



From ethnonationalism to neoliberal nationalism and neoliberal humanitarianism: the logics of post-war migration and refugee policies in Japan



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

Guest Lecture by Prof. Gracia Liu-Farrer

Director of Institute of Asian Migration at Waseda University, Japan

Biography:

Gracia Liu-Farrer holds the position of Professor of Sociology at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies and is the Director of the Institute of Asian Migration at Waseda University, Japan. Her research is dedicated to examining the economic, social, and political practices of immigrants in Japan, as well as studying the global mobility of educational and labor migrants. Notably, she has authored the books "Labor Migration from China to Japan: International Students, Transnational Migrants" (Routledge, 2011) and "Immigrant Japan: Mobility and Belonging in an Ethno-nationalist Society" (Cornell University Press, 2020). Furthermore, she has made significant contributions as a co-editor to publications such as the "Handbook of Asian Migrations" (with Brenda Yeoh, Routledge, 2018) and "Tangled Mobilities: Places, Affects, and Personhood across Social Spheres in Asian Migration" (with Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, Berghahn Books, 2022).

Abstract:

Japan's post-World War II immigration and refugee policies have undergone several stages. The following developments characterize its policy toward labor migration: There was no immigration policy in the first three decades after the war (1945-1975); selective migration prioritized highly skilled individuals while restricting low-skilled labor migration from the late 1980s onwards; and the loosening of restrictions on manual and service migrant workers from the 2010s. Japan's policy toward refugees has also developed slowly. Japan resisted signing the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol until 1981. While admitting extremely few Convention refugees, since 1991, Japan has granted a sizable number of asylum seekers temporary resident statuses. This presentation provides an overview of post-war Japan's migration and refugee policy development and discusses the contexts and rationales of their emergence and application. It argues that three concepts capture the logic of Japan's policymaking: ethnonationalism, neoliberal nationalism, and neoliberal humanitarianism.