

**"Open and closed societies:
historical reasons and modern consequences of inequality in Japan and Europe"**

University of Tartu (Jakobi 5)

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Abstracts and bios of the presenters

Sara Park, University of Helsinki

Abstract

“Historical background of Japanese migration, legislation, and current refugee policy”

The purpose of this paper is to provide possible answers to the typical question of why study international migration in Japan. To this end, this paper will take as its case study a historical study of Japanese immigration policy. Although sometimes forgotten, Japan has a small number of registered foreigners compared to its population. The fact that there are approximately 2.7 million registered foreigners and perhaps many more mixed-race Japanese is not enough to answer this obvious question. It is necessary to show that through the study of international migration in Japan we can make a significant contribution to understanding the peculiarities of a "non-migrant" state.

Throughout its foundation, Japan's immigration control policy has been influenced by the international relationship with the US and neighboring Northeast Asian countries. Migration studies in Japan have developed in its history, and as the result, they can be roughly divided into three scholarly fields: migration laws, history of migration laws, and international sociology. The boundary of this scholarship approximately coincides with academic fields of legal/policy studies, history, and social sciences (sociology, economy, and pedagogy). The first field, law and policy studies mainly deal with the changes in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, the second one deals with the historical origins of, and the background conditions of the changes in the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act. The third field, comprised of various social sciences, mainly argues for societal changes brought by Japan's migration policy from the labor market, class/social stratification, welfare, education, racism, etc.

Among the scholarship, the research on the history of Japan's immigration control policy has two observable waves of study; one starts in the late 1960s and continues throughout the 1980s, and another

starts in the 2000s. The former wave can be seen as a result of various changes in Japanese society, from the anti-Vietnam war movement to raising ethnic consciousness among 2nd generations of Koreans and Chinese, and can be summarized as the decolonization movement in Japanese society. On the other hand, scholarship in the 2000s was partially led by releases of new documents in Japan, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as uncovering testimonies of Koreans of irregular migration to Japan before and during the Cold War in Northeast Asia. At the same time, accumulated findings on private trades in Okinawa/Amami islands started to cast new lights on Japan's border history, by highlighting the travel and trade in southwest water in Japan that connected mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Okinawa, Amami, and mainland Japan during when Japan was occupied by the Allied Powers and all private travel and trade were prohibited.

Thanks to these previous scholarships, it is clear now that Japan's immigration control policy is better understood in relation to the counterparts of Republic of Korea and Taiwan, where all irregular/private travels took place and share alliances with the United States and had anti-communism in its political core. At the same time, the fact that such research on the history of Japan's immigration control policy has been almost always led by question to the "boundaries of the Japanese" and continuing racism in Japan. The migration study in Japan is, therefore, is based on the reflection of Japan and Japanese-ness, and can develop further and better understanding of how the Japan as we know today was build and has been reconstructed.

Biography

Sara Park (Ph.D., Kyoto University) is a lecturer in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki in Finland. After finishing her Ph.D. thesis under a topic of irregular migration from Korean Peninsula to Japan when Japan was occupied by the Allied Powers, her research focuses on nationalism and understanding of the borderline of people and the state. Her recent work covers the links between migration policy and its administrative process, as well as the meaning of history and memory in post-war Japanese society, especially in relation to oral/life history and social research methods. She published her works in English, Japanese and Korean, including "Itsu, dareniyotte nyukan ha dekita noka [When, who made the immigration control system?]" in Eriko Suzuki and Koichi Kodama eds. *Nyukan Mondai toha Nani ka* [What are the Problems in Immigration Control System?] Akashi Publishing, Oct. 2022, pp.57-87, "Entering Japan in exceptional times: reflections on Japan's entry restrictions and quarantine procedures between March 2020 and May 2022", *Critical Asia Archives*, June 2022, <https://caarchives.org/entering-japan-in-exceptional-times/>, "Ideology or racism? The historical origin of immigration control regime in post-war Japan", *Citizenship and memory in Eastern Europe and East Asia: A Comparison* (Proceedings of the 25th International Conference of Europeanists, Chicago, 28-30 March 2018), https://kwansei.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=28712&item_no=1&page_id=30&block_id=85, Mar. 2021, "Documenting the undocumented: State identification of non-nationals in post-war Japan", 2018, *Social theory and dynamics*, vol.2, p. 94-108, *Gaikokujin wo tsukuri dasu* [Inventing Aliens: immigration control policy and its implement in post-war Japan], Nakanishiya Publication, 2017.

Miloš Debnár, Ryukoku University

Abstract

“Diversity and integration of Europeans in Japan - the role of whiteness and conceptual issues”

This presentation focuses on the case of contemporary European migration to Japan and through the analysis of their migration patterns, whiteness, and integration, it aims to emphasize some of more general issues in the study of migration in Japan. First, the presentation outlines the migration pattern of the growing European migration. By drawing on the concept of superdiversity (Vertovec 2007), I argue that conventional approaches to diversity and migration are not sufficient to account for the extent of diversity and complexity of contemporary migration to Japan.

Second, this is further demonstrated through the discussion of integration and the role of whiteness as a privileging identity. The analysis demonstrates how global whiteness is juxtaposed vis-à-vis the racialized and locally hegemonical Japaneseness and that whiteness in such a context is often “passive” or “a token, a trophy” that cannot be readily “activated” as a form of capital (Hof 2020:11). This emphasizes the need to acknowledge the role of racism in contemporary Japan (e.g., Kawai 2015, Park 2017) and the representations and naming practices used in the discourse related to migration and migrants (Roberts 2018, Debnar 2020, 2023).

Finally, based on the previous point and further analysis of the narratives by European migrants, the presentation critically engages with the notion of integration. The racialization in everyday life of migrants renders integration as an impossible task based on the self-perceptions by migrants as well as conceptually. The notion of integration has been often criticized for “allud[ing] to an idealized coherent past” (Meissner&Heil 2020:741) or its exclusionary character (e.g., Favell 2021). Consequently, the presentation concludes with a call for novel conceptual and theoretical approaches that would allow to account more comprehensively for the complexity and diversity of migration to Japan.

Biography

Miloš Debnár is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of International Studies, Ryukoku University in Kyoto. He received his Ph.D. in sociology from Kyoto University in 2014 and his main research interest is sociology of European migration to Japan. He has written on migration patterns, social integration and the role of race and whiteness in the integration. His current projects are a comparative study analysing choices of staying and leaving by European migrants to Japan, and a collaborative project with the University of Vienna on study abroad in East Asia by students at Central European universities. He is the author of *Migration, Whiteness, and Cosmopolitanism: Europeans in Japan* (Palgrave, 2016) and some of his recent publications include a forthcoming chapter *Privileged, Highly Skilled and Unproblematic? White Europeans in Japan as Migrants* that will be published in *Expatriation and Migration: Two Faces of the Same Coin* (ed. Sylvain Beck, Brill, 2023).

Maria Erss, Tallinn University

Abstract

“Exploring student agency in an ethnically and culturally divided society: the case of Estonia”

Student agency as “the capacity (of students) to direct their own lives” (OECD 2019) is often associated with student-centred approach to instruction which is quite unevenly implemented in Estonia. Agency is a useful concept for examining educational inequalities which are manifested in the cultural and pedagogical divide as well as the achievement gap between Estonian and Russophone schools. As part of a postdoctoral research project a mixed-method sequential study on student agency was conducted in Estonian and Russophone schools in 2021-2022.

First, eight focus group interviews were conducted in spring 2021 with 37 students in Estonian and Russophone schools focusing on the experiences and views of 16-year old high school students regarding their perceived agency in school related contexts. The study revealed that students in Estonian and Russophone schools achieve different forms of agency. While Estonian students enjoy more freedom of school choice and various curricular choices along with more student-centred pedagogy, Russian students described their agentic experiences in the field of extracurricular activities and through their psychological emancipation process from teachers and parents. In some most restrictive environments a resistance or subversion dimension of agency was developed by students.

Next, two questionnaires were developed in 2022 to measure different aspects of student agency: agentic engagement and resistance to perceived injustice, the perceived support for agency, persistence in pursuits and school climate. The first study involved students in grades 6-12 from 55 Estonian and 4 Russophone schools and the second study focused on 11th graders involving 254 students from Estonian and 145 from Russophone schools. The results indicate that the capacity for agentic behaviour and the perceived agency support are higher in Estonian schools. The agency scores of boys and older students significantly surpass the scores of girls or younger students.

Keywords: student agency, school choice, ethnic minorities, segregated school system, school culture

Biography

Maria Erss is a researcher and associate professor for curriculum theory at Tallinn University. Currently, she is working on her postdoctoral research project “Understanding the concept of student agency among Estonian and Russian speaking students: What is the experience and attitude of students towards agency in upper secondary schools in Estonia?” which is funded by Estonian Research Council under grant PUTJD1031. From 2021-2022 she spent part of her postdoctoral study at the University of Stirling in Scotland under supervision of professor Mark Priestley. Maria Erss gained her PhD degree with the dissertation „The politics of teacher autonomy in Estonia, Germany, and Finland“ at Tallinn University in 2015 in educational sciences. Her research topics have been teacher autonomy, professionalism and agency, curriculum reforms, educational history and politics and student agency. For her full publication list see: https://www.etis.ee/CV/Maria_Erss/est

Wako Asato, Kyoto University

Abstract

“Pandemic and socio-economic condition of immigrants: experience of inclusion and exclusion in Japan”

A survey of foreign residents conducted in 2020 (n=615) found that the more vulnerable became more vulnerable from a socioeconomic perspective. Specifically, the monthly income of foreign residents as a whole decreased from 152,000 yen to 83,000 (decline ratio of 45%) yen per month. However, the rate of decline differed by employment status, occupation, status of residence, age, and gender. With regard to employment status, the rate of decline in the tourism, restaurant, and entertainment industries exceeded 70%. On the other hand, the rate of decline for elderly care sector was merely 10%, and for IT, there was an increase. In terms of gender, female income level was only 79% of that of males before the pandemic, but this gap widened to 62% of men. This is due to the higher proportion of women in the part-time job. The rate of decline was higher for older workers in terms of age.

In response to the decline in income, a number of special safety net measures were implemented. These include Special Cash Payments, rent subsidies, COVID-19 Leave Benefits, and interest-free loans. However, foreign residents had difficulty in accessing these temporary safety nets due partly to language, tedious procedure and due to asymmetrical power relation with employers. In addition, because the availability of each safety net differed depending on the status of residence and other requirements, special measures that appeared to be inclusive frequently ended up being inaccessible to foreign residents. Thus, inclusion and exclusion of welfare safety net under pandemic are not opposing concepts, but co-occur from the experience of foreign residents.

Biography

Wako Asato is associate professor at Division of Transcultural Studies of Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, Japan. He conducts extensive research on demographic change and care migration including domestic worker, care worker, and nurses intertwining welfare regime taking into account of the state, market, family and community. Social integration policy is also another topic of interest in receiving societies in Asia and some European countries. He is an awardee of the Presidential Award of the Philippines in 2014.

Abstract

“Transnationalism and Socio-Economic Integration in Japan: Chinese Minority and Nikkeijin”

In recent years, the effects of transnationalism and transnational networks on the patterns of socio-economic integration of immigrants have become intensively debated in migration research. While some have argued that transnational activities of migrants are not only positively influencing their socio-economic integration in the host society, but are also leading to new patterns of multiple integration in several societies. Others have questioned such arguments and even regarded strong transnational links as hindrance for an socio-economic integration into the host society. Still, this discussion is primarily based on empirical research about transnationalism and socio-economic integration in advanced economies in Europe and North America.

This paper analyses the cases of new immigrant groups in Japan. It studies the effects of transnational activities and links on the socio-economic integration of new Chinese immigrants and *nikkeijin* (return migrants of Japanese origin from South America). It finds great differences between the two ethnic minorities. The Chinese minority is marked by an internal diversity including successful ethnic entrepreneurs as well as marginalized trainees. A first group of Chinese immigrants enter Japan as (language) students and achieve after graduation a career thanks to their transnational capital. Later on, many of them use their transnational networks for establishing their own transnational business. A second group of Chinese immigrants come to Japan as foreign trainees. They are embedded into the foreign trainee system of Japan as a kind of total (transnational) institution, which pre-empts any form of socio-economic integration of the trainees in Japan. In the case of the *nikkeijin*, transnationalism has a negative impact on their socio-economic integration. The stronger the transnational links and activities, the lower their income and the weaker their integration in Japan. Overall, they are segregated in the labour market into indirect short-term employment and not fully integrated into social security systems. In view of the educational non-attainments of their children, they are on the path to become an ethnic underclass in Japan. The paper will end with a discussion of the implications of these findings about Japan for the academic debate about transnationalism and socio-economic integration.

Biography

David Chiavacci is Professor in Social Science of Japan and director of the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. His research covers political and economic sociology of contemporary Japan in a comparative perspective. He is known for his publications on social movements, social inequality 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), *Re-emerging from Invisibility: Social Movements and Political Activism in Contemporary Japan* (Routledge 2018, co-edited with Julia Obinger), *Japanese Political Economy Revisited: Abenomics and Institutional Change* (Routledge 2019, co-edited with Sébastien Lechevalier) 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).

Joanna Kitsnik, Sophia University

Abstract

“Tolerance for Socioeconomic Inequality — Evidence from Japan and Estonia”

“We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable — but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.” (Ursula K. Le Guin, November 19, 2014)

The underlying wider question I will propose with my presentation is the following: Do we need a more fair society? The question sounds both idealistic and maybe even utopian because it should motivate us to have a more critical but also uncomfortable look at the way our contemporary societies, economies and socio-political world order is structured today. Even if people could agree that fairer and more equal world, at its widest possible sense is something that would benefit us all, today our societies and economies lack a clear picture of how to achieve such aim. I am, today in the role of social science researcher and I am here at fault as well. I cannot propose a clear roadmap, and I have hard time even imagining one towards the goal of more fair social structures. The current problems are just too complex, meanwhile, people are also very good at closing their eyes to reality. However, what has been in my power is to expose the effect of the widely shared ideas and beliefs people have internalised, and which they utilise to excuse and explain, and in turn, legitimise existing socio-economic inequalities they encounter around them. My presentation is divided into three complementary parts. First, I will give an overview of the trends in socioeconomic inequality in Japan and Estonia. Next, I will discuss the formative role of inequality normalising beliefs and attitudes have in relation to the tolerance of socioeconomic inequality. And finally, I will walk you through some of my own analysis results on the latest (2017-2022) World Values Survey data for Japan and Estonia to illustrate how perceptions of inequality normalising narratives predicts higher tolerance of unequal income distribution. In other words, the stronger the belief in neoliberal ideologies of individual responsibility, choice, preferences of freedoms over equity, and meritocracy, the higher the acceptance of unequal incomes. Such explanatory relationship can be observed throughout economically developed countries, including Japan and Estonia, even despite their diverging socio-economic and political pathways.

Biography

Joanna Kitsnik holds a PhD degree in Sociology (2022) from the Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, and an MA degree in Sociology (2016) from the School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University. In her latest research she applied quantitative cross-national comparative approach to income inequality research. Her dissertation focused on the effects of various inequality legitimising narratives contributing to individuals’ perceptions of how much inequality they are willing tolerate, and compared these trends across economically developed countries. From October 2022, she will continue as a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) funded postdoctoral researcher at Sophia University in Tokyo where she will study the role of normative ideas of justice and fairness on the attitudes towards wealth inequality in post-industrialised societies. Her research topics are related to wealth and income inequality, intergenerational inequality, and civil society.

Abstracts and bios of the PhD students

Rennan Okawa, Osaka University

Abstract

“What is preventing second-generation Brazilians living in Japan from achieving educational attainment?”

The purpose of this study is to clarify the social difficulties of educational attainment of Brazilians living in Japan. In Japan, university degree is one of the most important factors to obtain a stable job. However, for immigrant families, educational attainment is a big challenge to overcome. Unfortunately, there is no statistics referring to the educational attainment for foreigners living in Japan. Therefore, the whole issue is not apparent yet, but thanks to the dedication of some researchers, a part of the problem has been uncovered, and it has shown that there is a significant gap of educational attainment between Japanese and some ethnic groups. This study explores the social obstacles of Brazilian families through their challenge for their educational success. This qualitative study conducted an interview for 5 Brazilian adolescents from 4 different families who could not obtain any university degrees. All families have already decided to stay in Japan and they have no intention to return to Brazil. That is why, all families recognize university degree as an important factor to have a stable life in Japan. This study reveals that the obstacles that Brazilian families living in Japan are strongly connected with the information and ethnic community's vulnerability. In this study, all Brazilian youth did not have any difficulties with the Japanese language and educational ability to pass the entrance examination for university. However, their difficulties were to obtain information for the scholarship that could help them financially or inform them how Japanese education system works. The reason that Brazilian families are so far from the information they need is because the schools do not provide the same amount of information as they do to the Japanese students and have little interest in the ethnic backgrounds that each family has, and the Brazilian ethnic community does not have an adequate structure to help community members.

Biography

Rennan Okawa is a PhD student at the Graduate School of Osaka University in Japan. He is a third generation Brazilian born in Brazil and he moved to Japan with his family when he was 8 years old. From a young age, he had to face multiple obstacles in school, which led him to his current study. His field of study is the sociology of education, and his target of research is Brazilian families living in Japan. His current interest in the study is the educational attainment of Brazilian immigrants, and how the identity of first-generation and second-generation differ.

Abstract

“All different, all equal? The short-term socio-psychological adaptation of new migrants into Estonian society”

Short-term adaptation and long-term integration of migrants into the host society takes place in different spheres of everyday life. This may include the domains of labour market, education, housing, socio-linguistic sphere, politics or civic action and several more. Although over the last years a new wave of criticism has been voiced over the value and validity of the concept of integration, it still remains a valid and useful instrument with which to analyse the situation of migrants in their host societies. Typically, the integration of migrants is studied over a longer period of time (over decades or even generations); however, there is much less attention paid on the early dynamics of right after the arrival, i.e. the very first years of migrants in their new host societies.

This presentation looks at the short-term adaptation patterns among the recently arrived new migrants in Estonia. The focus is on the socio-psychological domain of integration: identity, belonging and personal contacts. The analysis is based on the survey data collected at the end of 2020 in Estonia and consists of a sample of 4000 new migrants. The category of new migrants in this presentation is defined as people who have arrived to Estonia within the last five years (before the start of the data collection), thus representing only the group of recently arrived migrants. The presentation compares different groups of migrants based on the countries of origin. The findings indicate remarkable differences between different groups of new migrants, including how the time spent in Estonia seems to affect some groups differently than the others.

Biography

Kristjan Kaldur is currently a second year PhD student at the Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies, University of Tartu. His main research interests relate to migration and integration. For his PhD, he is studying the short-term integration trajectories of new migrants who arrived to Estonia, with the special focus on the Russian-speaking new migrants. Kristjan has also worked for almost 15 years as an analyst at the Institute of Baltic Studies (IBS) - a policy-research think tank here in Tartu -, carrying out policy analysis in the field of social cohesion, integration and migration in Estonia.

Mohammad Abu Sayed Toyon, Estonian Business school

Abstract

“The monochromatic reality of working students in Estonia: who cannot afford to be university students without a paid job?”

Traditional justifications for student employment have focused on social inequality or, more particularly, financial necessity; nevertheless fewer efforts have been made to characterise these students in the Estonian context. This study aims to characterise working university students based on a variety of social resource variables and predict the "If-then" social rules. In particular, this study operationalizes the monochromatic reality of the working students as a condition in which university students in Estonia cannot afford to be students without a paid job. Using data from the Eurostudent survey-VII and the CHAID algorithm as an analytical technique, results were produced. The findings revealed that, among other social resource variables, age is the most important in determining who cannot afford to remain students without paid employment. The subsequent important and significant variables include public financial support (grants, scholarships, and loans) from the university attended, student loans, income source dependence, sex/gender, and level of education obtained. By showing how these variables interact with one another and by presenting various "If-then" rules, this study might be useful to anyone interested in the empirical literature on socioeconomic inequality, specifically in regards to the characteristics of university students who combine work and study.

Keywords: Social inequality, study-work-integration, CHAID, Eurostudent survey-VII

Biography

Mohammad Toyon is currently enrolled as a Ph.D. student at the Estonian Business School. His research deals with the interplay of different forms of capital (e.g., social, human, economic, cultural, etc.), and employment of university students in Estonia. Toyon earned a master's degree in Applied Heritage and Quantitative Economics from the University of Tartu, a MBA degree in International Business and a BBA degree in Finance from the University of Dhaka. He also has a two-year diploma in Banking from the Institute of Bankers Bangladesh. Toyon formerly served as a Lecturer in Management at Global University Bangladesh and has a lengthy history of teaching in community colleges. Apart from teaching in Bangladesh, Toyon gained interdisciplinary skills while working in banks and international news agencies. He has also served as a project facilitator for a variety of international non-governmental organizations and conducted research fieldwork in Strasbourg and Copenhagen.

Anastasia Sinitsyna, University of Tartu

Abstract

“Labour Market Inequalities Across Workplaces and Industries: Evidence from Estonian Immigrants in Helsinki”

By the current presentation I would like to summarize the main findings on interrelations, trends and reasons behind the housing and labor market inequalities in Europe as a general and in Finland as a particular example. Firstly, I would like to discuss how and why income inequality produce to some extent housing inequalities that drive further economic disproportions. Next I will address the question to what extent two strands of labor market inequalities— sorting into a different industries (niching) and sorting into workplace establishments (segregation) — are overlapped and interconnected. Finally I would like to summarize the major behavioral patterns of Estonian entrepreneurs in Helsinki Metropolitan Area and driving forces behind their decision to step into self-employment. My findings show i) very strong interconnection between workplace and industrial segregation; ii) the highest levels of inequalities on the Finnish labor market is among Estonians and iii) high levels of entrepreneurial activities among Estonians as possible response to high levels of labor market segregation. All these findings do not support the cultural similarity argument in immigrant labour market integration. Rather, immigration policy and origin country wealth level may matter. However, for immigrant (Estonian) entrepreneurship ethnolinguistic proximity to the natives (Finns) ease the process of integration helping to overcome labor market inequalities.

Biography

Anastasia Sinitsyna graduated from the master's program in Quantitative Economics at the University of Tartu (Estonia) in 2017. During my master's, I visited as an exchange student the University of Kiel and participated in an educational program on social entrepreneurship organized in collaboration with the University of Tartu, the College of Charleston (USA), and Nebraska Wesleyan University (USA). Later in 2017, I was accepted as a Ph.D. candidate in Economics at the University of Tartu. My Ph.D. dissertation topic is "Relations Between Spatial and Economic Segregation: Case of Estonian Diaspora in Finland." I was a scientific assistant in a few research projects mainly related to the labor market integration of immigrants in Estonia and Finland. In 2020, I took the position of sub-leader of the Working Group in European Cost-Action project CA18214 "The Geography of New Working Spaces and impact on the periphery" and was accepted as visiting scientist at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Currently, my research interests are focused globally on globalization, social and economic inequalities of immigrant groups, and the role of the linguistic and cultural gap. In addition, I am also much interested in the evolution of remote work and coworking practices and how new ways of working might socially and economically integrate immigrants.