Fukushima” through the movements of people into and out of the region following the triple disaster in 2011. Lynn has keen interests in counter-urbanization movements, entrepreneurship, and environmental and disaster sociology. She completed her MA in International Relations (Area Studies) at Waseda University.

### ***The Role of Entrepreneurs in Revitalizing Fukushima’s Former Exclusion Zones***

**Abstract:** On March 11, 2011, northeast Japan was struck by a series of devastating earthquakes and tsunamis that culminated in the meltdown of Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Powerplant. This disaster displaced over 300,000 people, with all residents within a 20-kilometer radius of the nuclear power plant quickly forced out of their homes following the reactor explosions. In 2023, Japan is still gradually progressing with nuclear decontamination and community reconstruction, with a small section within the last municipality finally re-opened in summer 2022 for residency. Areas in the immediate vicinity of the nuclear power plant remain closed to the general public. Nevertheless, people have been re-populating post-2011 Fukushima, and along the way, aiding in the region’s reconstruction and revitalization efforts. Through patchwork ethnography and informal interviews with entrepreneurs and residents of post-disaster coastal Fukushima, this presentation observes the transformation of Fukushima since the disaster in 2011, the region’s gradual re-opening from 2014, and the coronavirus pandemic through the lenses of in-migrants and returnees, and, in particular, the entrepreneurs of the region. The research examines the interactions between residents and their environments, and explores the infrastructures and drivers that facilitate the change in Fukushima. Ultimately, this presentation seeks to answer the question: How has “Fukushima” changed?

**David Chiavacci** is Professor of Social Science of Japan at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. His research topics include social movements and social inequality in Japan as well as Japan’s new immigration and immigration policy. His recent publications include *Social Inequality in Post-growth Japan: Transformation During Economic and Demographic Stagnation* (Routledge, 2017, co-edited with Carola Hommerich), *Reemerging from Invisibility: Social Movements and Political Activism in Contemporary Japan* (Routledge, 2018, co-edited with Julia Obinger), and *Civil Society and the State in Democratic East Asia: Between Entanglement and Contention in Post High Growth* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020, co-edited with Simona Grano and Julia Obinger).





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## ***Controlled Opening: Immigration Policy in East Asia***

**Abstract:** This paper analyzes and discusses comparatively the foundations of the immigration policy in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan as established democracies and new immigration countries in East Asia. While their immigration policy is often discussed in the context of ethno-nationalism, this paper argues that their political economic foundations as developmental states with a productivist welfare regime, and a social contract of shared growth are a more appropriate perspective for understanding their immigration policy. The main goal and foundation of the immigration policy in these three advanced industrial economies is to keep the new labor immigration under control in view of the enormous migration potential in East and Southeast Asia. This leads to a restrictive immigration policy in all three countries despite their democratic political systems and the voices from civil society actors and the international community demanding a more inclusive policy based on a fuller consideration and implementation of human rights. However, this restrictive immigration policy is in the context of the developmental state a functional equivalent for socio-economic integration. The commonalities as well as mutual learning and copying in immigration policies in the case of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are actually of such a degree that we can speak of an implicit Northeast Asian migration regime despite a predominantly unilateral immigration policy making in the three countries.

**Fabian Jintae Froese** is Chair Professor of Human Resource Management and Asian Business at the University of Göttingen, Germany, and Joint Appointment Professor of International Business at Yonsei University, South Korea. In addition, he is Editor-in-Chief of *Asian Business & Management* and Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. His areas of expertise are in expatriation, diversity, and talent management. His research has been published in major journals such as *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Journal of Organizational Behavior*.

## ***Challenges and Opportunities for Female Expatriates in Asia***

**Abstract:** Whereas Scandinavian countries are well-known for gender equality, Asian countries are lacking behind. For instance, according to the Global Gender Gap Index, Japan ranks at 125 among 146 countries. The percentage of women in managerial and executive positions in companies is rather low in Asia. What does that mean for women expatriates in Asia? Do they perceive similar challenges as host-country-national women? In addition, do they experience double-layered discrimination because of their gender and nationality? Or, do they also enjoy some advantages due to their unique status? And if so, how can they leverage their unique advantages? This study intends to tackle these questions. We conducted a qualitative study, primarily relying on interviews with more than 50 female expatriates in China, Japan, and South Korea. Findings suggest that female expatriates experience both challenges and opportunities due to their status as women and expatriates. We highlight the unique situation of female expatriates and outline strategies how female expatriates can leverage their unique status to their advantage. We discuss theoretical and practical implications.



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**Sunyoung Park** is a Doctoral Fellow at Bamberg Graduate School of Social Sciences in Bamberg, Germany, supported by the DAAD Graduate School Scholarship Programme since 2018. Her research focuses on the dynamic formations of migrants' sense of belonging and identity in the destination society, particularly concerning superdiversity in the elements of social integration. Currently, she is in the final stages of completing her cumulative doctoral thesis, with plans to submit the dissertation in 2023.

She possesses expertise in a wide range of qualitative methods and proficiency in data analysis skills, including Thematic Analysis, Content Analysis, and Qualitative Comparative Analysis, among others. Prior to the academic career, Sunyoung Park worked as a development project manager for Africa and Central Asia at an Information Communication Technology company for 7 years.

### ***Forming My Own Transnationalism: Identity Contestation and Negotiation of Korean Migrants in Germany during COVID-19 Restrictions in 2020–2021***

**Abstract:** This study investigates the identity contestation of Korean migrants in Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, focusing on incongruent categorizations and societal stereotypes. Through Thematic Analysis of in-depth interviews, this study reveals that migrants predominantly seek recognition and respect for their acquired assets – such as education, profession, and socio-economic status, driven by their strong motivation to integrate into their host society. However, the persistence of incongruent categorizations based on inherited attributes – such as ethnicity, race, and nationality leads to micro-aggressions and frustration, challenging migrants' identities. To address the issue the study embraces the concept of superdiversity, emphasizing individual agency and experiences in social integration. The results highlight the instances where migrants who had lived in Germany longer than others had gradually lost their motivation for integration after facing repeated frustration due to incongruent categorizations. It concludes with the suggestion that society should prevent reproducing conventional categories in policies and media discourses and establish a social system that appreciates the value migrants were initially invited to contribute. Such a gesture of social integration can help migrants develop a more robust and sound sense of belonging within their communities and overcome the obstacles posed by existing incongruent categorizations.

The findings reveal diverse evaluations of public service delivery and its digitalization based on previous experiences in public service delivery and its digitalization, needs and priorities in their daily lives. This highlights the importance of comprehensive approaches to improve the accessibility of public services from migrants' perspectives. It underscores the significance of re-considering the concept of social integration and inclusion that should go beyond solely migrant-related factors when designing policies.

The study acknowledges certain limitations, such as the specific context of the cases examined. Investigating how the digitalization of public service delivery impacts these diverse groups would provide further insights and help shape more inclusive and effective policies.



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**Sakura Yamamura** is Junior Professor in Human Geography at the RWTH Aachen University, specialized in urban and migration research as well as in social geographical issues of digitalization. Previously, she was postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. With expertise in social and economic geography, her work focuses on the spatiality of transnational social and economic activities in urban contexts. She studied Geography, Sociology and Ethnology in Hamburg, Université de Paris 1 Sorbonne and the University of California Berkeley, and also brings professional experiences from working at the OECD and BAMF.

### ***Transnational Labor Migration in Asia and Beyond: Dynamics of Global Urbanization and Mobilities***

**Abstract:** While increasing migrant-led diversity of urban spaces are observed and discussed in many cities of the world – in particular so-called global cities, where global flows of capital, goods and people are concentrated –, the connection between the global phenomenon of transnational migration and the local socio-spatial impacts on the cities remains underexplored. In fact, human and socio-spatial dimensions within discussions on global cities have primarily focused on global economic actors in the transnational corporate context, and have paid little attention to actors and mechanism of migration industries. Local actors in the migration industries along with migration policies, however, are crucial in directing global flows of migrants and through its mechanism shaping global cities on the local level. Especially in the vibrant Asian context, where different migration regimes control and manage the flows of different transnational labor migrants, such mechanism needs to be analyzed more closely.

Taking Tokyo, a long-neglected but highly topical Asian arrival city, as the basis, this presentation gives new insights and impulses into debates on the socio-spatial dynamics of transnational urban spaces. It conceptually reflects such localised diversification of urban spaces on a global scale by embedding differential inclusion of transnational labor migration of different types and migration industries into the global cities perspective. It thus bridges the gap on urban transformation from the global to the local, and opens the floor for further debates on dynamics of global urbanization and mobilities.

**Yuki Seidler** is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Department of Political Science, University of Vienna. With her expertise in qualitative, interpretive and participatory methodologies, her work focuses on health inequity, refugee and migrant health and Asian migrants' wellbeing from a socio-political and cultural perspective. She has interdisciplinary backgrounds in Policy Studies, International Relations, Public Health and Applied Medical Science. Besides her academic career, she has worked with the International Red Cross Movement in various Asian countries and the International Organization for Migration in Vienna, Austria supporting migrants and displaced people in vulnerable situations.



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## ***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***

**Abstract:** Women of ethnic minority status are known to be at particular risk of maternal depression. Among the Asian women immigrated to Western countries, acculturative stress caused by differences in cultural expectations, norms and practices related to pregnancy and birth is known to be one of the main reasons. Immigrant women have limited psychosocial support and network to draw upon in this vulnerable time. Using an intersectional approach between immigration, motherhood, age, gender and acculturation the aim of the study was to explore the self-perceived career options highly skilled women of East Asian origin considered after giving birth in Austria. The compositive narratives based on in-depth interviews with eight inter-culturally married Chinese-speaking and Japanese women revealed four types of career paths: 1) pursue career in a non-German speaking international working environment, 2) invest in new, or scale up skills to be part of the “mainstream” Austrian labour force, 3) find and establish own niche as an immigrant entrepreneur, or 4) return home or move to a third country to maximise the use of the already acquired skills. Women’s self-perceived choices were influenced by various factors such as the social welfare system in Austria, degree of establishment of current career, social networks, German language skills, relationships with spouse and with families back home, as well as their acculturation experiences in the perinatal period. Their career paths were considered in the midst of women’s dual identity change from being a transnational temporary immigrant woman to becoming a permanent immigrant mother in Austria.

**Nanase Shirota** is an independent researcher and is previously a Newton Trust – Japan and the World – Post-doctoral Research Associate in Japanese studies at the University of Cambridge (until September 2023). She earned her Ph.D. in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Cambridge. She focuses on listening, communication, interaction, gender, labour, Japanese hostesses, Japanese Active Listening volunteers, oral history and life stories, using anthropological and sociological methods.

## ***Precarious Stepping-Stone: Japanese Hostesses in London and Their Labour, Career and Mobility***

**Abstract:** In my presentation, I argue that hostess labour at a nightclub in London is a ‘precarious stepping-stone’ for young, single Japanese women. For various reasons, some Japanese women, including both highly educated and those who are not, go abroad to places such as London, Honolulu, New York, Sydney and Southeast Asia, and temporarily work as hostesses in nightclubs. Their work involves providing pleasurable conversation and serving alcohol for Japanese businessmen, in effect creating a little piece of Japan abroad. As a case study, I carried out participant observation, working as a hostess in London for three months in 2021. Through narrative analysis of my data, I sought to understand why these young women work as hostesses in London. I found that, unlike some professional hostesses in Tokyo, they seem to perceive a hostess job as a ‘*precarious but temporary stepping-stone*’ to the next career. However, although this job can be a stepping-stone, the



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precariousness holds these women back. The fragility of this work comes from traits of transnational, intimate labour: their visa status, language ability, the nature of gendered, entertainment work such as dealing with problematic customers, ways of consuming alcohol (hostesses cannot drink water at a table), and being replaceable and hence accepting lower wages (sometimes less than minimum wage) etc. Why, then, do they still work as transitional hostesses? I argue that it is about *imagined security* and *hope* engendered through this work.

**An Huy Tran** is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Sociology, Bielefeld University. An Huy Tran's research expertise focuses on the sociology of migration, transnationalism, sexuality, and gender with regional knowledge of East Asia (Japan and Vietnam). He received a Ph.D. from the University of Duisburg-Essen with a research project on the intersection between transnational migration, sexualities, and masculinities among male Vietnamese migrants in contemporary Japan. At the moment, he is working on his first monograph and developing a new research project on migrant housing. An Huy Tran's research interests also include student mobility, migrants' entrepreneurship, intermediaries/brokerage, and the migration industry.

### ***The Myth of Gender Mobility in Transnational Migration: the Case of Male Vietnamese Migrants in Contemporary Japan***

**Abstract:** The gender aspect in transnational migration has been receiving growing academic interest within the last few decades. While such development has allowed the examination of migration aspirations and realities beyond the economic and labor spheres, the gender dimension in men's migration tends to receive less attention in comparison to that in female migrants' journeys, especially in the context of intra-Asian transnational migration. Moreover, migration scholarship has observed that migrant men tend to contemplate return migration more than migrant women (Carling et al. 2015). This presentation explores such a phenomenon through the empirical engagement with the migration trajectories of male Vietnamese migrants in Japan. Drawing on the life history interviews with 70 migrants in Japan and returnees in Vietnam, the presentation shows how the prospect of transnational upward mobility in terms of not only socio-economic condition but also masculine status can be an aspirational lodestar and a possible reality for several Vietnamese men during the course of migration to Japan and returning to Vietnam. Specifically, migrating to Japan can be a pathway to manhood during which male migrants accumulate different kinds of resources to be seen as capable, well-articulated, and mature men upon the commonly expected return to Vietnam. In that sense, transnational migration becomes a site of gender performance and becoming in which upward gender mobility can be transnationally realized. The presentation's analyses suggest a nuanced understanding of the politics of gender in transnational migration as well as the mapping of mobility trajectories across time and place.



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**Lenka Vyleťalová** is assistant professor at the Department of Asian Studies of Palacký University Olomouc. After receiving her MA in Japanese studies and French philology she has initially worked in multiple roles for Japanese corporations in the Czech Republic. In 2008, she conducted a study of intercultural management practices in Japanese multinationals as part of her MBA joint degree at the University of Economics in Prague and Université Jean Moulin Lyon. After receiving a research scholarship from the Japanese government in 2011, she pursued her research interests at the Graduate School of Global Studies of Sophia University in Tokyo, where she focused on the relationship between labour diversity, transnational mobility and the skills development of workers. She received her Ph.D. in 2017, and since has been working as a Collaborative Researcher at the Institute of Comparative Culture of Sophia University. As a member of the Global Japanese Cuisine project, she collected and analysed primary and secondary data on culinary mobilities in the Czech Republic, Ukraine and France. Her recent research focuses on the relationship between labor mobility, gender and social change.

### ***Mapping the Transnational Migration of Highly Skilled Japanese Women in Dual Career Couple Context: a conflict or a confluence of career and family trajectories?***

**Abstract:** Given the traditionally low ratio of women among the Japanese organisational expatriates, their function in the transnational mobility has long been reduced to their supporting roles as trailing spouses or nurturing mothers. However, a growing number of Japanese female professionals relocate abroad as self-initiated expatriates, and continue a transnational career path even after creating a family. Furthermore, not all those who relocate under the spouse Visa are in fact professionally inactive, proving their agency in defying the traditional power relations between men and women within the context of transnational family-based mobility.

The present empirical study builds on qualitative interviews with Japanese female migrants in Switzerland and Czech Republic, who relocate in the context of a dual career household. It firstly explores both risks and potential of transnational labor mobility through a consideration of conflicting issues related to work/care regimes and institutions or the role of gender in the work-family interaction. The narrative is then taken into perspective in considering Japanese social norms, gender roles and care regimes that continue to reconstruct barriers for more equality-based use of the talent pool that women as a half of the workforce represent.

**Maria Nolan** is an anthropologist with a regional focus on urban China, who completed her doctoral studies at SOAS University of London in 2020. Her doctoral research explored the emergence in China of *zhai*, which loosely refers to a tendency towards staying at home, and traced the unfolding of new modes of sociality in a society rapidly evolving alongside innovations in digital media. Since completing her doctoral studies, Maria has conducted digital research exploring the social and psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Chinese and Irish youth. She is currently a Lecturer in Anthropology at SOAS University of London.



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## ***Studying Abroad and Staying “at Home”: Reflections on International Higher Education and Migration among Students and Young Graduates in Urban China***

**Abstract:** Over the past decade, enthusiasm among Mainland Chinese for studying at universities abroad has surged to the extent that China today is the world’s largest source of international students – over 700,000 studied overseas in 2019. While disrupted due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, Chinese student mobility is now reportedly showing signs of returning to pre-pandemic levels following the country’s loosening of pandemic-related restrictions in January 2023. Research on mobility patterns among this student population have tended to focus on factors influencing choice of study destination, such as safety and security, quality of education, and cost of study within particular locations. Less attention has been paid to push factors – what prompts such large numbers of Chinese families to continue to invest in overseas higher education, considering that China is now home to some of the world’s highest-ranking universities, and in light of recent research that suggests returning students face the same obstacles as “home” students in finding employment after graduation? This paper addresses this question by exploring – ethnographically – perceptions and experiences of overseas study among youth in urban China. Drawing on research conducted between 2016 and 2020 that explored the life experiences of students, recent graduates and young professionals in Chinese cities, this paper sheds light on the ways in which study at a foreign university is a meaningful choice – or not – for these youth, and how perceptions and experiences of study and life abroad relate to attachment to another highly important institution in the lives of Chinese youth – the home.

**Vanessa Tkotzyk** is a postdoctoral researcher in the project *AspirE* at Goethe University Frankfurt/Main. In 2022, she received her Ph.D. from the University of Bonn, where she is also teaching seminars on Japanese economy and society and participating in the project *The Digital Transformation and the Changing Nature of Work in East Asia*. Her doctoral thesis *Zum Migrations- und Eingliederungsverhalten dauerhaft ansässiger Japanerinnen und Japaner in Deutschland. Charakteristika und soziale Integration der ersten Generation (Migration and Integration Patterns of Japanese Permanent Residents in Germany. Characteristics and Social Integration of the First Generation)* will soon be published under the title *Von Japan nach Deutschland – eine Studie zur Integration von Japanerinnen und Japanern in deutschen Großstädten (From Japan to Germany – a Study on the Integration of Japanese in German cities)* at Springer Nature.

## ***Japanese Students and Working Holiday Makers: Student and Working Holiday Visa as Means to Permanent Settlement?***

**Abstract:** Against the background of the ongoing debate on how Germany can attract more skilled workers from abroad and Japan promoting study abroad in the “Fourth Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education” to foster global human resources, this research sheds light on the decision-making of Japanese students and working holiday makers. With the help of semi-structured interviews, this case study discusses the temporalities of their staying respectively their (re)migration aspirations and intentions, while also considering immobility aspects, especially with regard to the global Covid-19





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pandemic. Regarded as temporary migrants, students were supposed to stay up to a few years in the receiving country. However, the remigration of international students cannot be taken for granted, since there is evidence that some do not return and that their student visa may lead to permanent settlement. There are various reasons for permanent settlement that can both be attributed to the migrants themselves and to the interests of the host society. On the one hand, the host societies have a keen interest in making them stay since international students are perceived as having attained a certain degree of acculturation to the host society as well as contributing to its economic growth as skilled workers. On the other hand, international students might not want to return due to economic, political, or societal reasons in their home country. Findings on the migration and integration of Japanese in Germany also indicate that – besides students – working holiday makers act in a similar way. Therefore, this study analyses whether Japanese students as well as working holiday makers use their visa as a gateway to permanent settlement.

**Ruixin Wei** is currently a doctoral candidate in the department of Korean Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. Her research interests revolve around ethnic identity, transnational migration, and youth mobility in the contexts of China and South Korea, with a particular focus on Korean Chinese.

### ***Middling Student Mobility: the Shifting Migration Infrastructures of Chinese Students Studying in South Korea***

**Abstract:** The emergence of educational hubs in East Asia has led to diversified patterns of Chinese student mobility. However, the literature predominantly focuses on mobility to Anglophone universities. This study examines the middling student mobility of Chinese students studying in South Korea using the analytical framework of “migration infrastructure”. It explores how the students are both facilitated and constrained by shifting migration infrastructures, which consist of an assemblage of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), institutions, and various actors. Drawing from interviews conducted with Chinese students, parents, educational consultants, this study reveals that student mobility is influenced by multiple factors. These factors include the development of ICTs, changing policies of educational institutions regarding international student recruitment, the fluctuating diplomatic relations between China and Korea, the role of education agents, as well as the decisions made by parents and students themselves. By applying the term middling mobility to Chinese students studying in Korea, this article highlights their in-between status in terms of academic performance and socioeconomic background in their home country. It also discusses the precarity and prospects that arise in the pursuit of overseas study. The study contributes to the existing literature on the landscape of Chinese students in global higher education, shedding light on the possible ways in which student mobility can be refined.

**Dong-Hoon Seol** is a sociologist with extensive experience in teaching, research, and administration. He is currently a professor of sociology at Jeonbuk National University, where he has taught for over 20 years. He is also the president of the Korean Sociological Association in





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2023, and an OECD SOPEMI (Système d'observation permanente des migrations) Correspondent for the Republic of Korea since 2018.

Dong-Hoon Seol received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in sociology from Seoul National University. He then worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for Demographic Studies at Duke University. His research interests include international migration, immigration policy, sociology of labor market, social stratification and mobility, economic globalization, and survey research methodology. He has published extensively in these areas, and his work has appeared in leading academic journals such as *International Migration Review*, *Ethnicities*, *Citizenship Studies*, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, *Journal of Population Research*, *Asia-Pacific Forum*, *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, *Korea Journal*, *Korea Observer*, *Journal of Asian Sociology*, and the *Korean Journal of Sociology*.

In addition to his academic research, Dong-Hoon Seol is also actively involved in professional organizations. He is a former president of the Korea Association for Survey Research and the Korea International Migration Studies Association. He is also a former editor-in-chief of the *Korean Journal of Sociology* and the *Korea Journal of International Migration*.

Dong-Hoon Seol is a highly respected scholar and an active member of the academic community. He has been registered in *Who's Who in the World* since 2011. He has received the *Best Academic Publication Awards of the National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Korea*, in 2002 and 2021. He is the winner of the *Distinguished Academics Awards for North East Asia Research* of 2010 from the NEAR Foundation. He was also given the *Distinguished Faculty Award for Research* of 2011, and the *Distinguished Faculty Award for Best Publications* of 2013, 2015, 2016, and 2021 from Jeonbuk National University.

**Hirohisa Takenoshita** is a professor of sociology at the Department of Political Science at Keio University. He has worked on issues of inequality and stratification, globalization, international migration, and quantitative methodology. His articles on immigration and inequality were published in several journals, such as *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *International Migration Review*, *International Migration*, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, *Comparative Social Research*, and *International Journal of Japanese Sociology*, *Sociological Theory and Methods*, and several articles were published as book chapters in Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan, Brill, Springer, and Trans Pacific Press.

**Yen-Fen Tseng** is a professor at the Department of Sociology of the National Taiwan University. She received her PhD in sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles. She was the editor of several journals, including *Taiwanese Journal of Sociology* (official journal of Taiwanese Sociological Association) and *Taiwanese Sociology*. Starting in August of 2023, she will serve as the Director of Global Asia Research Center at National Taiwan University.



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Her research interest is migration within Asia and migration policy, particularly skilled migration to and from Taiwan. In the aspect of skilled migration out of Taiwan, she studied Taiwanese skilled migrants in various Asian global cities with reference to recognition of skills across border and the importance of place characteristics of global cities influencing mobility/settlement intentions among skilled migrants. As to the skilled migration to Taiwan, she has finished a collaborative project with Lake Lu on skilled migrants from Hong Kong in Taiwan; given the erosion of democracy in Hong Kong, many people have fled to Taiwan. The research investigates how the changing geopolitics translate into different actors' understanding of migration and migration policies. She is currently studying skilled migrants from Southeast Asia to Taiwan, focusing on those taking study-migration pathway. She examines the gap between skilled immigration policy and lived migratory experiences among skilled migrants in Taiwan. Her publications related to skilled migration include "Settlement Intentions among Taiwanese Skilled Migrants in Tokyo and Hong Kong" (*Asian Population Studies*), "Becoming Global Talent? Taiwanese White-Collar Migrants in Japan" (*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*), "How Do Identities Matter? Taiwanese Cultural Workers in China" (In J-H Wang ed., *Border Crossing in Greater China: Production, Community & Identity*), and "Shanghai Rush: Skilled Migrants in a Fantasy City" (*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*).

## CHAIRS

**Megha Wadhwa** (Free University of Berlin) is a migration researcher and Japanese and Indian Studies scholar. She is a Research Associate at Free University of Berlin, Adjunct Assistant Professor at Temple University Japan and a Visiting Scholar at Sophia University, Tokyo, which is also her alma mater. Currently she is working on *Indian Professionals in Japan and Singapore: Migration Trends, Labor Market Integration and Challenges* and is a part of the research project *Qualifications and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA)*, supported by Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany (BMBF). Her research passion lies in understanding the similarities and differences in the migration trends of Indians in Japan, Singapore, Germany and other places around the globe. Her research focuses on identity, ethnicity, race, social class, women, and skills in migration. She is originally from New Delhi and was a resident of Tokyo for about 15 years before she moved to Berlin in 2021. She is the author of the book *Indian Migrants in Tokyo: A Socio-Cultural, Religious and Working Worlds* (Routledge 2021). She is also trained in fieldwork filming, and her recent documentaries are *Daughters from Afghanistan* (2019), a 7-minute documentary *Indian cooks in Japan* (2020), *Finding their niche: Unheard stories of migrant women* (2022).

**Joohyun Justine Park** (Goethe University Frankfurt) is a post-doctoral research fellow at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. She is a member of the BMBF collaborative project joint project *Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA)* and a visiting scholar at the Migration Research and Training Centre, Korea. She received her PhD



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in Education at the University of Auckland and worked as a professional research fellow at the same university. Her current areas of research include migrants' adaptation, acculturation, social identity, sense of belonging, and well-being. Methodologically, her research interests also lie in the areas of cross-cultural research and mixed-method research.

**Aimi Muranaka** (University of Duisburg-Essen) works as post-doc at Institute of East-Asian Studies in University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany. She now works for a collaborative research project *Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA)* funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). She has completed her Ph.D. in University of Duisburg-Essen, and she has conducted qualitative fieldwork in her dissertation which sheds light on how Japanese private intermediary actors contribute to 'make' a cross-border labor market between Japan and Vietnam. Using qualitative research methods, her current project investigates how the Vietnamese IT professionals seek to move and navigate in the labour market in Japan and in Vietnam. Her research interest is marketisation of migration, skills/qualifications in migration and brokerage in Asia.

**Ruth Achenbach** (Goethe University Frankfurt) is principal investigator of the BMBF-funded research project *Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA)* at the Interdisciplinary Center for East Asian Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt. She is also PI of the EU-funded project *AspirE – Decision making of aspiring (re)migrants to/within the EU: The case of labour market-leading migrations from Asia* at the same institution. Her work focuses on the migration of Chinese students and professionals in East and Southeast Asia and Japanese migration to Germany as well as Japanese development cooperation.

**Helena Hof** (University of Zurich / Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity) is Senior Research and Teaching Fellow in Social Science of Japan at the University of Zurich and a Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity. Her work focuses on Japan in a comparative perspective and lies at the nexus of mobility studies, the sociology of work, skilled and middle class migration, gender, ethnicity and race, and global cities and entrepreneurship. She is currently part of the German government-funded collaborative project *Qualification and Skill in the Migration Process of Foreign Workers in Asia (QuaMaFA)* within which she is PI of her individual project *Foreign entrepreneurs in Tokyo's and Singapore's knowledge-intensive start-up sector*. Helena holds guest researcher affiliations with Waseda's Institute of Asian Migrations in Tokyo and the Asia Research Institute's Migration Cluster at the National University of Singapore. Some of her most recent publications include the monograph *The EU Migrant Generation in Asia. Middle-Class Aspirations in Asian Global Cities* (Bristol University Press 2022) and "Intersections of Race and Skills in European Migration to Asia: Between White Cultural Capital and 'Passive Whiteness'" (Ethnic and Racial Studies).



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- 2) Or take the *Regional Train FEX or RE 8*, get off at **Hauptbahnhof** (Main Station). Then take any *S-Bahn* or *Regional Train* (Regionalexpress) going west, get off at **Zoologischer Garten**.

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- 1) Take *subway line U9* (direction to Rathaus Steglitz), get off at **Spichernstraße**, change to *U3* (direction to Krumme Lanke), and get off at **Oskar-Helene-Heim**. JDZB is on the other side of the street as shown in your access map. –
- 2) Or take the *Bus X 10*, direction to Teltow, get off at **Oskar-Helene-Heim**.

Website of the **jdzb**: <https://jdzb.de/en/about-us/location>

Please refer also to the **Berlin Public Transport map** on the next page.

Website of the public transport operator, **BVG**: <https://www.bvg.de/en>



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## BERLIN PUBLIC TRANSPORT MAP

- U-Bahn and S-Bahn lines
- A selection of *Regional Trains (FEX, RE 8, RB 23)* and *Express Buses (X 7, X 71, X 10)* that run from **Airport BER, Hauptbahnhof, and Zoologischer Garten** to **jdzb**

