

This half-day symposium is held in conjunction with the scoping workshop on [Brokerage, Migration Routes, and Human Mobilities](#), organized by the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, and the Institute for Research on Contemporary Southeast Asia, with funding support from the AMORCE Grant by National Centre for Scientific Research.

Over the past two decades, the study of migration has seen growing interest in the “middle spaces of migration”, that is, the intermediary spaces of migration. Instead of focusing on destination or origin countries, researchers have become interested in the figures, practices, and material and immaterial resources that help structure, maintain and transform migratory routes, and consequently facilitate and channel human mobility. In this symposium, speakers address the study of the intermediary spaces of migration through engaging different empirical contexts using conceptual frameworks ranging from “migration industry”, “mobility infrastructures”, and “brokerage practices”.

## 18 JANUARY 2024 • THURSDAY

<b>10:00 – 10:15</b>	<b>WELCOME REMARKS</b>
10:00	<b>LOÏS BASTIDE</b> , National University of Singapore, and IRASEC
<b>10:15 – 11:45</b>	<b>PANEL 1</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>LOÏS BASTIDE</b> , National University of Singapore, and IRASEC
10:15	Japanese Migrations in Tonkin between the 1880s and the 1920s <b>FRÉDÉRIC ROUSTAN</b> , University of Lyon 2
10:35	Chinese Migrants, Transnationalisms and Intermediate Spaces <b>LAURENCE ROULLEAU-BERGER</b> , French National Centre for Scientific Research
10:55	Calo, Preman and Kinship Networks: Brokerage of Domestic Fishing Workforces in the Context of Seafood Global Production Networks <b>KATHARINE JONES</b> , Coventry University
11:15	Discussion
<b>11:45 – 13:15</b>	<b>PANEL 2</b>
<i>Chairperson</i>	<b>LOÏS BASTIDE</b> , National University of Singapore, and IRASEC
11:45	Digital Migration <b>KOEN LEURS</b> , Utrecht University
12:05	The Development of Digitalisation in Malaysia’s Labour Migration Industry <b>CHOO CHIN LOW</b> , Universiti Sains Malaysia
12:25	Deployment of Migrant Care Workers in Singapore and Indonesia <b>ANDY SCOTT CHANG</b> , Singapore Management University
12:45	Discussion
<b>13:15</b>	<b>END</b>

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## Japanese Migrations in Tonkin between the 1880s and the 1920s

**Frédéric ROUSTAN**

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Around 1880, a first generation of Japanese migrants settled in Tonkin, when the French colonial presence was expanding there, creating a specific and lasting link between the region of origin of migrants, Kyûshû in Japan, and Tonkin area, until the 1930s.

This migratory movement, which falls into the historiographical category of *karayuki san*, has at its economic heart the prostitution of young women from poor Japanese peasant families brought from Kyûshû Island by various means. From the end of the nineteenth century, bazaar activities run by Japanese men were developing in connection with the economy of prostitution. The situation lasted until early 1920s, after the action led by the Japanese consul to remove traces of Japanese prostitution. Despite this evolution and the arrival of new actors from other areas and working for large Japanese companies, the Japanese community in Tonkin remains structured around historical migrants from Nagasaki surroundings.

In this presentation we will briefly introduce this first generation of Japanese migrants in Tonkin, trying to make apparent both the local establishment in colonial society, but also the continuity of relations and exchanges with Japan. Then, we will address the question of the migratory logics of Karayuki, men and women, linked to a complex set of interpersonal relationships, shedding light on certain aspects of the system of social relations in which women's migration took place. We will end up discuss the similarities and differences with the situation in Singapore.

**Frédéric Roustan** is Associate Professor in Contemporary Asian History at the University of Lyon 2, France, attached to the Institut d'Asie Orientale research center. After his doctoral studies at Osaka University, he did several post-doctoral positions in Japan, including at the University of Tokyo and Hitotsubashi. After 10 years of studying and working in Japan, he returned to France where he taught Japanese at Aix-Marseille University before joining the history department of the University of Lyon. He currently works on the historical relations between Japan and Vietnam, particularly issues relating to the migration of Japanese to French Indochina.

## Chinese Migrants, Transnationalisms and Intermediate Spaces

**Laurence ROULLEAU-BERGER**

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In Chinese cities, *local cosmopolitanism* is produced through economic negotiations, exchanges and dealings between Chinese migrants and international entrepreneurs. Economic networks link other cities in the Asia region, stretching to cities in the Middle East, in Africa and in Europe across interconnected *intermediate spaces*. The demultiplication of migratory routes of transnational entrepreneurs and retail traders make it possible to map the pathways of non-Western economies. Local and transnational markets are based on multi-ethnic labour apparatuses—and also on Muslim cosmopolitanism—which emerge through partnerships between Chinese, Turkish, Lebanese, Syrian and Jordanian nationals, among others. The migratory routes of the new Chinese young ‘elites’ and traders within the international space, as well as those of ‘discredited’ populations, and the increasingly visible presence of Chinese entrepreneurs in different countries actively contribute to a proliferation of new economic, symbolic, religious arrangements, producing intermediate spaces that are neither exclusively national nor exclusively global. Thereby, we have distinguished:

- *transnationalism from above* with the training of young migrants who belong to the new Chinese middle classes or new international elites;
- *intermediate transnationalism* in Chinese ethnic commerce and entrepreneurship;
- *transnationalism from below* with the appearing of new Chinese “hobos”, the forgotten ones of globalisation.

Chinese migrants are producing *polygamic biographies* where biographical crossroads linked to migration and re-migration open onto a diversity of multi-situated mobility spaces and a kaleidoscope of aspiration. Polygamic migratory biography do characterize what I have called a *compressed Individual*.

**Laurence Roulleau-Berger** is Research Director Emeritus at the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (French National Centre for Scientific Research), Triangle, Ecole Normale Supérieure of Lyon, Triangle, PhD and PhD Supervisor in Sociology. She has led numerous research programs in Europe and in China in urban sociology, economic sociology, and sociology of migration over thirty years. Since 2006, she is involved in an epistemological way on the fabric of post-Western sociology. She has published thirty books, numerous articles and chapters, among the most recent: *Post-Western Revolution in Sociology. From China to Europe* (2016); *Work and Migration. Chinese Youth in Shanghai and Paris*, with Yan Jun (2017); *The Fabric of Sociological Knowledge*, co-ed. with Xie Lizhong (2017) (in Chinese); *Post-Western Sociology. From China to Europe*, co-ed. with Li Peilin (2018); *Young Chinese Migrants, Compressed Individual and Global Condition* (2021); and *Sociology of Migration and Post-Western Theory*, co-ed. with Liu Yuzhao (2022); co-edit with Li Peilin, Kim Seung-Kuk, Shujiro Yazawa (2023), *Handbook of Post-Western Sociology: From East Asia to Europe*, Brill Publishers. She is Editor-in-Chief at the Brill’s Series *Post-Western Sociology and Global Knowledge*, and co-Editor in chief of ENS Publishers Series *De l’Orient à l’Occident*. She is Life Fellow in Global China Academy, British Academy. Among awards, in 2021, she has got the prestigious Medal of Chevalière de l’Ordre National du Mérite for her scientific work.

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## **Calo, Preman and Kinship Networks: Brokerage of Domestic Fishing Workforces in the Context of Seafood Global Production Networks**

**Katharine JONES**

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Seafood is big business and an increased appetite for fish in western food markets coupled with technological innovation has quadrupled trade over the past half century. The consequent environmental as well as human costs of this global trade are substantial. To date, most research on the latter has addressed the severe exploitation of international migrant fishers recruited to work on large fishing trawlers in Asia. These accounts tend to situate responsibility for exploitation with criminal and 'unscrupulous' actors, including recruitment intermediaries. Yet, these analyses - like most studies of migration intermediaries - with very few exceptions, ignore the inherent structural inequalities of modern globalised fishing that underpin fishers' working conditions as well as the behaviours of their recruiters. In contrast, this paper draws on brokerage as an analytical category to explain the mobility of domestic fishing workforces in Indonesia in the context of globalised seafood production. The paper is based on analysis conducted for a British Academy-funded study of recruitment and employment in the seafood export industry in Indonesia in 2019, involving 140 interviews with fishers, civil society and government officials, brokers, international buyers and retailers. The paper advances the argument that rather than solitary – and abusive – actors, intermediaries of domestic as well as international migration should be theorised as multi-layered social and economic processes that are deeply embedded in global capitalist production networks. In this case, I argue, the brokerage of labour relations via the social figures of preman, calo, and kinship networks, is a mechanism deployed by international seafood businesses to co-opt the informality associated with small-scale traditional fishing to maximise the extraction of surplus value.

**Katharine Jones** is Professor of Migration and Social Justice in the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations, Coventry University, UK where she leads a team of researchers. She is currently Co-Director of the £13m UKRI GCRF Migration for Development & Equality (MIDEQ) Research Hub, leading on the hub's research on migration intermediaries. Katharine has been conducting and project managing research on migration for over two decades, including for the UN, government departments, local authorities, the European Commission, foundations, civil society, and business. She is an expert in ethical international recruitment of migrant workforces, having developed multiple policy documents for the UN and for the National Health Service England. She is highly active in support of migrants' rights where she lives in Glasgow, Scotland, and is a long-standing trustee of the Scottish Refugee Council and leading migrants' rights law centre, JustRight Scotland.

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## Digital Migration

**Koen LEURS**

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Digital migration studies refers to an emerging interdisciplinary research area concerned with the study of migration in relation to digital technologies and datafication. Contemporary migration increasingly reflects a digitally mediated state of migrant being and a digitized and datafied condition. This results from bottom-up digital practices of migrants, and top-down forms of monitoring, governing, monetizing, surveilling and coercing migrants. In this talk I address four questions to reflect on the commitments and challenges of doing digital migration studies. I. What is digital migration? On the level of ontology I propose a relational understanding of digital migration to acknowledge migration and technological development are increasingly mutually constitutive and fundamentally inseparable. II. What kinds of knowledge are produced about digital migration? On the level of epistemology I reflect on the position of scholars within the variety of actors that produce knowledge about migration through the digital. III. How can we produce knowledge about digital migration? On the level of methodology I address how the continuum of non-migrant-centric and migrant-centric research intersects with digital-media-centric and non-digital-media centric research respectively. IV. How can we produce ethical and accountable knowledge about digital migration? I will reflect on promises and pitfalls of accountable knowledge production with and for migrant communities, realizing that researching migration poses several serious ethical challenges, which may be further compounded in digital contexts.

**Koen Leurs** is Associate Professor in Gender, Media and Migration Studies at the Graduate Gender Program, Department of Media and Culture, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. Leurs research interests include migration, borders and youth culture; digital, creative and participatory methodologies and research ethics. Currently, Leurs is the principal investigator of the Team Science project 'Co-designing a fair digital asylum system', funded by the Digital Society and COMMIT, a public-private ICT research community (2022-2023). He chairs the Utrecht University wide Digital Migration Special Interest Group, part of the Governing the digital society focus area. He previously co-edited *Handbook of Media and Migration* (Sage, 2020) and the special issues *(Im)Mobile Entanglements (International Journal of Cultural Studies, 2023)* and *Inclusive Media Education for Diverse Societies (Media & Communication, 2022)*. He has published *Digital Passages: Migrant Youth 2.0. Diaspora, Gender & Youth Cultural Intersections* (Amsterdam University Press, 2015). His latest book is *Digital Migration* (Sage, 2023), and the edited volume *Doing Digital Migration Studies: Theories and Practices of the Everyday* will come out soon (Amsterdam University Press, 2024).

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## The Development of Digitalisation in Malaysia's Labour Migration Industry

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This research analyses the application of digital technologies in the labour migration industry in Malaysia. Digital intervention could be conceptualised as an approach to de-commercialise the migration industry and to phase out intermediaries. Digitalizing the recruitment and management process of foreign workers is widely seen as a strategy that has the potential to combat corruption, eliminate the need for intermediaries, and reduce hiring costs. Digital platforms such as the Foreign Workers Centralised Management System (FWCMS), the Integrated Foreign Workers Management System (ePPAx), the Foreign Worker Application System (SPPA), and the Maid Online System (SMO) ultimately lead to the elimination of intermediaries and to the emergence of government-appointed private IT companies. The Malaysian case study raises a few questions; How do state-led digital technologies facilitate the migratory process during the pre-departure stage? What are the roles of IT companies as new non-state actors? What are the implications of digitalisation on the commercialisation of Malaysia's labour migration industry? This research suggests that the shift towards the digitalisation of migration management removes the commercial aspect of the migration industry, improves national labour law compliance, and enhances employers' accountability.

**Choo Chin Low** is Senior Lecturer in the History Section, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia. She holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne. Her research interests include migration, citizenship, and diaspora studies. Her recent publications appeared in *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *Regions & Cohesion*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, *Citizenship Studies*, *Diaspora Studies*, *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, and *Third World Quarterly*. She was a visiting fellow at Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University (2016). She currently serves as a country expert for the Global Citizenship Observatory (European University Institute, Italy) and the Global Dynamics of Social Policy (University of Bremen, Germany).

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## Deployment of Migrant Care Workers in Singapore and Indonesia

**Andy Scott CHANG**

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How is a transnational workforce produced and reproduced? Drawing on seven months of ethnographic research in Singapore and Indonesia, I argue that international staffing agencies play a central role in the governance of guest workers, ensuring the replenishment of a flexible labor supply. I compare how two multinational employment agencies that deploy migrant labor from the same origin to the same destination construct transnational labor regimes in a gendered occupational sector. While both companies elicit the commitment of recruits, they market contrasting but complementary categories of women domestic workers. TransferMaids implements a regime of exhibition on the storefront: it disciplines sojourners to display their bodies to lure employers scouring for experienced domestics in situ. Conversely, FreshMaids devises a regime of improvement on the shopfloor: it trains aspiring migrants to facilitate their acquisition of overseas employment. By retaining a stock of spatially proximate migrant labor, and by manufacturing a remote labor pool for cross-border deployment, international staffing organizations buttress the reproduction of labor migration. Women jobseekers manage their precarity in two ways. First, they decline unattractive job offers and orchestrate deference, sociability, and competence to entice desired employers. Second, they engage in soroization and backstage gossip to preserve their selfhood vis-à-vis powerful forces they perceive as exploitative, abusive, and difficult.

**Andy Scott Chang** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Singapore Management University and incoming Assistant Professor of Sociology at Florida State University. He is an international migration scholar with a regional focus on East and Southeast Asia. He researches the political economy of labor migration, its consequences on rural livelihoods, and the identity formation of migrants and their family members. His award-winning work has been published in *Social Forces*, *Social Problems*, and *Pacific Affairs*.

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## ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

**Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA** is Raffles Professor of Social Sciences, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. She is also Research Leader of the Asian Migration Cluster in the Asia Research Institute. She was recently awarded the prestigious Vautrin Lud Prize (2021) for her outstanding achievements in the field of geography, and was also elected to the Fellowship of the British Academy as a Corresponding Fellow. Her research interests include the politics of space in colonial and postcolonial cities, and she also has considerable experience working on a wide range of migration research in Asia, including key themes such as cosmopolitanism and highly skilled talent migration; gender, social reproduction and care migration; migration, national identity and citizenship issues; globalising universities and international student mobilities; and cultural politics, family dynamics and international marriage migrants.

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**Loïs Bastide** is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of French Polynesia, and currently, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute (ARI) of National University of Singapore and Statutory Researcher at IRASEC. At ARI, he is developing a research project on the politicization processes of Indonesian migrant workers, with fieldworks in Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia. This work draws upon and extends the research initiated during his PhD, which investigated the constitution of a transnational social space between the three neighbouring countries, through the cross-border mobilities of Indonesian workers. During his research stay at ARI, Loïs Bastide also continues coordinating an ongoing, wide-ranging research program on social change in French Polynesia.

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