INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP:

HOW JAPAN WORKS:
RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF A
DIVERSIFYING LABOR MARKET
Organizer:

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Vogt

University of Hamburg
Institute for Asian and African Studies (AAI)
Department of Japanese Studies
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1, East Wing
20146 Hamburg

Tel.: +49(0)40-42838-4825
Fax: +49(0)40-42838-6200

E-Mail: gabriele.vogt@uni-hamburg.de
URL: http://www.aai.uni-hamburg.de/japan/
HOW JAPAN WORKS:
RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF A DIVERSIFYING LABOR MARKET

UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG (AAI)
18–21 JULY 2016

BACKGROUND:

With this workshop we kick off a joint research and teaching project between the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies at Waseda University and the Department of Japanese Studies at University of Hamburg.

We gratefully acknowledge that in 2016 and 2017, this project receives generous financial support by Waseda University and by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) with funds from the Federal Foreign Office (FFO).
RESEARCH OBJECTIVE OF THE JOINT RESEARCH AND TEACHING PROJECT BETWEEN WASEDA/GSAPS AND HAMBURG/AAI:

Diversification of Japan’s Labor Market: Risks and Opportunities in a Multidisciplinary and Comparative Perspective

The diversification of labor markets is a global phenomenon. Diversification in this context generally refers to two aspects: (a) to the types of employment, and (b) to the composition of the working population. The research project aims at bridging the gap between these two themes. We place our focus on the intersection of the structural (a) and the societal (b) diversification of Japan’s labor market. Our main research question is how the diversification of types of employment and the diversification in the composition of the working population impact each other. Certain groups that are directly influenced by these shifting dynamics are in the center of our general research project and will also compose the core of the three project pillars. In our research we give special attention to women, youth and immigrants in Japan’s labor market, thus covering the independent variables of gender, age and ethnicity. Each project pillar as well as the general project, in addition, covers class as an underlying variable. We adopt an interdisciplinary perspective, combining cultural anthropology, sociology and political science, and conduct a multi-level analysis of the various emerging phenomena.
PROJECT MEMBERS:
Noriko Fujita, M.A. (Waseda University, GSAPS)
Helena Hof (Waseda University, GSAPS)
Vincent B. Lesch, M.A. (University of Hamburg, AAI)
Professor Gracia Liu-Farrer (Waseda University, GSAPS)
Professor Glenda S. Roberts (Waseda University, GSAPS)
Anna-Lea Schröder (University of Hamburg, AAI)
Stefanie Schwarte (University of Hamburg, AAI)
Professor Gabriele Vogt (University of Hamburg, AAI)

WE WELCOME THE FOLLOWING GUESTS TO THE JULY 2016 WORKSHOP IN HAMBURG:
Professor James Farrer (Sophia University/Tokyo)
Dr. Steffen Heinrich (German Institute for Japanese Studies, DIJ Tokyo)
Aimi Muranaka, M.A. (University of Duisburg-Essen)
Hiroyuki Nishizaki (University of Tokyo)
PROGRAM

VENUE: INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES (AAI), ROOM 120

18 JULY 2016 (MONDAY): A HISTORY OF WORK, NON-WORK, AND LIFE

15:30 – 17:30  Kick-off Meeting
Greetings by workshop organizer
Self-introduction of participants

Research Notes on:
Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community
James FARRER (Sophia University/Tokyo)
Gracia LIU-FARRER (Waseda University, GSAPS)
Gabriele VOGT (University of Hamburg, AAI)

18:00 – 20:00  Shanghai Nightscapes: A Historical Sociology of Urban Chinese Leisure
James FARRER (Sophia University/Tokyo)
Venue: AAI, Lecture Hall 221

19 JULY 2016 (TUESDAY): WORK IN THE LIFE COURSE

10:00 – 12:00  Education and Deregulation – Employment Trajectories for Young Japanese from Poor Educational Backgrounds
Vincent LESCH (University of Hamburg, AAI)
Disc.: Gracia Liu-Farrer

Deregulation and De-culturalization of Labor in Japan
Hiroyuki NISHIZAKI (University of Tokyo)
Disc.: Glenda Roberts

12:00 – 14:00  LUNCH

14:00 – 16:00  Leaning Out for the Long Span: Married Japanese Salarywomen’s Strategies for Maintaining Careers and Well-Being in the 2000s
Glenda ROBERTS (Waseda University, GSAPS)

The Politics of ‘Decent Work’ in Germany and Japan
Steffen HEINRICH (German Institute for Japanese Studies, DIJ Tokyo)
20 JULY 2016 (WEDNESDAY): GOOD WORK, GOOD LIFE

10:00 – 12:00  
**Who Are We Fighting For? Labor Unions and Irregular Employees in Japan and Germany**  
Stefanie SCHWARTE (University of Hamburg, AAI)  
*Disc.: Steffen Heinrich*

*Tenkin of Married Women in Employment and Family: ‘Empowerment’ and ‘Living-apart Marriage’ in Contemporary Japan*  
Noriko FUJITA (Waseda University, GSAPS)  
*Disc.: Gabriele Vogt*

12:00 – 14:00  
**LUNCH**

14:00 – 18:00  
**Fieldtrip**  
*Museum der Arbeit*  
Wiesendamm 3, 22305 Hamburg  
http://www.museum-der-arbeit.de

21 JULY (THURSDAY): PORTABLE WORK AND LIFE

10:00 – 12:00  
**Young Europeans' Mobilities in Times of Globalization: Negotiating Foreignness in Tokyo and Singapore**  
Helena HOF (Waseda University, GSAPS)  
*Disc. Gabriele Vogt*

**New Migration Patterns to Japan? Studying Initiatives by the Private Sector and Government**  
Aimi MURANAKA (University of Duisburg-Essen)  
*Disc.: Glenda Roberts*

12:00 – 14:00  
**LUNCH**

14:00 – 16:00  
**Policies Designed to Fail: Health-Caregiver Migration to Japan and Germany**  
Gabriele VOGT (University of Hamburg, AAI)

**Mapping Immigrants' Economic Locations in Contemporary Japan**  
Gracia LIU-FARRER (Waseda University, GSAPS)
18 JULY 2016 (MONDAY): A HISTORY OF WORK, NON-WORK, AND LIFE

James FARRER (Sophia University/Tokyo)
Gracia LIU-FARRER (Waseda University, GSAPS)
Gabriele VOGT (University of Hamburg, AAI)

**Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community**

The Marienthal museum in the village of Gramatneusiedl near Vienna is site of the path-breaking research on “Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal” or “Marienthal: the sociography of an unemployed community”, in which Marie Jahoda, Paul Lazarsfeld and Hans Zeisel showed how unemployment destroys individuals and social life. Their findings and their method-mix have inspired a great deal of research, and are still impressive today.

James Farrer, Gracia Liu-Farrer and Gabriele Vogt will share their research notes based on a fieldtrip to Marienthal, which they conducted during the 3rd ISA Forum of Sociology (July 10–14, 2016 in Vienna/Austria).

---

James FARRER (Sophia University/Tokyo)

**Shanghai Nightscapes: A Historical Sociology of Urban Chinese Leisure**

Since Orville Schell’s 1988 book *Discos and Democracy* urban nightlife has been identified as one of the visible markers of social change in China. Nightlife is a space in which class, gender, sexual, and other more subcultural identities are publicly performed. The urban nightscape is also a space of global flows, in which imported ideologies, images, sounds, tastes, and people are enjoyed and localized by Chinese people, especially youth. The talk will focus on the changes in the popular culture of dancing — from the 1920s to the present — showing how dance clubs have served as spaces for new forms of gendered sociability. In particular, the talk will focus on how dance clubs since the 1980s have transformed from mass leisure spaces into stages for conspicuous consumption and social distinction.

This talk is based on the book *Shanghai Nightscapes: A Nocturnal Biography of a Global City* written by James Farrer and Andrew David Field (University of Chicago Press 2015).
19 JULY 2016 (TUESDAY): WORK IN THE LIFE COURSE

Vincent LESCH (University of Hamburg, AAI)

**Education and Deregulation – Employment Trajectories for Young Japanese from Poor Educational Backgrounds**

In contemporary Japan, the ratio of irregular employment patterns and average job turnover rates has been increasing constantly. At the same time, we observe a shift from a credential society (gakureki shakai) to a learning capital society. The challenges that emerge at the intersection of these dynamic shifts in the realms of labor and education are threefold: (a) an increasing performance pressure for (not only but especially) young people on the labor market, (b) the emergence of a new dynamic of class cleavage and (c) the overall shift to a flexible labor regime.

Employment in unstable and low-wage sectors, reduced career mobility, fragmented work biographies and a higher risk of unemployment can be considered a result of insufficient education. Although a crucial factor for finding successful employment, learning competencies are not equally distributed among school children; the troublesome state of schooling in Japan is reflected in a variety of problems such as bullying, truancy, drop-out and many more. Moreover, educational achievements can no longer be reliably and predictably translated into desirable occupational success, i.e. the concept of a smooth transition from school to labor market, which was once a defining characteristic of Japan's credential society has been called into question.

This research project (PhD) attempts to unravel the mechanisms of how a poor educational background diminishes the chances for young Japanese to successfully transition into a labor market that has become subject to some pronounced deregulation.

Fieldwork is scheduled to begin in fall 2016.

Hiroyuki NISHIZAKI (University of Tokyo)

**Deregulation and De-culturalization of Labor in Japan**

Does the deregulation of the Japanese labor market go hand in hand with a de-culturalization? With this research question the focus of my M.A. thesis shall lie at the intersection of workplace and culture, which has been subject of research in several disciplines. In e.g. anthropology “myths” and “religions” are studied as tools to strengthen communal aspects within Japanese companies. Urban-folklorists puts their focus on “rituals” and the “concept of ageing” etc.

In contemporary Japan, the strong connection between work and culture becomes especially apparent in the large-size companies of the post-war generations, where life-long employment and a seniority-based wage system were implemented. Being deprived of these benefits, today’s young generation is no longer willing to dedicate excessive time and energy to their work or company. Also, workers in smaller enterprises are not prone to identify all that strongly with their companies since they oftentimes change workplaces several times in their productive lifespan. In particular through the deregulation of the labor market, frequent change of employment has become somewhat of a new norm.

With this the foundation of the “Japanese company culture” is changing and the consequences cannot be foreseen just yet. Yet, the relationship between workplace and culture (or life, as a matter of fact) is an appealing object of study. By means of employing examples from several countries, this research project wants to illuminate the complex interconnection between work and culture and focuses on the effect of concepts like security (e.g. minimum wages), mutual understanding and self-determination in a labor market subject to deregulation.
Glenda S. ROBERTS (Waseda University, GSAPS)

Leaning Out for the Long Span: Married Japanese Salarywomen’s strategies for maintaining careers and well-being in the 2000s

Facebook’s Sheryl Sandberg’s 2013 book *Lean In* has attracted attention in Japan, where Sandberg’s advice for business women to ‘lean in’ and assert themselves in order to climb the ranks of power in the corporation was controversial. Soon after the NHK special featuring Sandberg, I noticed the translated version of her book had appeared and was displayed prominently in a bookstore at Shinjuku station, easily in reach of the urban business commuter. But how do salarywomen view Sandberg’s strategies? How do women in ordinary career positions maintain their well-being when their husbands are rarely able to substantially contribute to childrearing and domestic management? This paper concerns building a career over the long span of marriage and childrearing, and the choices ordinary salary women make not to lean in too far, while enlisting intergenerational support in order to manage their family lives. While such strategies may not propel married women into the Sandberg ranks of upper management, they are survival strategies while the children are growing up. Will these strategies evolve as companies are pressured to increase the percentage of women in management under Prime Minister Abe’s policies? Data come from a longitudinal set of fifteen women in the same Tokyo corporation, whom I have been interviewing at 3-5 year intervals since 2003.

Steffen HEINRICH (German Institute for Japanese Studies, DIJ)

The politics of ‘Decent Work’ in Germany and Japan

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) decent work is, apart from fair wages, characterised by its ability ”to promote both inclusion and productivity by ensuring that women and men enjoy working conditions that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values”. Although the concept of decent work itself enjoys almost universal support in Germany and Japan, there has been growing criticism in recent years that labour markets have actually been moving in the opposite direction. In particular, critics have pointed to highly gendered employment patterns and the deepening rift between regular and non-regular jobs in both countries. While one group of employees in traditional employment models continues to enjoy relatively secure and well paid positions, a second rapidly expanding group holds jobs with much lower levels of social security and wages. Worse still, in the cases of Germany and Japan, many non-regular jobs offer few prospects for moving to better paid and more secure position at a later stage. This can have far-reaching consequences on the life course of these workers, i.e. with regard to family formation.

In this presentation I will discuss and compare the social and political implications of growing labour market dualisation in Germany and Japan. I will argue that current policy-making processes are still strongly geared toward the manufacturing sector and traditional forms of employment with little public participation. Decisions thus often fail to take into account the interests and needs of workers that are outside these core sectors and/or in non-regular employment relationships. However, this traditional pattern of decision-making is now increasingly being challenged by a growing public sensibility in both countries for the consequences of inequalities in the labour markets. In the long-run this could improve the odds for more universal and stringent regulations for gender-equal and family-orientated work.
Who Are We Fighting For? Labor Unions and Irregular Employees in Japan and Germany

In Japan, in the wake of labor market deregulations of the 1990s, irregular employment by now has risen to almost 40 percent of the workforce. Low job security, low wages, and only limited access to corporate social welfare are some of the main characteristics of irregular employment. With many of the traditional labor unions not granting membership to irregular employees, their agenda focused on protecting the privileges of regular employees rather than on creating decent working conditions for both, regular and irregular employees. A steady decline in labor union membership, however, forced the unions to radically adapt their positions. Unions started to accept irregular employees as members, and to politically address the disadvantages this group faces in terms of labor protection.

By means of a qualitative content analysis of its agenda, and through expert interviews, I will examine how Rengō (Nihon Rōdōkumiai Sōregoikai), the Japanese Trade Union Confederation, positions itself toward irregular employment structures. I will furthermore study the strategies that Rengō applies as a political advocate, and assess their impact onto labor policy-making. Adding a comparative perspective from Germany, where the development of labor structures proceeds with much similarity, may enhance our understanding of the particularities of Rengō’s activism. Empirical data on the positioning of the DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund), the Confederation of German Trade Unions, toward irregular employment will serve this cause.

This is an MA research project. Fieldwork is scheduled to begin in December 2016.

Tenkin of Married Women in Employment and Family: ‘Empowerment’ and ‘Living-apart Marriage’ in Contemporary Japan

With a significant demographic change and ensuing decline of labor force in Japan, the society welcomes another boom in women’s empowerment. The government has set two objectives, women’s continuous labor participation and promotion to managerial positions, and required Japanese firms by law to meet them by their voluntary efforts.

Tenkin, a practice of the Japanese employment system, meaning personnel transfer which accompanies a move of a domicile, thrusts challenges on married working women. The practice itself has diversified in purpose, timing, and location compared to former practice. Furthermore, in recent years, the number of dual career couples has increased, but a discourse of ‘trailing one’s spouse’ is still embedded in people’s minds. Between their multiple roles as career-track employees and wives and mothers in their reproductive ages, women are forced to make a decision on where to prioritize: career or family. In their workplaces, some who are employed by more progressive firms that take women’s family situations into account without delaying promotion, confess their career goals and family planning to their seniors and negotiate with them. They determine to live apart from their husbands, which makes them embrace both independence and intimacy, on one hand, while suffering from infertility issues. In doing so, they sometimes do not know where to turn as they attempted to rework former subjectivities of worker and wife.

Drawing from ethnographic research consisting of in-depth interviews with firms, individual workers, as well as organizations concerning tenkin, I will illustrate the women’s lives and experiences through tenkin in both employment and family. I will then discuss how they perform the construction and reworking of their subjectivities as they confront the discourse of ‘empowerment’ and ‘living-apart marriage’ in their lives in contemporary Japan.
Helena HOF (Waseda University, GSAPS)

**Young Europeans’ Mobilities in Times of Globalization: Negotiating Foreignness in Tokyo and Singapore**

This paper investigates the rising numbers of educated Europeans of middle class background who early in their professional career relocate to metropolitan Tokyo and Singapore. Japan and Singapore face population aging and workforce decline, which is why they have adopted policies to attract skilled foreign labor. However, the complex conditions that shape Europeans’ sojourns in Asia have been poorly understood so far.

The comparative study, based on qualitative fieldwork in both locations, proposes that the two different city contexts attract different people in terms of lifestyle considerations, cosmopolitan attitudes and cultural fantasies. It examines what the destination countries provide for these foreigners by focusing on both career-related issues and social relations in the host societies. Due to these migrants’ racial, gender, class and national characteristics, special interest lies in how they negotiate their foreigner status and ‘otherness’. It will be explored to what extent they eventually integrate and where they feel they belong to. Furthermore, the researcher examines how these young migrants cope with the situation if expectations are not met and what this means for their future in this Asian city or elsewhere. Such dynamics have implications for their long-term place of residence and career progression.

Aimi MURANAKA (University of Duisburg-Essen)

**New Migration Patterns to Japan? Studying Initiatives by the Private Sector and Government**

This research project (PhD) attempts to unravel a potentially evolving new migration pattern to Japan, which proceeds under the initiative of the private sector with indirect governmental support.

Previous research on international migration to Japan highlights how the government has been applying different measures without implementing concrete migration policies. Despite Japan’s demographic decline, the government maintains its reluctant attitude toward migration. Scholars have identified three different patterns of migration to Japan: back-door, side-door and front-door migration. The back-door type represents undocumented migrants who enter Japan e.g. through human trafficking. The side-door type includes workers who enter Japan legally, but are not recognized as foreign workers (e.g. descendants of former Japanese emigrants to South America). The front-door type consists of official foreign workers, such as professors and other high skilled professionals.

Despite the official and unofficial migration patterns in place, and although Japan is faced with an increasingly severe labor shortage, the number of foreign workers still remains low. It is private firms that recently took the initiative and began recruiting qualified foreign workers. They concentrate their efforts to the ASEAN region, and seek to attract workers by offering special training programs. These initiatives are supported by governmental money stemming from the budget of Japan’s Official Development Assistance.

My research project focuses on this new migration pattern to Japan initiated by private firms and supported the government. Fieldwork is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2016.
Gabriele VOGT (University of Hamburg, AAI)

**Policies Designed to Fail: Health-Caregiver Migration to Japan and Germany**

Japan and Germany are in the midst of substantial demographic changes with a combination of low birth rates and high life expectancies triggering population aging and population decline. The decline of the working age population is particularly pronounced and results in labor shortages in some industries. One of the business sectors most severely hit by Japan’s and Germany’s demographic developments is health-caregiving, where the mismatch of demand and supply is particularly pronounced: While an increasing number of elderly are in need of health-caregiving, the number of those who chose to enter the professions is on the decline. Recently and reluctantly both countries have jumped onto the bandwagon of international health-caregiver recruitment. They both do so via bilateral treaties signed with a number of nations in Southeast Asia respectively in Eastern Europe and North Africa; with the Philippines being the one sending country Japan and Germany alike are aiming to recruit from. Both migration schemes, however, have proven to be unattractive to potential employers and employees alike. By studying the underlying policy-making processes from a perspective of International Political Economy, this paper explores the factors that lead to the outcome of what can be dubbed "policies designed to fail".

Gracia LIU-FARRER (Waseda University, GSAPS)

**Mapping Immigrants’ Economic Locations in Contemporary Japan**

It has been over three decades since the onset of contemporary migration into Japan. Entering Japan during the economic boom in the 1980s, going through the decade of stagnating economy in 1990s, and experiencing the global financial crisis in 2008 and the March 11 Earthquake disasters in 2011, how do the newcomer immigrants in Japan fair economically? In the existing literature on the economic practices of migrants in Japan, a labor market segmented by nationality is a prominent phenomenon. Studies on the Filipinos tend to talk about the exploited entertainers. Those on Nikkei Brazilian focus on the working and living environment of the *Dekasegi* migrants. In comparison, works on the Chinese tend to notice the professional workers in corporate Japan. To what degree do such portrayals represent the immigrant reality? Why do some immigrant groups demonstrate upward social mobility while others lag behind? How do we account for the different economic strategies adopted by the different immigrant communities in Japan? Drawing on fieldwork data and existing literature, this presentation tries to provide an overview of the economic locations and practices of immigrants from different national backgrounds, and the conditions that shape the outcomes of their mobility or immobility.