



“I've improved career prospects, but I've encountered challenges in terms of intimacy”: When Taiwanese migrants are confronted with gender issues in Japan



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Rämistrasse 59, CH-8001 Zürich (RAA-G-15)

Guest Lecture by Dr. Amélie Keyser-Verreault

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Abstract:

Many young Taiwanese adults have a very positive image of Japan and, in a desire to improve their career prospects, some of them, highly qualified, decide to migrate there to work for Japanese or international firms. The case of Taiwanese migrants is an interesting one for exploring the impact of gender issues on the migration process. Certainly, in terms of career progression and wages, these migrants are improving their situation, but on the level of intimacy, many of them face challenges. While studies on migration have long focused on the economic aspect of migration, more recently researchers have shown that intimacy also plays an important role in understanding the migration process. The data-oriented analysis of this paper is situated in this vein and is based on interviews with around fifty Taiwanese migrants in Japan in 2023 in the cities of Fukuoka, Nagoya, Kyoto, and Tokyo. First, for Taiwanese women accustomed to the gains of feminism that have colored employment policies in Taiwan, the Japanese work culture, in which there are strong gender norms, may be surprising. These women, when entering marriage and building a family in Japan, sometimes also face challenges in the division of care work. Second, another group that also encounters difficulties in terms of intimacy is members of the LGBTQ+ community. These migrants leave the most gender-friendly state in Asia, Taiwan, to migrate to a country with few legal protections and low social accessibility of queerness. This context makes it difficult for Taiwanese LGBTQ+ migrants to live their intimacy. The presentation will go through case studies to ethnographically illustrate some challenges women and LGBTQ+ Taiwanese migrants face in Japan but will also present some counterexamples to nuance the picture.

Biography:

Amélie Keyser-Verreault is an anthropologist and postdoctoral fellow at the University of Tübingen (Germany). Dr. Keyser-Verreault's research focuses on body politics, gender, and sexualities with an emphasis on social transformations. Her current research project is about the demographic crisis in Taiwan and the related social mobilizations. She also has a deep interest in qualitative, art-based, decolonial, and intersectional methodologies. Her work has been published in academic journals such as the *Journal of Gender Studies*, *Chinese Sociological Review*, *Ethnography*, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, and *Feminism & Psychology*.