

# EPRIE

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in East Asia and Europe

## Migration, *and* Integration, Belonging







*Visit to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) close to Paju, South Korea.*



# Editorial

Since 2012 the Exchange Program for Regional Integration in East Asia and Europe (EPRIE), initiated by the Korea Verband and supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, has been bringing people together from various backgrounds and places to share and exchange ideas, and so far it has proven to be a success.

The list of topics is as diverse as the participants and the opinions that brought them together – from coping with the past and political rapprochements (2012/2013) to the concepts of nations and identity building (2014/2015), as well as topics related to current global developments regarding asylum, migration, integration and belonging (2016/2017).

Each year and for each topic, we have managed to publish a journal in cooperation with the Korea Verband called Korea Forum Special. Starting this year, the journal is headed by the EPRIE alumni and their EPRIE Association. Therefore, we want to mark this change with a new name, a new design and a new format.

From now on, we want to focus on contributions from EPRIE alumni – their ideas, their work experiences, their scientific research – everything that is related to the overall project of bringing people together under the agenda of Regional Integration in East Asia and Europe. This could be anything from short essays on theoretical reflections, such as the contribution by Albert Denk on

“Global City Tokyo”, to more personal reports, such as Selma Polovina’s piece on the “Balkan Refugee Route” Conference. Our overall aim is to illustrate our work as EPRIE alumni from different perspectives. We want to provide insight into our projects and our work, let you peek behind the curtain. We want to give inspiration and guidance for new ideas, and we want you to be part of this undertaking.

EPRIE 2017 focused on migration, integration, and belonging. Following on from that, this issue highlights the struggles migrants and refugees face following their arrival in a new country and a new society. We examine the migrants and their stories, as we believe they can tell us where we have to direct our attention and how we can effectively avoid people feeling excluded. As Sina Schindler argues in her contribution on “Why we have to listen to migrant’s perspectives”, migrants themselves can provide the necessary insight to create space for integration.

By listening to their stories, we have explored why migrants feel connected to their new place and how they develop a sense of belonging. Alexandra Bauer and Gracia Liu-Farrer interviewed migrants living in Germany and Japan to find out why they want to stay and what makes them feel connected with their new home. Both articles show that multiple senses of belonging exist and that migrants have become an integral part of their adopted society. They

actively take part in civil society and engage with other migrants at NGOs such as the Villa Education Center and the Japan Association for Refugees in Tokyo. Although migrants have become an integral part of our societies, many of them are still facing everyday racism. We interviewed journalist and writer Mohamed Amjahid on how to address everyday racism and become aware of our own privileges when we work with others. Since integration and inclusion also need to take place in exchange programs like EPRIE, we report on available methods such as Open Space and Design Thinking. Jutta Weimar and Tarek Mohamed Hassan describe how we can practice inclusion in groups.

The cover of this issue shows barracks in Serbia. The image was taken at the “Balkan Refugee Route” Conference in 2017, organized by the International Alumni Center of the Robert Bosch Stiftung. About twenty years ago, people fled from war-torn Serbia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Nowadays, the barracks provide homes for refugees who take the Balkan refugee route. The image shows the very basic conditions under which they live in a gated refugee camp. However, it also shows us how easily countries can change from being a place of conflict to a new home for migrants. The picture is a strong reminder that changes can happen very easily, even in supposedly safe places, and that we should welcome new arrivals, just as we would want to be treated by others.

Juliane Böhm, Yann Werner Prell & Mathias Räther

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# On why we have to listen to migrants' perspectives

Sina Schindler

***“Once upon a time scholars assumed that the knowing subject in the disciplines is transparent, disincorporated from the known, and untouched by the geopolitical configuration of the world in which people are racially ranked and regions are racially configured. From a detached and neutral point of observation [...] the knowing subject maps the world and its problems, classifies people and projects into what is good for them.”***

***(Mignolo 2009)***

When we think of ourselves as academics and experts, it is easy for us to forget that our points of view are not as objective as we like to tell ourselves, especially when we talk about migration. Most often we think, write and do research on topics related to migration from a perspective that we consider external, an outside observation. We make use of statistics, of the so-called “facts” and “figures” which we tend to think are neutral. We traditionally learn in school and in university courses that good and right knowledge is not subjective – that the points of views of minorities, especially minorities

who are affected by some sort of exclusion, are biased and therefore not useful in a scientific approach. What we did not learn in school, however, is that everything we were taught in our class rooms about history, politics, and even the hard sciences like biology has always been told from specific standpoints, and as such has always been biased. As the de-colonial thinker Walter D. Mignolo says, the knower is always implicated in the known, although in the special case of modern western knowledge production the knower’s position is at the same time concealed and privileged as it also controls the

disciplinary rules of knowledge production – or to put it in the words of political theorist and historian Partha Chatterjee: There is a “close complicity of modern knowledge and modern regimes of power [in which] we [the people and scholars of the so called ‘Third World’] would forever remain consumers of universal modernity; never would we be taken as serious producers” (Chatterjee 1998). To sum up, there is a hierarchy of knowledge, with certain forms of knowledge at the top, namely the forms described with terms such as modern, scientific and “First



World”. Other forms of knowledge are at the bottom: “Third World”, “minority”, and native knowledge which are deemed too specific to be universal or too self-interested to be objective.

The 2017 EPRIE program on migration, integration, and belonging opened up spaces where attention was paid first and foremost to migrant activists and NGOs working for migrant and refugee rights. Many of these NGOs are self-organized by people with a history of migration, either their own or experienced by their families.

We started our 14-day EPRIE journey in the Beomeosa Temple in Busan where we were allowed to get acquainted with some ethical principles and practices of Zen Buddhism – a valuable source of knowledge that helps many people on this planet interact with the world and its living beings. That was the first contact with “alternative”, spiritual knowledge that had to withstand quite a few critical questions from our science-infused brains eager to spot the possible religious illogicalities.

In the following days, we listened to and spoke with the members of the Busan Foreign Workers Support Center which is located at the migrants' rights advocacy organization “Solidarity with Migrants” (SOMI). Here it became clear that while migration happens for various reasons, processes in the aftermath of the actual movement of migration show a wide range of common patterns. This impression was later reinforced by the testimonies we heard, whether from young North Korean students in South Korea who found-



ed an association to help their peers arriving in the South Korean society, or from the descendants of Korean voluntary and forced laborers in Japan whose 4th generation now makes up Japan's largest minority, or from the women and men who migrated from South Korea to Germany during the 1960's and 1970's to work as nurses and miners and fill the shortage of skilled labor abroad, or even our own stories which we exchanged during hours of workshops and discussions. Even though the distances between the various home and receiving countries may differ widely – culturally or geographically in neighboring countries, in divided countries, in countries on the same continent or on different continents – common topics were present in each of the stories: feelings of home sickness, of being faced with prejudice, of loneliness, disconnectedness, despair, sadness, curiosity, of hopes and disappointments, of not being able to communicate or express oneself, of being deprived of human rights and dignity, of being exploited and insulted, of not

being taken seriously, and also of empowering oneself through activism, through community-building, through the fight for one's rights and for the rights of others, and of making oneself seen not as a refugee, a spy, a Third World woman, a person without value, a cockroach, a fetish, a victim, a criminal, but as an individual human being.

We learned that a country's status can change quickly or can even be multiple things at the same time, as is the case for South Korea which was one of the poorest countries in the world after the Korean War and is now part of the G-20 (which by the way is one of the best examples for the interlocking of knowledge production and economical interest). South Korea has a brother, 60 km away from its capital Seoul, whose gross domestic product is estimated to be a fortieth of its own. South Korea benefitted financially from sending manpower abroad and putting up unwanted children for international adoption, and it now benefits from a low-cost labor force

of migrants itself while at the same time criminalizing various aspects of working migrants' lives.

As the example of South Korea shows us, the issues of migration are complex and heterogeneous. If we rely on one kind of knowledge - which most often will be the dominant kind - we will not be able to grasp this complexity, and our understanding will remain incomplete. We need to actively listen to the Southeast Asian working migrants and North Korean refugees in South Korea, to the Burmese children and the 4th generation of the South Korean minority in Japan and to the South Korean miners and nurses in Germany. By "actively listen" I mean that we must look for them, make sure that they are invited to conferences as speakers. We must not speak about them but with them, and we must make space for them. This is crucial

because their stories can question the alleged impartiality, the comprehensiveness or universality of spaces where knowledge about migration is currently produced, with all its destructive and far-reaching consequences. They can extend our knowledge about migration with important perspectives in order to make it effectively more "objective". They can make us understand the vulnerable positions that migrants often are forced into, and they help us shift our perception of migration from an abstract process to (sometimes) voluntary and (much more often) forced movements of individual subjects. We then can put these specific experiences into broader political, economic, ecological contexts, and interconnect the contexts in order to identify global patterns. With these stories we can fit recurring patterns into structures of power and privilege – and question and

challenge these structures.

The migrants' stories also tell us where we have to direct our attention to in order to effectively avoid exclusion, to provide space for integration, to actually practise what we preach when we talk about protecting human rights, instead of isolating ourselves without taking responsibility for the global imbalances to which we contribute every day.

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### Sina Schindler

is a PhD student at Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, in the Department of Media and Cultural Studies. Her research interests include migration, post-migration, belonging and hybrid identities, with a special focus on Asian-German perspectives. Sina is a facilitator in diversity-conscious youth work and a board member of ROOTS & ROUTES Cologne e. V. and of Stiftung Asienhaus. She participated in EPRIE 2017.



# Migration, *and* Integration, Belonging



*The participants of EPRIE 2017 started their journey at Beomeosa Temple in Busan where they were allowed to get acquainted with some ethical principles and practices of Zen Buddhism.*



# “To free oneself from this inflexible sense of belonging...”

Transnational biographies and multiple senses of belonging among South Korean women in Germany

Alexandra Bauer

## Introduction

The history of Korean migration to Germany is largely unknown to the general public. During the 1960s and 1970s, South Korean men were recruited for the coal mining sector and South Korean women for the healthcare sector in the Federal Republic of Germany. Many of them decided to stay and build a life in Germany which involved not only economic and political consequences, but also led to an expansion of diverse transnational entanglements and multiple senses of belonging. My master's thesis in social and cultural anthropology aimed to demonstrate the diversity and constant change of individual transnational senses of belonging among first-generation South Korean women who were recruited as nurses to Germany and who live or have lived in intercultural marriages. I asked myself the following questions: How do the women participating in my research define their specific migration histories and

senses of belonging with regard to their history, locality, gender, profession, family, and their personalities? And how have their views changed over the course of their lives? What do the women consider to be central events in their biographies and what experiences have shaped their understanding of belonging? Which practices do they use in their everyday life to feel a sense of belonging, feel safe and at home?

This topic is highly significant to me personally as my mother is Korean, and was recruited to work as a nurse in Germany, and my father is German. The transnational ties within my family and my own feelings of belonging have been of concern to me for many years. Here I present a short summary of my research.

## Relevance

The life stories of my interviewees constitute a vital part of Germany's (migration) history. Just recently,

the German 2017 federal election showed that the idea of multiple senses of belonging, i.e. feeling a belonging to two or more places or nation states, still appears to be a relatively unknown concept. With the consent of my interviewees, I included many quotations of the women, in anonymous form, throughout my thesis. By telling their own stories, they are able to combat various stereotypes about migrant women from Asia and the belonging of people with a migration background. Politics, the media and academia reproduce a single sense of belonging, namely to only one nation state, as the standard to aspire to, and they over emphasize feelings of being torn and the loss of loyalty to one state among people with ethnically diverse backgrounds. The women's stories can offer unique insights into the defective German »guest worker program«, nurses currently being recruited, transnational aging, and the stories can give new impetus to



political debates about migration, nation states, rigid border demarcations, belonging in Germany and the interplay between gender and migration. The recognition, visibility and understanding of steadily changing multiple senses of belonging practiced on a daily basis call for legal and political consequences, so that political decision-makers and NGOs can adequately address the concerns of so-called »transmigrants« and the societies they live in. As my interviewees taught me, it is essential to find new concepts for complex, highly diverse and current living environments. The concept of multiple senses of belonging could form an important basis for this purpose, break down stereotypes and contribute to a better self-perception in subsequent generations.

### **Research methods & multiple senses of belonging**

My methods and type of data consisted of narrative and semi-structured interviews in German or Korean, one expert interview and participant observation in the women's homes or during daily activities outside. The triangulation of these methods generated similar or different results which are not mutually exclusive but broaden the perspectives on the diffuse concept of multiple senses of belonging and make it more tangible. Finally, conducting research on the life stories of others requires the greatest possible transparency, which becomes even more important in light of my own family background. As a result, I constantly reflected on my own position during the entire thesis. Growing up in an environment with a strong demand for a single national belonging and being repeatedly confronted with

everyday racism left me struggling to allow myself multiple senses of belonging since they were always denied by my social environment. My position changed during while conducting the research and has continued to change since. It is of my utmost concern neither to present only the positive experiences of my interviewees nor just the conflicts. The concept of multiple senses of belonging is a versatile tool for analysis and further comprehension of the diverse living environments of the women participating in my research. According to Monique Scheer (2014), this concept is more open to changes, negotiations and contradictions than fixed terms such as identity and home. Even smaller units of belonging can be included, such as family, education, profession, religion, eating habits, language, name, political opinion, and clothing. Belonging is not only a state of mind, it can also be exercised as a »belonging to« in everyday life. However, this does not entail a radically free choice of units of belonging, as becomes apparent when a person is not seen as »fully German« or »fully Korean« because of their appearance, name or accent. The perception of one's own belonging depends greatly on the recognition or denial of each respective environment.

### **Research findings**

The people who have migrated from South Korea to Germany shape the history and social life of and both societies through their specific backgrounds and experiences as they create their homes spanning two worlds. Their life stories and everyday practices consist of various transnational entanglements and they often experience their multiple

senses of belonging as personally enriching and use the experiences strategically. For instance, some women deemed their strong sense of belonging to their new hometown in Germany or to their profession to be a helpful tool for standing up to racist harassment on the street. The various senses of belonging are negotiated in a continuous process throughout each phase of life, characterized by permanent changes, gains and losses, and eventually by concerns of how to maintain a transnational lifestyle in old age. My interviewees all reported that feeling and maintaining strong ties to diverse units of belonging was important for them to develop emotions of »well-being« and a sense of »home« through language, profession, gender roles, children's education, hobbies, food, interior decorating and clothing, with their partners, families and friends. Although some women spoke of »cherry-picking« when choosing their units of belonging, they were never free from the influences of history, locality and socio-political structures of all the contexts involved, and each biography showed signs of restrictions. This was especially evident when family members opposed an intercultural marriage, forcing some women to decide on a life either in Germany or in Korea. »Luck« was another recurring motif. All of my interviewees place a high value on »being lucky« and being thankful for a welcoming staff at their workplace, as well as inclusion and recognition of their chosen units of belonging by their social environment. The consequences of not being »lucky« could entail psychological illnesses, discontinuation of contracts or even suicide. The fact that health and personal well-being

were dependent on luck for so many women clearly shows how deficient and indeed harmful the »guest worker program« was. Many of my interviewees contradicted stereotypes of passivity and subservience frequently assigned to Asian women. In 1977 against the backdrop of the oil crisis and recruitment stop, many of my interviewees fought successfully to retain their right of residence and labor permit and were highly politically active in transnational women's rights and democracy movements. The pleasure they derived from transnational cultural activities, such as dancing, painting, writing and political activism, and the attending deeply felt sense of belonging gave them stability in situations in which they were denied a sense of belonging. Almost everyone emphasized being German and Korean at the same time, which signifies that national feelings of belonging are still considered important but they do not necessarily have

to be mutually exclusive. In fact, the concept of multiple senses of belonging provides a home as a German, Korean, foreigner, migrant, nurse, activist and artist, which can be simultaneously possible if belonging is not thought of as inflexible.

Finally, I want to focus on the term »inflexible sense of belonging« which was coined by my interviewee Mrs. Jeong as a precise summary of the topic of multiple senses of belonging. The women who participated in my research actively chose, fought for, and optimized their senses of belonging in diverse ways. However, they were always confronted with limitations to their senses of belonging, which is why »inflexible« serves as an appropriate description for the fixed definition and treatment of belonging in German and Korean contexts, as exemplified by rigid nationality laws and experiences in everyday life. As I now seek to promote the stories and lessons of my

interviewees politically and to enter into discussions about belonging with the second generation, I strive to free myself from my own inflexible sense of belonging.

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### Alexandra Bauer

studied East Asian Studies/Korean Studies, Political Science and Social and Cultural Anthropology at Freie University Berlin. Her interests span migration, transnationalism and multiple senses of belonging. In 2017, she published her master's thesis on transnational biographies and multiple senses of belonging of first generation South Korean women in Germany and received the Rudolf Virchow Advancement award from the Berlin Society of Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory. She has worked at the Korean Human Rights Foundation and Korean Labor Institute in Seoul and with Korea Verband e.V. in Berlin. Her goal is to pursue further research on multiple senses of belonging among the second generation of the German-Korean community.



# Migration, *and* Integration, Belonging



*Solidarity with Migrants (SOMI) is a migrant advocacy organization in Busan, South Korea. Danny Guerra (right) and Tess Managan (center) turned from migrants to activists and fight for the human rights of migrants.*

# Memories of Japanese immigrants in Daejeon between colonialism and modernization

Morita Manako

*How do we face the legacies of migrants who were once present but left a long time ago? This question can be raised in any place that has a history with migrants, whether they were immigrant workers, refugees, settlers or others.*

“A city built by Japanese” (Fukunaka 1995) — Daejeon (대전/大田) is a city located in the middle of South Korea and its modern history is inseparable from Japanese immigrants. The city as we know it began with the construction of the Gyeongbu Line (경부선/京釜線), a railway connecting Seoul to Busan, which addressed the urgent need of the Imperial Japanese Army for transportation to the Russo-Japanese war.

Before the construction of the railway, Daejeon was a rural village called Hanbat (한밭), which literally means “a large field”. Japan chose such a small village as the important relay point of the line because they could easily build a new city there, avoiding resistance from the locals.

At the time when the Gyeongbu line opened in 1905, five years prior to the annexation of Korea, about six hundred Japanese railway workers had already settled there (Tanaka 1917). The number grew to about 2,500 in 1910, while the Korean population at that time was around 1,700. The Japanese population remained larger than that of the Koreans, at least until 1925 (Daejeon-Gwangyeoksi 2013). In that sense, Daejeon was a truly colonial city which differed from other major Korean cities that had developed long before the colonization.

Today in the city of 1.5 million, we can still find a small district of about forty Japanese-style wooden houses just next to the Daejeon station. The district is called the “Sojedong vil-

lage of railway workers’ houses” (소제동철도관사촌/蘇堤洞鐵道官舍村) and those houses were built specifically for the railway workers.

During the colonial period many such railway workers’ districts existed near the main stations. Most of them, however, burned down because of the Korean War or were later dismantled. Now Sojedong is one of the biggest districts in Korea where original houses still remain.

A small group of researchers called the Daejeon Modern Archives Forum (DMAF) has been engaged to record the history of Sojedong from 2011. One of the experts in architecture, An Jun-Ho, 50, underlines the historical importance of the district, saying that “the fact that





*Japanese style wooden house in Sojedong, Daejeon, South Korea.*

the modern city started with the railway is not widely known here". While more sophisticated buildings such as the prefectural government office, houses for government officials and banks erected under colonial rule exist until today, he thinks that "those small houses for railway workers symbolize the very origin of the modern city and have particular historical value".

However, there are plans to redevelop Sojedong district in a few years, and all the houses are to be dismantled. DMAF is trying to preserve at least some of the houses, but they find it difficult to attract the interest of the locals as the houses are old and it is hard to regard them as fashionable or visually valuable.

The inconvenient history of the railway also seems to be related to the public's indifference towards Sojedong. In Korea, national memory concerning the colonial period is quite harsh because of the humiliating experiences of exploitation and assimilation, and the railway is especially associated with horrible memories of exploitation of food and resources and even forced labor. Historian, Ko Yun-Soo, 41, points out that "railways always symbolize colonialism and modernization at the same time and seeing both of these perspectives at the same is often controversial".

An and Ko, however, wanted to know the vivid appearance of colonial Daejeon, beyond such controversy. Thus, they traveled around Japan to interview eight Japanese who

had lived in Daejeon at the time the modern city was developed and collected testimonies and documents about the city. Most of interviewees are in their 80s and 90s now and they spent their childhood in the colony as second generation settlers.

"Daejeon was a very sophisticated and modern city like 'little Tokyo'. We had a very good living there with little influence of the war." "As everyone knew the city developed thanks to the railway, local people were friendly to us. We left all properties when leaving for Japan after 1945." Throughout the interview, most of the interviewees told personal stories expressing strong nostalgia for their hometown which brings back beautiful memories. Although Japanese and Koreans basi-

cally lived in separated areas, some of the interviewees mentioned memories of the interaction between the two communities, mostly positive ones. Ko asked all of them the same question at the end of the interview. “How did being born and growing up in colonial Korea influence your life?” Ultimately Ko found that “no one answered the question”. There was almost no story particular to colonial life, such as discrimination or assimilation. Most of them seemed to be proud of having participated in modernizing the city and not to accept that they were actually “rulers” in a colonial system.

Although An and Ko wanted to hear personal stories beyond the simplified dichotomy of the rulers and the ruled, they still became embarrassed by the fact that interviewees’

memories do not correspond to the official historical context and that they did not share a common historical narrative with former citizens of Sojedong. “I expected to record their honest memories from which we, today’s citizens, could see the society at the time. But perhaps they might have been too young to have had a social perspective. For now, I don’t know what kind of meaning their memories have for us”, An says.

All of these attempts concerning Sojedong can be seen as an attempt to track down the former immigrants who certainly are a part of the local history but were very naturally excluded from national memory as they are no longer nationals. While the process ironically showed them the strength of the national narrative, the ambitious challenge to find

the meaning of the controversial traces of immigrants and pass them on to the current generation and future generations continues.

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### Morita Manako

is a staff writer for Tokyo Shimbun and Chunichi Shimbun, Japanese daily newspapers. She completed her B.A. in Global Studies at the University of Ochanomizu in Tokyo. Her main interests include reconciliation and national memory. She participated in EPRIE 2013.

# Migration, *and* Integration, Belonging



*The organizations Shwe Gangaw no Kai (top) and Second Harvest (right) provide assistance to refugees in the greater Tokyo area.*



# At home in Japan: Locating belonging in an ethno-nationalist society

Gracia Liu-Farrer

*This paper examines the narratives of belonging from immigrants of different national backgrounds who have lived in Japan for an extended period of time.*

*The paper shows that immigrants can belong to both host and home countries, depending on their understanding of the notion of “home”. Belonging is a form of emotional geography. One’s intimate relationships, socioeconomic experience and cultural competence in different places matter. Belonging is also a form of cultural narrative. The narratives of nationhood and personhood all affect people’s concept of home and belonging.*

In a non-traditional immigrant country such as Japan where a myth of ethnic homogeneity and cultural uniqueness constitutes its national identity (Burgess 2010) and where immigration as a concept and policy solution to demographic crisis are shunned (Roberts 2012), settlement and mobility in and out of Japan takes on a fluid and uncertain nature. Can immigrants locate belonging in Japan? How do they understand their relationships with the host society? We need to answer these questions because immigrants now are more likely to end up in an ethno-nationalist country such as Japan rather than in the US or Australia, the so-called traditional immigrant societies. Understanding how immigrants locate belonging in Japan helps illuminate the particular characteristics and processes of

integration into a new type of immigrant-receiving context.

## 1. Narratives of home and belonging

The terms “home” and “belonging” conjure different images in different contexts. In immigrants’ narratives, home is sometimes associated with “everyday life”, indicating the present, and is interchangeable with “being at home”, invoking security and comfort. For others, home stands for the nuclear family. For others, however, home means “natal home” or “homeland”, referring to the place where they departed from.

### At home in Japan

Among immigrants in Japan, quite a few felt that they belonged to Japanese society. This is caused by their feeling of “being at home” in

this place. Japan or a place in Japan gradually became the place they returned to while their natal home is the place they “went”. Many immigrants have become so accustomed to the Japanese way of life that they often experience reverse cultural shock or physical discomfort when visiting their country of origin.

Moreover, this attachment to Japan comes from feelings of fitting in with the local community or a social group. The interviewees embraced their local bonds to such a degree that one Chinese woman felt guilty for leaving her friends, colleagues and neighbors in Sendai after the Tohoku earthquake on March 11, 2011. The local community does not have to be tied to a specific place, instead it is about groups and organizations that the immigrants are



affiliated with. Workplaces, hobby groups, religious congregations and co-ethnic professional circles all provide a sense of “at-home-ness” and belonging in Japan.

Finally, many immigrants also interpret belonging as playing a role in the society, contributing to it or having a relationship with Japan. Several informants claimed their right to belong to Japan because they were taxpayers. They also enjoyed the social welfare provided by the Japanese government. These benefits, such as “covering the costs when you get sick”, made them feel included.

### Homeland belonging

While a substantial number of people affirmed an increasing sense of belonging to Japan, the majority of the immigrants were more as-

sertive about their belonging to their countries of origin. Three somewhat overlapping scenarios stand out among their stories. First, some were the “sojourner” type who never intended to stay in Japan. Regardless of their experience in Japan, they orient themselves toward their place of origin. Second, homeland belonging, in a way, implies immigrants’ lack of satisfaction with their life in Japan. This emotional attachment to the place of origin might be thought of as resembling “homesickness” described by Alistair Thomson (2005, p. 118). It is a longing “for people and places” and “ways of life” in their home country and “not feeling at home” in the destination country. It is as much about the “remembered and imagined home” as about their life in the “here and now” (ibid. p. 224). Finally, there are people whose

notion of home and belonging are influenced by their cultural traditions and nationalistic discourses. In these narratives the location of “home” and the sense of belonging were predetermined, synonymous to roots, and tied to a primordial identity.

### De-placed belonging

Migration, though it does not necessarily uproot people completely from their original homes, inevitably entails a process of detaching and re-attaching individuals to places, complicating their emotional geography. Over the course of finding places to belong to, a de-placed notion of home and belonging emerges — a sense of belonging no longer attached to a particular geographic location. In some cases, belonging is either absent or disposed of.

The association of home with nuclear family and intimate relationships is the most common one in the narratives of those who describe a de-placed sense of belonging. Their belonging has nothing to do with where their home is, but more with whom they are with. The absence of a love relationship and family, on the other hand, leads to an absence of belonging among some immigrants.

There is also the possibility of cosmopolitan belonging. There are immigrants who feel that one's nationality means little for their identity. Instead, they tend to describe themselves as "an international person", an "Asian" or a "European". They are often competent in two or more languages, culturally curious and fond of travel. A strong sense of individuality is pronounced.

## **2. What affects the feeling of belonging or the lack of it**

The immigrants' narratives indicate that several key conditions influence their belonging tendencies.

### **The centrality of intimacy**

Intimacy and belonging are closely linked. Underneath many of the immigrant narratives of belonging we find longing for intimacy and social inclusion. The intimacy here is not limited to love and sexual relationships, even though they are a very important part of it. For many people, especially the Chinese, Koreans and Filipinos, it also extends to broader patterns of social relationships, including friendships and collegial relations. Many use the words "cold" to describe their Japanese peers because the manners Japanese use to express friendship are different from what they are accustomed

to —more outgoing and intimate kinds of expression. Social inclusion refers to the subjective feeling experienced in a multitude of social contexts ranging from company meetings and community events to social interactions in general. These narratives document the emotional geography of immigrants in Japan and highlight the characteristics and issues of integration in Japan.

### **Acculturation and gradual belonging**

Belonging can be a gradual process. The longer one stays in a new country, the higher the possibility of building various intimate social relationships with people there. It is consequently more likely for one to establish a sense of belonging to at least a segment of the society. It is a gradual process because acculturation and building social relations take time. Language seems to be the most crucial condition the interviewees talked about when they were asked about their sense of belonging, from IT engineers to cooks. Sense of belonging has to do with the level of comfort experienced when using the new language in various situations, such as friendship circles, company meetings and general socialization.

### **Status and belonging**

Whether individuals feel valued and appreciated in an environment is an important indicator of their sense of belonging in that environment. In other words, their sense of belonging has to do with their perception of their own social status — of how other people regard them — in a system, a group and in society. Therefore, whether a person feels at home and possesses a sense of belonging in Japan has a lot to do

with his perception of how much he is valued in Japan. The ethnic Japanese Brazilians' changing notions of homeland present an illustrative case. Though they entertained the idea of an ethnic homeland while they were in Brazil, upon migration the ethnic Japanese Brazilians found themselves as low-skilled laborers confined to the manufacturing sector of the Japanese economy. Many of them suffered a loss of social status because they were comparatively well-educated middle class in Brazil. The nature of their economic position and the lack of cultural competence to mix in with Japanese society accentuated their social isolation. As a consequence, they began to redefine their natal homeland, Brazil, as the true homeland (Tsuda 2003).

### **The racial factor**

Arudou's book *Embedded Racism* (2015) and numerous articles on his well-known website Debit.org lambaste the differential treatments many Japanese establishments give to the so-called "visible minorities" and point out that "Japaneseness" is a racialized category. According to him, skin-color, more than one's actual citizenship, is used as the criterion of exclusion. No doubt, at least at present, the term "Japanese" evokes an East Asian racial image because an overwhelming majority of Japanese people throughout history shared these characteristics. Though flawed and a cause for discrimination in many incidents, as condemned by Arudou, this stereotypical image is accepted by most Japanese as well as non-Japanese. Because of this, an individual's phenotypes affect their experiences in Japan and consequently their sense of belonging and how they relate to Japanese society.



### The power of cultural narratives

Migration is a process of crossing multiple borders — political, social and cultural — and as such it exposes immigrants to complex and sometimes difficult experiences and requires of them a certain creativity to make sense of their life in a new country. From these immigrants' narratives of home and belonging, we see cultural influences from the nationalistic discourses and patriotic education in their places of origin, from cultural nationalistic discourses about Japan, as well as the different notions of selfhood and identity that are prevalent in the countries they came from. For example, North Americans and Europeans are much more likely to emphasize a notion of home anchored in the present moment. The sense of belonging is mapped onto a personal biography. On the other hand, nationalistic discourses occur frequently in Chinese immigrants' narratives. Though not all Chinese immigrants automatically associate "home" with "homeland" or their birthplace, many invoke the notions of roots, land and "a love of your country" in their narratives. Meanwhile, immigrants from other parts of the world also use terms such as "group-oriented mentality", "ho-

mogeneous", or "closed society" to describe Japan, reflecting the global reach as well as willing acceptance of cultural discourses in the contemporary world we live in. Immigrants are mostly able to negotiate incoherent cultural narratives and separate the reality they live in from the ideology or identity they possess. But these discourses influence how they perceive their roles in Japanese society and eventually their mobility decisions.

### Conclusion

In the age of global mobility, to move becomes an aspiration, a necessity, a signal of self-worth, and, for many, a normative practice. With expanding transnational movements the boundary between origin and destination countries is increasingly blurred. This paper sketches the belonging patterns of immigrants in Japan, a stereotypically homogeneous and ethno-nationalist society. It shows that it is possible for immigrants to find a sense of belonging in Japan. However, many people do not. There are also people who free themselves from a place-belonging. A sense of belonging, as a socio-psychological construct, can be influenced by a range of things, from one's private, intimate relation-

ship, one's cultural skills and social locations to one's ethnic background and nationalistic discourses.

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### Gracia Liu-Farrer

is professor of sociology at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Japan, and leads the Migration and Citizenship Research Group at Waseda Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies. Her research examines immigrants' economic, social and political practices in Japan, as well as Chinese immigrant children's identities and belongings in different destination societies. Her interests also include the global mobility of international students and wealthy Chinese.



# Global City Tokyo

Albert Denk

Tokyo is considered the largest city in the world. According to estimates, more than 38 million people live in the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area (United Nations 2015). This corresponds to about one third of the total Japanese population. Tokyo is the epitome of a global city that is internationally connected and is considered a center of global economy. It stands for many superlatives - like the Shinjuku station (with over three million passengers daily, comparable to the total population of Berlin, Germany), the huge pedestrian crossing in Shibuya (which can be crossed by 2,500 people at the same time) or the seemingly never-ending luminous facades

in Akihabara. Nevertheless, with these iconic images, the people in the background, necessary for the functioning of the city, remain out of focus. This article shows how the processes of global interconnectedness and local exploitation in Tokyo are closely intertwined.

In 1991 the sociologist Saskia Sassen coined the term Global City (Sassen 1991; Lützeler 2008). She named the cities of New York, London and Tokyo as prime examples. All three cities of the so-called Global North represent a new form of city, overriding the influence of nation states. Based on privatization and deregulation, international city networks

emerge that elude state control and state economies. This can be seen by the example of outsourcing and tax evasion. For example, according to the National Tax Authorities, Japan lost 16.1 billion yen (nearly 120 million euros) in 2016 due to tax evasion (The Japan Times 2017). In addition, global cities are decoupling from their surrounding areas and developing stronger ties to similar global financial and information centers. It creates de-territorialized places that are connected across the planet through information technologies like the Internet. Thus, Tokyo is more closely associated with cities such as New York or London than with the villages in the nearby



prefectures of Saitama or Kanagawa. Global cities operate in their own network, characterized in particular by global fluctuation of capital and a transnationalization of people (for example top level professionals).

A particular feature of these cities is that localized work continues to exist and is even conditioned by the globalization of the city. This is particularly evident in the case of migrants and refugees and their informal work. Without low-wage labor, the system of top earners could not be upheld. These connections become particularly clear in the example of the financial district Marunouchi in Tokyo. It is necessary to employ

cleaning personnel to provide clean offices for the Mitsubishi managers and waste management workers to bring Furukawa Electric's trash out of the area. Similarly, nursing staff and daycare providers are required by the Hitachi Group boards to care for their parents and their children during working hours. Security services are required to guard the Shin-Marunouchi Building at night and to control entry into the JP Tower during the day. Meetings occur only briefly during lunchtime when high earners, such as those from Nikko Citigroup, meet with low-wage workers in the restaurant business and the latter prepare local organic products for the former. All

of these low-paid jobs are predominantly carried out by marginalized people, such as women, members of minorities, migrants, or refugees (Ishikawa 2015). In addition, there is little to no social security for these people. They and their families are dependent on their low income. Sassen describes this as a process of informalization. Due to the increasing economic activities of high earners, there is an increasing demand for low-paid positions, resulting in more informal employment. For many, informal work is "a way to survive under these conditions" (Sassen 2005, p. 30). Thus, Sassen outlines an increase in the exploitation processes of low paid workers



and thus illustrates an increase in inequalities within global cities.

Sassen also sees the concentration of people without citizenship (“immigrants”) as a special feature of global cities. She calls this the “new immigrant workforce in a de-nationalized urban space” (ibid. p. 39). This includes the previously described low-paid sector but also top-level professionals. Sassen's focus on citizenship must be criticized at this point. There is a lack of clarity here. More decisive is the economic and cultural capital of persons. The so-called top-level professionals are in conflict with the local population as they bring “global skills” to the labor market, which makes them more competitive. The benefits of top-level professionals are based on international educational qualifications at prestigious universities and multilingualism. Furthermore, they can outperform prices in the housing market through higher incomes, and with this, they generally raise the price level. In the Ginza shopping district, the square-meter price can now reach 33 million yen (292,000 euros) (Welter 2016). In order to find customers for this living space, a global financial elite is needed to procure the capital for such an object. As the need for these homes also creates jobs for low-paid workers, there is a dependency between the global financial elite and the local low-wage sector. The construction workers for the apartments in Ginza are often migrants and refugees and are characterized by a lack of labor rights. Prominent cases, such as the suicide of a 23-year-old worker after 190 hours of overtime in a single month on construction sites for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics,

also show the extreme working conditions under which informal work takes place (Associated Press 2017). Exploitation processes are thus also related to the highly unequal concentrations of economic and cultural capital.

The sociologist Göran Therborn criticizes Sassen's concept of the global city by pointing out, based on the financial crisis of 2008, how strongly cities are still dependent on nation states (Therborn 2009). Japan had to fight double-digit growth losses during the financial crisis. This was followed by fiscal and monetary stimulus from the Japanese central bank, the Bank of Japan, so that jobs and company locations could be maintained (Haasch 2011). This also shows that Tokyo remains highly dependent on national policies, as national interventions have also provided financial support to the global city. In addition, the state is indispensable in many aspects of Tokyo's life, such as national health insurance (Kokumin Kenkō Hoken) and state education. This also applies to the many state employees in Tokyo whose income is paid by the state and not by the city.

Although Therborn himself does not say much about the phenomenon of social polarization in global cities, his work shows the interrelations between various political actors. The global city of Tokyo faces challenges that need to be resolved locally, nationally and globally. On a global level, for example, compliance with the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up by the International Labor Organization (ILO) should be mentioned. The United Nations spe-

cial agency is setting internationally valid labor standards that must be adhered to by all member states. Sassen's description of nation states losing power to global cities shows that states have less and less importance for and influence on global cities and can barely make any changes. Nevertheless, as Therborn points out, government legislative initiatives can also protect and specifically promote marginalized people. Local projects have a huge potential for social change from the bottom up. Thus, local civil society projects can create certain protection and promotional areas for disadvantaged people. For example, the organizations Center for Minority Issues and Mission (CMIM), Second Harvest, Shwe Gangaw no Kai, and the Japan Association for Refugees (JAR) provide assistance to refugees in the greater Tokyo area. These and other projects are symbolic of a local approach. Attempts to reduce inequalities in global cities can be found and are probably only to be coped with at multiple levels.

This article presents the interplay between global finance, knowledgeable elites and the local low-wage sector, which are strongly reciprocal and interdependent. To break this cycle, it is important to focus on marginalized groups. Be it the cleaners or the waste management, the nursing staff or the educators, the security services or the low-wage workers in catering – because without them, Tokyo would not be a global city.

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### Albert Denk

is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU) and research associate at the Technische Universität München (TUM). Previously, he worked as project coordinator for Refugees Welcome - Germany. Albert participated in EPRIE 2016 and is a proponent of global solidarity.

# Visiting the Japan Association for Refugees

Tamura Miyuki  
Claudia Karstens  
Albert Denk

We are in the facilities of the Japan Association for Refugees (JAR) in a central district of Tokyo. JAR is an NGO that has been working for the needs of refugees in Japan since 1999. In these rooms refugees are advised on social and legal issues. Overall, 26 paid employees and 28 interns take care of meals, rest opportunities or help with finding work. Today the facilities are closed but it is easy to imagine them full of people, loud talk and a busy back and forth. JAR is one of the few NGOs dedicated to refugees in Japan. Their work begins from the arrival of a refugee until support is no longer necessary. Those who have made it to JAR can be extremely lucky. In Japan, of the approximately 7,500 asylum applications in 2015, only 27 were granted.

There are rolled up mattresses in one of the rooms, a place of rest for refugees in the middle of the hectic city. The asylum process can take several years in Japan as their duration is not regulated by law. Some refugees are homeless so a mattress

in the office is better than sleeping outside. During the asylum process, most refugees do not receive state support. In addition, many refugees lose their legal status or do not have it in the first place. As a result, they do not get welfare benefits. For example, access to medical care and higher education for their children are limited.

JAR tries to close this gap. Its mission is to ensure that all refugees who flee to Japan and seek help will be supported and can settle down in the new land with hope. Moreover, JAR wants to build a society in which people can live together with the refugees. In the social realm, the NGO cares about health care, food and shelter for the refugees. In doing so, they enter into negotiations with medical institutions and local authorities. In addition, they assist in the asylum process by providing information about the refugee determination procedure and legal advice. Moreover, the organization tries to give refugees a career perspective. They support them on the

job market or on the path to self-employment. In addition to the direct support, JAR actively works on advocacy and networking to promote institutional reform, as well as public relations campaigns.

Despite the fact that the Japanese government ratified the Refugee Convention and Protocol in 1981, the overall environment surrounding refugees and asylum seekers requires much more improvement. While Indo-Chinese refugees in the 1980's were admitted exceptionally in an annual quota based on the Cabinet understanding and were provided full social services (i.e. accommodation, education, health, and vocational training), there are hardly any such services available to those who make an asylum claim and go through the refugee recognition procedures. Furthermore, the issue of refugees and asylum seekers has not received considerable publicity either in public administration or in civil society. Moreover, the Japanese Government does not support organizations like JAR financially.



The organization had to start a fundraising campaign to get donations for a new building and to organize support for refugees and asylum seekers. Thanks to many donations, the organization achieved their goal and they can move soon.

During the meeting at JAR, the participants from Europe and East Asia exchanged different points of view. For instance, financial support from the state is different in Japan in comparison to Germany. In the latter there are six recognized welfare agencies, among others, which get subsidies from the state to organize a social welfare infrastructure. This also includes support for refugees and asylum seekers (for instance providing integration courses).

However, JAR is also fighting similar challenges as the organizations in Germany do. This includes things like finding a lawyer, getting accommodation, applying for health insurance, getting a work permit, finding a job or the fear of detention. Compared to Germany, Japan does not yet seem to have a strong, nationwide network of organizations which can lobby for refugee issues. In Germany there are organizations like PRO ASYL, the Refugee Council in every Federal State and the above-mentioned six recognized welfare agencies with their members and subdivisions. One improvement discussed was the creation of a network in Japan which would give smaller organizations a powerful voice.

Despite the minimal support from the Japanese government, JAR manages to accomplish a breathtaking job. Under the conditions described above, the work of the organization attains even more importance. After leaving the facilities in Tokyo, one participant from Germany stated: "It has been great to see that there are also very active people in Japan who are fighting for the same idea." Despite different challenges, there seems to be many similarities between civil society activists who are supporting refugees in East Asia and in Europe. Recognizing the similarities and the efforts being undertaken both in East Asia and Europe feels encouraging.



### **Tamura Miyuki**

*is currently working for Japan Association for Refugees (JAR), an implementing partner organization with UNHCR. She studied International Law and Human Rights at the United Nations Mandated University for Peace and participated in EPRIE 2016.*



### **Claudia Karstens**

*works as an Expert Advisor on Migration at the Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband e.V. and studied Social Law and Social Economics (LL.M) at the University of Kassel and the University of Applied Sciences Fulda. Claudia participated in EPRIE 2016.*



### **Albert Denk**

*is a PhD candidate and lecturer at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (LMU) and research associate at the Technische Universität München (TUM). Previously, he worked as project coordinator for Refugees Welcome - Germany. Albert participated in EPRIE 2016 and is a proponent of global solidarity.*

# Villa Education Center

**Kato Jotaro**

The EPRIE 2017 participants and alumni (10 people in total) visited the Villa Education Center to see Kyaw Kyaw Soe and his wife Nwe Nwe Kyaw on July 1st, 2017. Kyaw Kyaw Soe is one of the recognized refugees who fled from Burma to Japan. He started the Villa Education Center in July 2014. This group teaches Burmese children growing up in Japan their mother tongue. It is located in Takadanobaba district which is called “Little Yangon” because of the large Burmese population living there. I organized this visit because I believed it was important for participants and alumni to learn not only in the meeting rooms but also in the field. Kyaw and Nwe had many experiences to share as refugees, migrants, restaurant owners and leaders of this education center focused on the integration of Burmese migrants in Japan.

First, we observed the mother tongue class for Burmese children who have been raised in Japan. On this day, two children were there. They were learning their mother tongue to help maintain their identity and in case their family goes back to Burma. One child was drawing a clock on the paper and writing the schedule in Burmese. He was concentrating on his studies. The other child had difficulties focusing. This child was born and raised in Japan and attended a Japanese elementary school. He still does not understand why he

needs to learn Burmese because he spends his life using only Japanese but his parents wish for their child to keep a Burmese identity.

Then we moved to the Burmese restaurant RUBY which Kyaw owns. He talked about his life in Japan and informed us about the Burmese society in Japan. He was born in Rangoon, Burma in 1963. He graduated from the University of Economics in Rangoon in 1984, and he was an activist at the university. He was especially interested in politics during his time at the university. In 1988, he participated in the pro-democracy movement in Burma. When the military coup happened in September 1988, he was afraid of continuing in his home country. Therefore, he decided to go abroad. He left Burma in 1991. He went to Thailand first and arrived in Japan in May 1991. Since then his life in Japan has been gradually changing. He says that the openness of the Japanese society helped him mature and that he became very self-confident. He became more pragmatic too. He worked several odd jobs prior to opening the restaurant; he also worked as announcer in the Burmese section of the NHK radio for more than 16 years. He helps other Burmese integrate into Japanese society and into the Burmese community. Even though he has lived in Japan for more than 25 years, he still misses Burma a lot. According

to him democratization of Burma is still in progress. Aung San Suu Kyi has returned to politics following years of living under house arrest. She is the daughter of Aung San, the Father of the Nation of modern-day Myanmar and the first State Counselor. The Burmese residing in Japan are wondering whether they should go back to Burma or settle down in Japan. It is important for their children to learn Burmese in case they choose to return.

What kind of reactions did the participants have? One person said Kyaw is optimistic. Another said he is enthusiastic. Here are the comments from some participants.

“During the EPRIE program, I was honored to visit the Villa Education Centre and meet the children learning Burmese and receiving cultural education there. After the visit we were able to spend time with Kyaw and learn about his journey to Japan, his life as a former asylum seeker and as a recognized refugee. I was excited to learn about his story. Last week I was informed by my Burmese friend that his son (one of the few recognized refugee children) was accepted to a university here in Korea. Like Kyaw, he has been teaching his own children and those of his neighbors their own language and culture. It is nice to see the work being done informally even though there is still a lot to be done in terms

of refugee laws and policies in the receiving countries.” (Jeanie Kim, EPRIE 2017 participant)

“We saw the great work in teaching Burmese children their language while visiting the Villa Education Center. I realized it was not only for learning the language, but also learning about their culture, building a network in the community, and developing a sense of belonging to their home country where their parents lived. When immigrants settle in new countries, I see many of them try very hard to integrate into their society while children of the immigrants suppress their heritage in order to merge into the mainstream of the new society. Teaching the second generation their background through language plays an important role in shaping their identity. Hearing Kyaw Kyaw Soe's story and seeing the class, I received a glimpse of their positive impact on the children. Kyaw Kyaw Soe and his wife showed that it's possible to integrate and be successful in the new country while keeping alive their passion and love for their home country and passing them on to the next generation.” (Fumie Terahata, EPRIE 2017 participant)

“The visit to the Villa Education Centre was interesting and unforgettable for me. As former refugees themselves, Mrs. and Mr. Kyaw tried to teach Burmese to the Burmese children living in Japan. Learning the language of their home country is more than a linguistic skill, it is also a way of not forgetting the culture they came from. Mrs. and Mr. Kyaw care sincerely and are concerned for each child's situation in their center. I learned from the attitudes they had toward the children, and I think that their way of viewing the children and refugees might have shaped the ideas and attitudes of their coworkers. They truly showed that before talking about policies toward refugees, we should view them as neighbors. The Burmese restaurant was great too. The food was delicious and I really want to visit that place again and hear more stories and lessons from Mr. and Mrs. Kyaw.” (Dahye Yim, EPRIE 2016 participant)

After the visit, participants and alumni concluded that “Identity is not determined by the government, but by yourself.” We heard the story of one student at Nwe's center. His parents were granted refugee status and a visa to stay in Japan. Then

they brought their child to join them because it is difficult for them to decide whether or not they should go back to Burma due to the slow democratization process. If the child wants to get permanent residence in Japan, he needs to stay in Japan for several years. He needs to study Japanese too. The child actually wanted to continue his studies in Burma. However for the sake of family unity, he needs to stay in Japan for a certain period. He also needs to learn Burmese in case the family decides to go back. The Burmese classes play an important role in keeping all the possibilities open for that child.

Some EPRIE participants also struggle with their own identity since they have moved around to several countries. There were some good conversations about what identity is.

When I heard that the EPRIE alumni meeting was to be held in Tokyo, I got nervous. The Japanese government is very unwelcoming migrants to Japan. I wondered what participants and alumni can learn from Japan. However, thanks to this visit, I realized that Japanese civil society welcomes migrants in many ways. The Villa Education Center is one such example.



### **Kato Jotaro**

*is a PhD candidate at Waseda University Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies. His research interest is how the illegality of irregular migrants is produced in Japan. He gives lectures at the University of the Sacred Heart and Hosei University. He participated in EPRIE 2016.*



# "EPRIE is a continuous experience for me"

Interview with Kato Jotaro

Julia Sonntag

## **What were your personal and professional reasons for applying to EPRIE?**

My personal and professional reason for applying to EPRIE is that I actually struggled in my NGO to work under the severe immigration control act. I struggled to save my clients. It was quite difficult to keep offering solutions to them and I needed some motivation, encouragement from others. Therefore, I saw last year's EPRIE 2016 as a chance to talk with participants from Europe and East Asia, and I think I just got something from others who do research or activities for migration refugees. I wanted to hear something from them. So I decided to participate.

## **What do you connect personally with this year's EPRIE topic "Migration, Integration and Belonging"? What do integration and belonging mean to you?**

Integration and belonging mean the following to me: A person who wants to integrate chooses to have their own identity. For instance, I have visited Burmese language class-

es together with the other participants. If people come to Japan, they learn Japanese. However, they might lose their identity or their language. Even though they are coming from Burma, it should be good for them to speak Burmese and Japanese. So for me integration is keeping the culture and language of the country of origin as well as acquiring that of the host country. To me belonging means having a secure place in one's own mind. From my point of view, if the person's legal status in a certain country is unstable, it is quite difficult to feel like they belong. Even if the legal status is unstable, a person might still favor staying in the host country over returning. It is quite important to make sure that I can belong anywhere with proper legal status, in the country of origin and the host country. Therefore, I would like to offer a space for migrants to belong.

## **In your opinion, what is the value of an exchange about migration and integration between Asia and Europe?**

For me, the value of an exchange between Asia and Europe are the

young and committed people from Asia and Europe. Actually, before I participated in EPRIE, I wondered, "How can I communicate with European and Asian people about that topic?" What surprises me are the many similarities between Europe and East Asia. Europe and East Asia both have a history of war and a history of reconciliation, and Europe experienced immigration earlier than East Asia. Now however, East Asian countries have completely the same experiences as Europe so we can share these experiences. What is so interesting to me is that for both Asian and European participants, identity is quite important as a place to rely on and feel secure. Both European and Asian participants are working to have a space for that. This was quite impressive for me

## **What is your major personal or professional take-away from this Asian-European exchange?**

My major take-away from the exchange between Asia and Europe is that I have got many friends or people to rely on in Europe and in East Asia. I mean in both Europe and East Asia we face difficulties after

many people continued to migrate. We might suffer and we can see in both Europe and East Asia a kind of discrimination towards migrants and refugees. Now I know that there are many friends and people to rely on. That encourages me a lot. There are people who work on the same topic in Europe, China and Korea and might still lose my motivation or the energy to continue working, but the EPRIE experience encouraged me. These friends encourage me so I can start to work again.

**Are there aspects of this program that you can translate into your own project or research work**

**when you are back home? If so, which aspects could your work benefit from and how?**

Before joining EPRIE in April 2016, I worked as an NGO representative and case worker, but after joining EPRIE I decided to go back to the research field as a PhD student. Actually, I quit my NGO job and started my PhD life in 2017. Now three months have passed, and I currently still feel troubled by coming back to academia. The lives of NGO practitioners and researchers are totally different. I try to work hard on research but I am relatively tired because it is quite a new field. However,

through EPRIE I can find people who also do the same research, so I can still learn many things from the participants. From my point of view, Japan is a very strict country for migrants. I think if I visit the other countries of EPRIE, especially Germany, I might get other research questions thanks to the comparison between Germany and Japan. EPRIE just continues to answer my questions and also gives me new questions. EPRIE is a continuous experience for me.



### **Kato Jotaro**

*is a PhD candidate at Waseda University Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies. His research interest is how the illegality of irregular migrants is produced in Japan. He gives lectures at the University of the Sacred Heart and Hosei University. He participated in EPRIE 2016.*



### **Julia Sonntag**

*is project manager at the Department for International Relations, America and Asia at the Robert Bosch Stiftung. After graduating in Political Science and Sinology (Chinese Language and Culture Studies) at Trier University, she worked as a volunteer for a local non-profit organization, giving educational and political support to refugees. During her studies, she worked as a research and teaching assistant at the Faculty of Political Science, Trier University, with a focus on transformation and democratization processes in East Asia and Southeast Asia. She spent a year and a half in Beijing, China, studying at Renmin University of China and working for a Chinese-German media start-up.*

# Open Space - self-organization as the principle for success

Jutta Weimar

Jutta Weimar and her colleagues have been successfully facilitate processes through Open Space for many years, from questions of organizational development and network formation to the involvement of children and young people and networking of executives at home and abroad. In this article, she describes the mechanisms underpinning Open Space and gives tips for its application.

Conference? Meeting? People think of lectures with endless slides, eternal sitting, boredom, a pre-set program that fits everyone a little bit, but doesn't really fit anyone, podium discussions that lead "smarter" people on stage, rooms cast in twilight and participants who dawdle away their time. What a person longs for are pleasant breaks and meetings and exchanges with the participants. Afterwards, you realize that you have talked about a lot of things, but nothing has changed.

## Change of scenario:

At the end of a two-day event, all of around 200 participants sit in concentric circles in the room, creating a tense and attentive atmosphere. A microphone is passed around and everyone has the opportunity to

share his or her impressions and thoughts with the others. "After 34 years in the industry, I have the feeling of belonging together for the first time", "very concrete appointments", "a very healthy working atmosphere", "I go home with a bag full of ideas and contacts", "I was skeptical at the beginning and am now very convinced about this way of working". The day before, at the beginning of the event, everyone sat together in the same way, 180 executives who had a common question and worked together in Open Space.

## What is the difference?

With today's complex issues, top-down decisions and sole reliance on expert know-how are not suitable means of advancing an important topic or promoting necessary changes. This requires people who are committed to your concerns, innovative thinking, self-organized work and willing to take responsibility for implementation. This is exactly what happens in Open Space. Open Space has been a tried and tested method since the mid-1980s and is always used successfully when: existential and potentially conflicting issues have to be addressed, nobody knows the answer, there are very different views on the problem, and

there's a burning need for an answer to the question.

## How does Open Space work?

Open Space is more than a workshop – it is a process with different steps, including prework and follow-up. Once it has been clarified whether Open Space is the appropriate means, a preparatory meeting is held for people representing the expected participants. At this meeting, the goal and the exact question are worked out and it is determined who has to be present to make the event a success.

Then Open Space takes place. There is no agenda, but there is a central question. Everyone is present at the beginning of the event because planning for all of the work and time schedule take place in the first 1 to 1.5 hours. Then everyone follows what is interesting and important to them. Parallel and self-organized break-out groups take place over the course of 1-2 days that develop the dynamics of self-organization, self-responsibility, networking, learning and cooperation. The results are documented in real-time. After a thorough examination of the results and enough time for reflection, all projects and project ideas





*At the beginning all the participants sit in a circle.*

for implementation are gathered together, arranged and documented. A few weeks after the Open Space event, there is a follow-up meeting at which the progress of the projects and plans are jointly evaluated and new projects possibly agreed upon and the next steps coordinated.

### **How does an Open Space event work?**

All participants sit in a circle, and at the beginning the sponsor greets all participants and opens the Open Space. Afterwards, the facilitator gives a brief introduction explaining the working methods. The special character of Open Space is created by the basic elements of the process:

### **The Circle**

Everyone is in contact with each other in a circle, there is no "top" or "bottom". The circle is a primordial form of human coexistence. The Open Space begins and ends in the

circle. Each morning and evening everyone meets in a circle to exchange ideas, bring in new concerns and ultimately plan future projects.

### **The Principles:**

#### **Principle 1:**

**"Whoever comes is the right people."**

I only turn to the people who are here with me and let myself be open to them. They are exactly the people with whom I can take my subject further.

#### **Principle 2:**

**"Whatever happens is the only thing that could have"**

Everything that could or should have happened is completely irrelevant. We work with what is available.

#### **Principle 3:**

**"Whenever it starts is the right time"**

New ideas and ground-breaking

thoughts usually do not come at a given time. I can calmly await the right moment for work to begin.

#### **Principle 4:**

**"When it's over, it's over / when it's not over, it's not over"**

I use my time productively. When a task is finished, I turn to other things. However, if the agreed time has already expired and it is only just beginning to get exciting, then we will meet again.

### **The Law of Mobility**

Whenever I find myself in a situation where I can neither learn nor contribute, I am obliged (law!) to go where I can learn or contribute. So when I realize that my mind is wandering, my body follows.

### **The phenonema - bumblebees and butterflies**

For the Law of Mobility to unfold its effectiveness, people need to "fly"



The bulletin board during the Open Space of EPRIE 2017 with the topic "Strengthening the Network".



Breakout sessions during the Open Space.

from workshop to workshop because a lot of things seem interesting to them or, like butterflies, are undecided and "just beautiful" and are not present in any workshop at first. Systemically, both phenomena contribute to productive work and are very welcome.

#### The Admonition:

##### Caution! Be ready to be uprised

This is an invitation to drop well-known assumptions and beliefs about the group, the theme or the setting and let yourself be surprised by the treasures to be found here and now.

#### The Bulletin Board

This is where the participants' issues are collected at the beginning. Even during running events, issues can still be posted.

#### The Marketplace

When the Issue-collecting phase is over, everyone comes to the front and signs up for the issues where

they want to go. This is not a registration list because the law of mobility makes it possible to be exactly where one's personal energy leads. In the marketplace, times and spaces can still be negotiated between the participants before the break-out sessions begin.

#### The non-stop break buffet

During the event, there is a non-stop buffet with drinks, fruit and vegetables incl. light dips where the participants can refresh themselves at any time during the event (which has virtually no pre-determined breaks).

Open Space events last between four hours and several days. The best take 16 hours, spread over three days. The break-out groups publish their results on the documentary wall which usually hangs near the non-stop buffet. In this way, each individual can understand what was discussed in the other break-out groups. After completion of all work,

the results are fully documented, including an updated contact list. Afterwards, the participants make appointments and make them available to everyone.

#### What works in Open Space?

The topic of self-organization is receiving new attention in the current management practice and has become a fixed working principle in some industries. In Open Space, this principle works in a pure and most natural form. Like in a marketplace, people can network, work on topics creatively and effectively and find solutions. Personal participation, a focus on important issues and a productive, healthy, lively community can emerge. Groups can produce an astonishing variety of concrete implementation steps in Open Space within a short period of time, and the number of participants is (almost) unlimited. Open Space events take place with groups of 5 to 2,000 people.





*Participants refresh themselves at the non-stop buffet during the event.*

In contrast to the conferences mentioned above and experienced many times, participants experience that it is possible to act on their own initiative and welcome to do so, to discuss essential tasks, to exercise leadership together, to deal with differences in an appreciative and resource-oriented manner, and to develop and agree action plans. The motivation

to tackle things in a self-organized and self-directed manner is supported by the synergy that arises in Open Space and can enter everyday working life.

Open Space continues to work: In the minds, in the actions at work, in the district, in corporate management, in public life, in social

discourse, in the daily formation of opinions...



### **Jutta Weimar**

*has worked as a freelance facilitator, coach & trainer in various fields and contexts since 2000 and is owner of the Facilitation Academy in Berlin, Germany.*

*More information about Open Space can be found here:*

[www.jutta-weimar.de](http://www.jutta-weimar.de)

[www.facilitation-academy.de](http://www.facilitation-academy.de)

[www.boscop.org](http://www.boscop.org)

[www.openspaceworld.com](http://www.openspaceworld.com)





# To build on the ideas of others: Using Design Thinking to move from regional integration to inclusion

Tarek Mohamed Hassan

*Innovative companies have long realized that they need to be human-centered in order to stay relevant. No wonder that the Design Thinking framework, as made famous and championed by innovation consultancies such as IDEO, is rooted in the for-profit sector. Nowadays, more and more players from the public and non-profit sectors are catching up in putting people first to better serve their stakeholders. How might we draw from Design Thinking methodologies to strengthen collaboration in East Asia and in Europe? How can we move from regional integration to inclusion?*

## Why Design Thinking?

Design Thinking is a framework that calls for a systemic approach to deal with ambiguity. This is the constant state of the 21st century: We are no longer surrounded by isolated challenges in different areas but by what is known as “wicked problems”. Megatrends like digitaliza-

tion and globalization prove that the world has become a “messy” place to operate in.

Today’s and tomorrow’s challenges need new mindsets and tools to navigate them. Traditionally, we are all taught that we have to be experts with extensive knowledge, able to

answer anything. Not knowing and uncertainty are not valued. We are encouraged to “fake it ‘til we make it”. Ask any experts about a specific problem in their domain and they will tell you the answer. It seems like people already have all the answers. While this works great in the sphere of exploiting current knowledge, it



hinders innovative exploration and solving challenges for which the outcome is unknown. If we already think we know everything about a problem, then we will only ever come up with the same or similar solutions.

Issues today are becoming more and more intertwined, so silos need to be torn down in order to design solutions that take into account a diversity of perspectives. One example: Water scarcity is not the sole issue of policy makers or engineers or social scientists. All contribute valuable expertise needed for a holistic solution based on desirability (human-centered), feasibility (technologically possible) and sustainability (economically viable). The sweet spot in the middle is called “innovation”.

### **Regional inclusion is the new integration**

The EPRIE program advocates regional integration in East Asia and Europe. Regional integration describes the long-term institutionalization of collaboration in a given

region regarding certain political fields of action.

Be it the development of a stronger public sector, joint environmental programs or trade agreements, the argument holds that putting in resources from party A and party B are eventually beneficial to both parties.

During EPRIE 2017 we learned that different perspectives from East Asia and Europe make regional integration in both places a challenge. Historical disputes and incidents in recent East Asian history have led to very different interpretations of these events. This makes collaboration a difficult endeavor. Similarly, in Europe, albeit not as politically charged as in East Asia, we also find stereotypes and stigmas ascribed to different countries.

The common denominator is that we still think as party A and party B. We still think about integration for both parties, instead of crafting a joint vision C. Here, regional inclusion comes into use.

What if we accept that we are both from party A and party B, but that vision C has the right incentives or is able to mitigate challenges that both party A and B are facing? What kind of mechanisms and frameworks can lead us there?

### **Getting messy with Design Thinking**

Design Thinking introduces the concept of radical collaboration. Wicked problems, such as how to re-imagine sharing resources within a region for more integration, are tackled by a trans-disciplinary team. Social scientists meet with business people, engineers discuss with ethnologists. This allows a diversity of viewpoints needed to navigate today's world.

The diversity of sectors can, in our case, be broadened with a diversity of nations. Take one South Korean engineer, a sociology professor from China, and a Japanese entrepreneur and let them explore as a team what regional collaboration can look like. Human-centered design advocates

the “beginner’s mindset”, inspired by the Japanese Zen Buddhist concept of “Shoshin” (初心). Shoshin implies that even though all team members are experts on the topic, they are encouraged to adapt an attitude of eagerness, openness and lack of preconceptions, to design the best possible solution.

One golden rule of brainstorming favors the notion of regional inclusion: One rule is to defer judgment and let ideas stay in the room even though they do not resonate with everyone. The other rule, encouraging wild ideas, means thinking big in order to tackle issues such as rethinking French and German energy markets, or confronting shared past and responsibility by China and Japan.

#### **Build on the ideas of others**

Working with the inputs of your co-creators is key to designing and

implementing an effective and sustainable solution to any given problem. This brainstorming rule organically pushes people into collaborating and using the potential that is around.

I do not argue that Design Thinking is the panacea to solve the historical tensions and political turmoil seen in East Asia or Europe. Moving from regional integration to regional inclusion will require a paradigm shift and experimentation with new frameworks and mindsets, of which Design Thinking is one. We need to start by tackling the way we have been thinking about regional cooperation as a systemic process. We need to innovate regional cooperation as we know it to make it fit for the future.

Albert Einstein said that we can not solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we

created them. Let us explore together where this journey can take us. One thing is certain: We need all the radical regional and global collaboration we can get at this point in history.



#### **Tarek Mohamed Hassan**

*is a techno-social innovation designer and entrepreneur. As a HPI D. School-trained Design Thinking coach and a German UNESCO-trained facilitator, Tarek holds trisector experience with a focus on start-ups and innovation management. Tarek empowers organizations in designing dynamic responses to rapidly evolving technologies and changing stakeholder needs. He participated in EPRIE 2017.*



# Migration, *and* Integration, Belonging



Participants and alumni of the EPRIE program 2017 at the alumni seminar.

# Five Questions for Mohamed Amjahid

**On privileges and hidden racism from the perspective of someone who is confronted with it every day**

**Yann Werner Prell**

**In Germany, many people discuss integration. What do you think about this debate? What does integration mean to you?**

I think that this word is misleading in the first place and above all in the German context. Integration in Germany always means that there might be something perfect and everybody has to stick to this perfect lifestyle. I wish life would be as easy as that but I don't see why I should integrate into a society that also produces far-right populism, hate, and violence of all kinds. Good values such as tolerance, equality and free speech are universal and not owned by a nation or a society that defines itself as a nation. I think that I am far more liberal than many people in Germany, therefore they should consider taking me, Mohamed, as a good example.

**In your book "Among Whites" you write a lot about daily racism when a lot of white people are not even aware of the ongoing discrimination. What could or should be done against it?**

Ask exactly this question. Get involved and discuss. No one can save

the world by him or herself. But exchange can really make a difference. Micro-aggression and racist behavior are happening because some people don't want to think about or just don't reflect on their own position in society. Asking (oneself) the right questions can be very useful.

**You write about privileges that you do not have as a "non-white" person, according to the color of your skin or your passport. How can we hold up a mirror to ourselves and recognize our own privileges? How do you make yourself aware of your own privileges?**

I just sit down and think about a very simple question. For example: Who am I to talk about a certain topic? I never mean to not participate in a discussion but being aware of my position in society helps me to avoid, for example, mansplaining or racist comments. We all have those bad things in us, sexism and racism are part of our daily education and media consumption. For a white person I suggest the following: Before shaking your head about "those migrants", think about your own behavior abroad, that you have

the right citizenship, and that you can easily move to another country without hassle, getting yourself into dangerous situations or even definitive decisions. If you don't like your new project (for example opening a surfing school in Morocco, teaching English to "African kids" or just exploring "exotic cultures" in Asia), then you can return to your own country because you are part of a privileged group that enjoys freedoms that other people can only dream of.

**You don't want to be seen as a role-model migrant by others. How do you react if you are typecast like this?**

First: Someone who typecasts me as a migrant in the second or sometimes even in the first sentence of a conversation should know, I don't like it. I am more than a non-white person, I am a journalist, a man, someone who can cook delicious food, I like reading and writing... Seeing people like me only as migrants is part of the problem. And then, the good migrant thing often automatically means that many other migrants are bad. That is not okay. Trying to use me as a role model (that Mohameds

are not always bad) will result in a lecture about why it's crucial to check their own privileges – above all the white privileges.

**As a journalist living in Germany, you receive a lot of hate mail. How do you cope with it, and where do you find a helping hand or the power to go on?**

I really was astonished when I received my first hate mail in 2008. It didn't make any sense why someone should hate me. Since then I've received literally thousands of reactions from people who think that they should write to me after just reading my name. I have good friends and a network of non-white journalists (and we are still few in Germany) who help me to deal with this kind of hate. We established a



group called “Hate Poetry” where we read those mails and comments out loud in front of thousands of people. They pay to see us and we make jokes and have fun all night long. It is like a therapy and we even

make money out of this shit. Deniz Yücel, our friend and colleague imprisoned in Turkey, is part of this group. When he comes back to Germany, we are planning to continue to take advantage of the haters.



### **Mohamed Amjahid**

*a staff writer at DIE ZEIT since January 2016, spent the first seven years of his life in Germany. For the rest of his youth, he lived in his parents' native Morocco before returning here for university. He studied political science and anthropology in Berlin and Cairo. In his book *Unter Weißen* (Among Whites; Hanser Berlin, 2017) Amjahid describes his experiences with racism in Germany and calls on white Germans to show more awareness of their own privilege.*



### **Yann Werner Prell**

*participated in EPRIE 2013 and is member of the EPRIE Alumni association. He works for Korea Verband and has supported EPRIE as a project assistant since 2014.*



# Report on the “Balkan Refugee Route” Conference

Selma Polovina

Born in Yugoslavia, I came to France as a political refugee in 1992 because of the war in the Balkans. After my studies in engineering, speaking four languages (Serbo-Croatian, French, English and German), I currently work at Airbus Group in Toulouse. Interested in international topics, I am highly involved in several intercultural associations and institutions like the French-German Youth Office. Thanks to that office, I participated in the French-German Balkan seminars in Europe on reconciliation from 2010 to 2014. In 2015 I took part in the program French-German Future Dialogue supported by the Robert Bosch Foundation. In 2016 I

joined the EPRIE program of the Korea Verband on the theme “Asylum, migration, and integration, similar challenges, different patterns”. As a member of the Robert Bosch Alumni and as a former Bosnian political refugee, I took part in the first Bosch Alumni Network Conference in Belgrade from October 13 to 16, 2017:

The “Balkan Refugee Route” was organized by alumni for alumni (60 journalists, NGO members, and policy-makers from 17 different countries). There were many interesting sessions on the current situation in Serbia, the current situation in the EU, human trafficking, the refugee radio route, photographers’ experience on the field, and a visit to a refugee camp. Of those subjects, the most relevant to share is the visit to the refugee center, the situation and issues of refugees in Serbia and Hungary, and the existence of the Refugee Radio Network (RRN).

Upon our arrival, we visited the camp of Krnjača, an asylum center located 10 km north of Belgrade, run by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees and Migration and also supported by Caritas, a socio-hu-

manitarian organization of the Catholic Church. This center has capacity for 500 people, providing a place for refugees and migrants from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Since July 2016, it is open only to registered asylum seekers and to people who express their intention to ask for asylum in Serbia. Previously it was open to everybody, including people without papers and migrants who did not intend to ask for international protection in Serbia. Despite efforts to stem the migration flow from Turkey, an average of 200 new refugees enter Serbia every day from Macedonia and Bulgaria. According to the local humanitarian workers, most refugees arrive and leave the country via human trafficking networks that have flourished since the closure of borders along the Balkan route. A lot of services are provided at Krnjača: accommodation (bunk beds in pavilions and studios), food provided by the Red Cross, the canteen, showers and toilets, hygiene kits, medical help, education (school classes for children and courses for adults, including Serbian language classes). Despite their meager living conditions, the refugees welcomed us warmly, and we could visit their houses and speak with people who







Visit to Krnjaca, an asylum center, as part of the “Balkan Refugee Route” conference. Photos taken by Alexandra Schiffmann/International Alumni Center.

spoke English or Serbian. For me, this was the most emotional moment. I learned that 25 years ago the same camp sheltered refugees from Bosnia.

We also discussed the current situation in Serbia and Hungary. There are two routes to enter the Hungarian/Serbian zone: legally through the transit zones (in existence since 2015) or illegally through the fences (in place since September 2015). More than 2,843 people have been

convicted after using the latter. The difficulties for migrants are legal and practical, on the one hand, such as difficulties in seeking justice due to trauma and an unknown environment. On the other hand, they face xenophobia because they are non-European with dark skin. During our workshop on “repatriation or integration”, four of us were invited to share our stories during the war in Bosnia. Two of them returned to their home country and two others (including me and another partic-

ipant) chose to integrate into the country of destination.

Larry M. Macaulay, founder, editor-in-chief and head of production, introduced the “Refugee Radio Network” (RRN) which was created in 2014 by political refugees in Hamburg, Germany. The RRN is a radio station, based on the freedom of expression with social impact, provides access to information, empowers migrants and vulnerable people, and produces radio programs that help to strengthen the voice of asylum seekers and refugees. The radio network extends throughout Europe, with stations in Vienna (Radio Orange), Berlin (Alex Berlin BCR), Munich (BR Radio), and Marburg (Radio Unerhört), and additional stations around the world: UNESCO World Radio Day, Radio Lora Switzerland, BBC World services, Al Jazeera, Radio France International.

The future steps of the conference are the expectation of increasing cross-border cooperation and plans to create a common exchange platform for sharing stories, current issues, information and resources, and to improve the quality of reporting.



### Selma Polovina

*was born in Yugoslavia. She came to France as a political refugee in 1992. She studied engineering and is currently working for the Airbus Group in Toulouse as an aeronautical engineer. She participated in EPRIE 2016 and took part in the first Bosch Alumni Network Conference in Belgrade in October 2017.*

# The decline of the nation state world order initiated by uncontrollable money and technology

Katsumata Yu

*Populism, economic inequality, migration crisis, environmental pollution... We are facing crises, which, frankly speaking, have no realistic solutions. Specifically, they are crises of the entire socio-economic system, in which we still maintain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century national political units under the globalized economy. I have approached these crises by observing flows of money. In this essay I illustrate how the discrepancy between nation states and capitalism is related to the systemic global crises and how the rapid pace of technological changes may exacerbate these crises.*

## National economy and global economy

In today's world, there are roughly two distinctive institutional logics on how money circulates: "national economy" and "global economy" (Hart 2012). National economy is characterized by restricted flows of money under the umbrella of nation states whose central banks create money and administer monetary flows together with state agencies. National economy is the sphere of nation states under which domestic politics and redistribution of economic wealth are conducted.

Global economy, on the other hand, is characterized by lawless flows of money across national borders.

Money flows unrestrictedly into tax havens using highly sophisticated financial schemes aimed at avoiding the state's control. This is the sphere of neoliberal global capitalism which operates on the principle of free competition and tireless profit seeking. The increasingly globalized world functions in a way that supports the growth of economic inequality at both domestic and global levels and the nation states have been pushed into a corner, faced with the challenge of solving these crises.

## Nation state and economy – before the discrepancy

This degree of separation between politics and economy was not observable until the late 20th century.

In fact, classical nationalism scholars, such as Ernest Gellner, suggest that initially capitalism and nation states had developed in tandem, not in opposition. According to Gellner (2000), nation states funded and created educational infrastructure that can reproduce a labor force sharing a national language and capable of carrying out basic mathematical tasks which are the kinds of skills highly desirable for the development of industries. This large, nation-scale educational project could only be achieved by a state, and it played a key role in the cultural homogenization or nationalization of society.

Historically, other fundamental conditions existed that were enforced by

states for the growth of capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) argue that in order to secure the free movement of labor forces, people had to be freed from a rigid class hierarchy. The traditional class system prevented people from entering new industries. Thus, the rigid hierarchy had to be abolished. Similarly, the free investment of capital within the territory of the nation state had to be secured at all costs so the feudal system had to be abolished as well. In the feudal system, land ownership was determined by traditional social relations between masters and servants. It hindered the free flow of capital.

It was the state that redefined its domestic territory into the culturally homogenous nation state that is conducive to capitalism and capitalist production. Therefore, the development of the nation state and development of capitalism have been inseparably connected.

### **National economy and global economy - after the discrepancy**

However, by the late 20th century the relationship between nation states and capitalism had morphed primarily due to the liberalization of financial markets and the development of the Internet. In the globalized economy, money bypasses state control. Multi-national corporations try to optimize their tax scheme through tax havens in legal and rational — yet ethically questionable — ways. The development of new financial techniques such as securitization is used to evade state monitoring. As economic entities such as hedge funds do not fit into the traditional categories of financial law, they utilize this institu-



tional loophole to their advantage, operating in the sphere of shadow banking which is not illegal but difficult for states to control and which might impact the monetary system in a negative way. On top of this, advanced nations have entered the phase of a long-term economic slowdown, making it difficult for them to maintain sound state budgets or a primary balance. Therefore, over the past decade there has been a general trend of decline of the nation state system. The growing economic inequality and populism in domestic politics are some of the concrete outcomes of the discrepancy between the national and global economy.

The dawn of IT giants such as Apple and Google further decreased the level of control that nation states can exercise over monetary flows. These IT companies have dominated digital communication infrastructure, the very medium of global economy. They brought innovation to the payment industry, capitalizing on their control over the basic media of

our time, such as the search engine in the case of Google and mobile networks in the case of Apple. For example, they produced convenient and secure payment businesses such as Apple Pay and Google Wallet.

The next phase of the development for these IT companies may be to issue their own digital currencies like Bitcoin, but it could surely be bigger and more stable than Bitcoin given their technological investment and economic scale. It is fair to say that monetary vested interest increasingly has been taken away from the traditional authority of the central-private bank nexus by these IT firms. Many argue that we do not have to solely rely on central banks for the production of money because there is no political and economic necessity for the central banks to be in charge of the economic system. However, changes in vested interest do not simply mean positive changes because Google or Apple are a private firms which operate based on the institutional logic of capitalism.

If they own and manage monetary infrastructure, they will use it for maximizing their profit as their rational strategy.

### Speed of change

One of my concerns is not only the discrepancy between national and global economy, but also the “speed”: the technological change is simply “too fast”, probably to a degree that is unprecedented for humanity. The Internet became widespread in the late 1990’s. There was no iPhone until 2007 and no iPad until 2010. Digital currencies have only recently gained popularity. In addition, the application of big data and the development of artificial intelligence may further accelerate the speed of technological change and its applications to the business and social world.

Usually technological development has both positive and negative effects but if the speed of change is too rapid, we cannot really deliberate its social management. To make matters worse, it is safe to assume that the institutional logic of neoliberalism drives the private IT firms to

act quickly to exploit the relatively slow formation of possible future legal and political responses.

### New narratives for the future?

As I discussed in this essay, while socio-economic problems play out in the sphere of the global economy, we primarily respond to them on the national level. Moreover, the speed of the technological transformation can be an exacerbating factor.

Are there any new narratives that can replace the neoliberal one and be used to unite humanity on the global level in order to better deal with these crises? A prominent anthropologist, Keith Hart (2012), advocates his vision of the world society or world federal government that could help expand the system of human rights and its legality globally. Should we aim for such a radical political transformation? If yes, how can we possibly create such a transformation without falling into another fascist regime?

Is an environmental narrative (such as the social movement to protect soil from degradation on a global scale) enough to unite us? Can al-

truism be a realistic ideological base for new narratives? These are open questions.

Perhaps now is the time to consider new socio-economic platforms for humanity to better respond to the crises.

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### Katsumata Yu

teaches philosophy, social theory and comparative religions in Japan. His research addresses the future of money and capitalism. He is a graduate of Columbia University and the London School of Economics. He participated in EPRIE 2014



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### EDITORIAL OFFICE

#### EPRIE

c/o Korea-Verband e.V.  
Rostocker Str. 33  
10553 Berlin / Germany  
Tel: +49 (0)30 3980 5984  
Fax: +49 (0)30 3980 5986  
info@eprie.net  
www.eprie.net

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### MANAGING EDITORS

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Nora Borodziej  
Suzanne von Engelhardt  
Mathias Räther

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### ABOUT EPRIE

The Exchange Program for Regional Integration in East Asia and Europe (EPRIE) is a 10 to 12 day program held annually in Europe and East Asia alternately, with intensive workshops and vivid exchanges of views including political talks, visits to institutions and guided tours.

EPRIE aims to promote and improve dialogue between people of neighboring states, whose relations have been troubled in the past; to develop personal contacts; to build a long lasting network; to stimulate and foster the development of further cooperation.

EPRIE was founded in 2012 by the two organizers Han Nataly Jung-Hwa and Rita Zobel. It is mainly supported by Robert Bosch Stiftung and the Japan office of Friedrich-Ebert Foundation.

### ABOUT ROBERT BOSCH STIFTUNG

The Robert Bosch Stiftung GmbH is one of Europe's largest foundations associated with a private company. In its charitable work, it addresses social issues at an early stage and develops exemplary solutions. For this purpose, it plans and implements its own projects. Additionally, it supports third-party initiatives that have similar goals. The Robert Bosch Stiftung is active in the areas of health, science, society, education, and international relations. Moreover, in the coming years, the Foundation will increasingly direct its activities on three focus areas: Migration, Integration, and Inclusion Social Cohesion in Germany and Europe Sustainable Living Spaces. Since it was established in 1964, the Robert Bosch Stiftung has invested more than 1.4 billion euros in charitable work.

### ABOUT KOREA VERBAND

The Korea Verband is a politically independent forum providing information and promoting cooperation among people who are interested in the history, culture, and politics of Korea. This platform will appeal to all individuals who wish to engage with or find out about current developments on the Korean peninsula.

The Korea Verband seeks and promotes collaboration on national and international levels with other non-governmental organizations and initiatives as well as experts on Korea in the areas of science, journalism, politics, labor unions, churches, environment, women's rights, arts and culture.

The Korea Verband was founded in 1990 and is a founding member of the foundation Stiftung Asienhaus. Since 2008 the Korea Verband has been based in Berlin.

### AUTHOR INFORMATION

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