

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN ASIAN MIGRATION

TEMPORALITIES, TRANSITIONS, AND TURBULENCE



**11-12
AUGUST 2025**

HYBRID FORMAT

NUS AS8 04-04 & Online via Zoom

This workshop is organized by
the Asia Research Institute,
National University of
Singapore, and partially
supported by the Asian
Metacentre Endowment
which is funded through
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For more information, visit <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/children-and-youth/>

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While the terms “children” and “youth” are often associated with age-specific stages in the life course, scholars have shown that they are socially constructed categories whose meanings are deeply shaped by historical, cultural, and political contexts. In the context of increasing mobility and diversifying migration pathways in the Asian region, these constructs take on added complexity, particularly as young people face shifting expectations, heightened vulnerabilities and uncertain futures amidst increasing rapid and often turbulent change.

In recent decades, the intensification of mobility and migration has become a defining feature of life across many parts of Asia. These movements impact not just the lives of individuals who cross borders, but also those who remain, with effects that ripple across time and generations. For many children and youth, migration may be directly experienced or indirectly felt, and in either instance, it becomes a significant force influencing their identities, relationships and imagined futures. Childhood and youth thus emerge not as a stable early life stage, but a terrain marked by transition, uncertainty, opportunity and constraint.

Despite the increasing recognition of children and youth in migration studies, much research continues to frame them as temporally ‘bounded’—captured in static moments rather than examined as dynamic subjects simultaneously navigating life course transitions and migration trajectories across space and time. The workshop brings together contributions that attend to the temporal dimensions of children and youth in migration, examining how young people’s lives unfold over time and space, and how their agency, aspirations, relationships and roles may shift across different life stages and migratory contexts. While considering children and youth as part of families and nation-states, the workshop also foregrounds their capacity as situated and relational, presenting them as future-oriented actors who actively contest, negotiate, and potentially reshape the terms of migration. Whether as left-behind children, independent migrants, accompanied “minors”, international students, or as returnees, their lives reflect both the consequences and opportunities of migration.

The workshop seeks to deepen theoretical and empirical understandings of young people’s experiences within migratory contexts in Asia. Drawing on a temporal lens, the selected papers explore how migration shapes children’s and youths’ life trajectories, identities, and aspirations—and in turn, how they may influence intergenerational migration pathways of their families and communities. These conceptually informed empirical contributions engage with the following themes:

- Temporalities of migration and changing aspirations of migrant and “left-behind” children and youth
- Young people as emerging agents in shaping, navigating, or resisting migration over the life course
- The role of migrant networks and migration infrastructures in shaping children and youth’s mobility and aspirations in turbulent times
- Intergenerational influences on migration and aspirations of children and youth

Together, the workshop contributes to a more nuanced, temporal, and future-orientated understanding of children and youth in migration—one that recognises how the ability to migrate, or the pressure to be mobile, can itself be part of the crisis shaping their lived realities and imagined futures.

WORKSHOP CONVENORS

Dr Theodora LAM

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Dr Bernice LOH

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Prof Brenda S.A. YEOH

Asia Research Institute & Department of Geography, National University of Singapore

Dr Kris Hyesoo LEE

Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore

Singapore
Standard Time

11 AUGUST 2025 • MONDAY

10:30 – 11:00	WELCOME REMARKS
	BERNICE LOH , National University of Singapore
11:00 – 12:30	PANEL 1 • YOUTH AGENCY AT THE MARGINS
Chairperson	THEODORA LAM , National University of Singapore
11:00	Staying, Returning, and Future-Making: Youth Agency in the Margins of Migration from Northeastern India BALAWANSUK LYNRAH , The University of Tokyo TRACEY SKELTON , University of Otago
11:20	Stay or Leave? Contrasting Rural Youth Life Choices amid Migration Flows and Agrarian Embeddedness in Banyumas, Central Java and Flores, East Nusa Tenggara DESMIWATI , National Research and Innovation Agency
11:40	Aspirations, Migration, and Education among Rural Youth in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia MELISA APRIYANI , Universitas Katolik Weetebula
12:00	Questions & Answers
12:30 – 13:30	LUNCH
13:30 – 15:00	PANEL 2 • MIGRATION, YOUTH AND INTERGENERATIONAL DYNAMICS
Chairperson	ELSPETH GRAHAM , University of St. Andrews
13:30	Suspended Childhoods: Migration, Temporality, and the Everyday Lives of Indonesian Migrants' Children ANASTASIA MELATI LISTYORINI , Taipei National University of the Arts
13:50	Cross-National Youth, Aspirations, and Intergenerational Ambivalence in Singapore BERNICE LOH , National University of Singapore
14:10	The Option to Stay: Parental Migration and Children's (Im)mobility Aspirations and Capabilities in the Philippines KRISTEL ACEDERA , National University of Singapore
14:30	Questions & Answers
15:00 – 15:30	AFTERNOON TEA
15:30 – 17:00	PANEL 3 • TEMPORALITIES OF YOUTH MOBILITY
Chairperson	BITTIANDRA CHAND SOMAIAH , National University of Singapore
15:30 <i>Online</i>	How Institutional Time Shapes Mobility Trajectories and Temporal Lived Experiences of Transnationally Mobile Youth from China: A Longitudinal Study between 2020 and 2025 CORA LINGLING XU , Durham University MENGWEI TU , Swansea University
15:50	Navigating the Invisible Hand of Mercurial Mobility: Student Border Crossers and Border Biopolitics along the Malaysia-Singapore Causeway EMMA GOH , University of California – Berkeley
16:10	Rethinking Transition Temporalities in Asia-Australia Youth Mobilities ANITA HARRIS , Deakin University
16:30	Questions & Answers
17:00	END OF DAY 1
17:30 – 19:30	WORKSHOP DINNER (For Presenters, Chairpersons and Organisers Only)

Singapore
Standard Time

12 AUGUST 2025 • TUESDAY

11:00 – 12:00	PANEL 4 • TEMPORAL PRECARITIES OF YOUTH LABOUR MIGRATION
<i>Chairperson</i>	EXEQUIEL CABANDA , National University of Singapore
11:00 <i>Online</i>	Footloose Youth: Joblessness, Micro-Mobilities, and Agentive Capacity in North India AVISHEK JHA , The University of Melbourne
11:20	Youthfulness in Taiwan's Distant-Water Squid and Saury Fisheries – Young Indonesian Migrant Fishers SAMIA DINKELAKER , National University of Singapore
11:40	Questions & Answers
12:00 – 13:00	LUNCH
13:00 – 14:30	PANEL 5 • TRANSNATIONAL FUTURES AND STUDENT MOBILITIES
<i>Chairperson</i>	KONG CHONG HO , Yale-NUS College
13:00	Crossing the Border for Education and Marriage: The Cosmopolitan Projects of Vietnamese and Thai Female Youths in Guangxi China YI'EN CHENG , National University of Singapore SIN YEE KOH , Universiti Brunei Darussalam SIVARIN LERTPUSIT , Thammasat University
13:20	Navigating Spirituality in the Midst of Academic Aspirations: Indonesian Students at a Singaporean University ERICA M. LARSON , National University of Singapore
13:40	"You Study Abroad, but You're Still Stuck": Emotional Geographies of Chinese Students in Southeast Asia KRIS HYESOO LEE , National University of Singapore MADELEINE SHUTLER , National University of Singapore
14:00	Questions & Answers
14:30 – 15:00	AFTERNOON TEA
15:00 – 16:30	PANEL 6 • BELONGING AND PRECARIY
<i>Chairperson</i>	MARUJA MB ASIS , Scalabrini Migration Center
15:00	Certain Cosmopolitans: Precarity and Possibility in the Lives of Migrant Children in the Gulf LAAVANYA KATHIRAVELU , University of Oslo
15:20	Growing Diaspora in Japan: Shifting Landscapes of Migrants' Children SARI K. ISHII , Rikkyo University
15:40	The Temporality of Ethnic Belonging among Children Growing Up in Korean Chinese Transnational Families RUIXIN WEI , Goethe University Frankfurt
16:00	Questions & Answers
16:30 – 17:00	CLOSING REMARKS
	BRENDA S.A. YEOH , National University of Singapore
17:00	END OF WORKSHOP

Staying, Returning, and Future-Making: Youth Agency in the Margins of Migration from Northeastern India

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Migration is often seen as the key pathway to a better future for young people from India's northeastern peripheries. Yet in Bodoland, a post-conflict region in Assam, many young people choose to stay or return after migrating. We argue that such decisions are not simply the result of constraints or failure, but reflect strategic, future-oriented actions. Young people engage with their spatial marginalities and social positioning in ways that reshape their aspirations and roles over time. Staying or returning is not a passive act. Instead, we show how youth actively reconfigure their futures through education, work, and community participation at home. These choices while informed by dominant imaginaries of migration also challenge them in subtle ways. The paper highlights how youth forge alternative life paths within constrained terrains, revealing a more complex prefigurative politics of mobility. In doing so, it complicates the narrative of migration as the only route to upward mobility and contributes to a broader understanding of how young people in peripheral regions imagine and inhabit the future.

Balawansuk Lynrah is a postdoctoral fellow at Tokyo College, The University of Tokyo. She holds a PhD in Geography, and her research explores how young people imagine and navigate their futures. Her broader interests include the geographies of children and young people, futures, everyday politics, development, and justice. Before starting her doctoral research, she worked with a community-based organisation in Bodoland from 2011, which deeply shaped her research with young people.

Tracey Skelton is currently holding the Endowed Ron Lister Chair in Geography at the University of Otago. Before this, she was Associate Professor at the National University of Singapore. Her research engages critically with human geography, particularly around issues of inequalities, marginalisation, and discrimination. Her key areas of expertise are the geographies of children and young people, sexualities, politics, urban studies, disability, gender, and race. Over the course of her career in the UK, Singapore, and Aotearoa/New Zealand, she has aimed to challenge dominant narratives and push for more inclusive, socially just understandings of space and place. One of her most significant achievements was serving as Editor-in-Chief of *Geographies of Children and Young People* series comprising 12 volumes with global reach that helped shape and define this children and youth geographies within the discipline.

Stay or Leave?

Contrasting Rural Youth Life Choices amid Migration Flows and Agrarian Embeddedness in Banyumas, Central Java and Flores, East Nusa Tenggara

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As migration intensifies across Asia, rural youth find themselves navigating between dreams of mobility and the pull of their agrarian roots. In Indonesia, this trend reveals complex spatial and generational dynamics, particularly in agrarian margins. While many rural youths view migration as a pathway to modernity and economic opportunity, others are reimagining rural life through renewed engagement with farming and local entrepreneurship. This paper examines the life choices of young people in two distinct rural settings in Indonesia: the forest-adjacent highlands of Central Java and the semi-arid uplands of Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. In Central Java, many youths are choosing to stay, building livelihoods through small-scale farming, value-added agriculture, and local entrepreneurship. In contrast, young people in Flores are more likely to migrate to other provinces, even though they maintain access to ancestral lands with considerable untapped potential.

Through a comparative ethnographic approach, this study explores how historical legacies, socio-ecological conditions, access to economic, kinship structures, and cultural expectations shape youth aspirations in different ways. Data were collected through semi-structure interviews with youth aged 15-24, participant observation in farming communities, and oral histories with elders to trace the intergenerational shifts in migration practices and land attachment. Drawing on insights from political ecology and migration studies, it frames rural youth not merely as individuals in transition but as relational actors who must balance kinship obligations, inheritance norms, and the imagined possibilities of urban life.

The comparative discussion reveals a paradox: in Central Java, proximity to markets, community support, and cultural pride in farming have fostered a revalorization of rural life, whereas in Flores, aspirations are more strongly tied to urban labor and educational migration, despite the persistence of unworked lands at home. Migration in Flores is not simply driven by economic necessity but also by a culturally embedded narrative of success and modernity, often reinforced through returnee stories and remittance economies.

This paper concludes by arguing that both mobility and rootedness among rural youth are shaped by temporal uncertainties and evolving imaginaries of the future. Rather than viewing migration as a linear transition into adulthood, the study foregrounds how young people actively contest and reshape the terms of mobility through situated, everyday choices. The analysis highlights how migration decisions are embedded in broader structures of opportunity and constraint—such as uneven development, access to education, gender norms, and intergenerational negotiations. It also draws attention to the paradox many youths face: migration emerges both as a strategy for survival and a source of dislocation and loss.

By focusing on the everyday negotiations of identity, belonging, and future-making in marginal agrarian spaces, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of children and youth in Asian migration. It urges scholars and policymakers to view rural youth not merely as migrants-in-the-making, but as active agents who

are reimagining what it means to stay. Ultimately, the paper argues for a shift in rural development discourse—one that takes seriously place-based aspirations and the socio-cultural value of land—while recognizing that youth agency is not a binary choice between staying or leaving, but a dynamic and ongoing negotiation shaped by time, space, and structural conditions.

Desmiwati is a researcher in the Minority and Vulnerable Groups Research Cluster at the Research Center for Society and Culture, under the Research Organization for Social Sciences and Humanities, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN). Her expertise lies in socio-economic and cultural studies. She earned her bachelor's degree in Communication Studies from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Jenderal Soedirman University (Unsoed), Purwokerto in 2004. She completed her master's degree in Public Policy Planning at the University of Indonesia in 2010. Desmiwati is pursuing a PhD in Anthropology at the University of Indonesia. Since the early 2000s, she has been actively engaged with the issues faced by farmers, fishers, laborers, women, and other vulnerable groups, particularly those related to forestry, environmental justice, and climate change, through research, community empowerment, and advocacy work. She has authored several national and international publications, which can be accessed via Google Scholar and Scopus.

Surati is a researcher at the Research Centre for Society and Culture, National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), and a PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Indonesia. Her expertise is environmental sociology, with a focus on the peatland ecosystem, indigenous communities, customary forests, as well as the socio-economic, ecological, and cultural aspects of communities surrounding forests. She has published numerous scientific papers in various national and international journals, national and international seminar proceedings, and has authored several national and international books. Her book publications in the last five years include: "Socioeconomics, Policy, and Community Empowerment, and Conflict Resolution" (2020); "Biomass Plants in Teak Land: Reflections on Socioeconomics, Environment, and Policy" (2021); "Forest and Land Rehabilitation Based on Superior Seedlings" (2023); "Peat Ecosystems in Indonesia: Assessing the Multi-Crisis and a Sustainable Path" (2025), part of the book *Approaching Natural Resources for Sustainable Development in Indonesia*.

Isroodin earned his bachelor's degree from STAIN Purwokerto. He founded the Satria Tama Community Learning Center (PKBM) while still a student in 2006-2016 in Purwokerto. In 2011, he actively served as an education volunteer at the Community Learning Center (PKBM) Argowilis, and in 2013, he established MTs PAKIS, a free school for children from forest villages at the junior high school level, which continues to operate today. MTs PAKIS is an agroforestry-based school, with the hope that in the future, children from forest villages will be willing and able to become the next generation to build and develop the potential of their villages.

Irwansyah is the secretary of the Graduate Program in Political Science at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Indonesia. As a permanent lecturer and researcher, his academic interests center on labor politics, urban politics, and the political dimensions of globalization. Irwansyah holds a Master's degree from the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands, and earned his PhD from Murdoch University, Australia. His research explores the intersections between labor process, workers' movements, urban development, and global political trends, with a particular focus on how these dynamics shape policy and social change in Indonesia and beyond. In addition to his teaching and research roles, Irwansyah actively contributes to academic forums and policy discussions, aiming to bridge the gap between scholarly research and practical policy solutions.

Aspirations, Migration, and Education among Rural Youth in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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This paper investigates how rural youth in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, in particular pre-service teacher education alumni, shape and drive their career aspirations within the intersectionality of gender, place, and migration. Reflecting on the capability approach, the study highlights that aspirations are not solely individual goals but socially immersed capacities which are shaped by opportunity, social values, and local development outlook. Through a phenomenological analysis of survey and interview data from graduates who were enrolled at a teacher education institution in Southwest Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara, the research finds that teaching job is seen as a culturally preferred and practical career that aligns with local values and offers a secure future in a context of rural areas which has limited options.

Female respondents primarily expressed a longing to remain close to their hometown, driven by caregiving roles and locally available opportunity, while male students were more open to migration and career exploration. Migration was often an essential pathway favoring higher education, but for many, it reinforced emotional connections to home and desire to return and contribute for local advancement. These research findings spot the light on the need for gender-sensitive, place-based support systems and the transformative potential of localized higher education institutions in supporting youth agency and rural development. Recommendations include strengthening local teacher education in rural areas, and supporting more opportunities for young women for exploring other professions. This research contributes to broader discussions on youth aspiration, education, and development in Indonesia's disadvantaged, outermost and frontier (*3T - tertinggal, terluar, terdepan*) areas and beyond.

Melisa Apriyani is an education practitioner, currently leading programs on capacity building for grassroots women leaders in climate action. With over a decade of experience in education and social development, she has worked as a teacher, lecturer, program manager, and consultant with non-profit organizations and social enterprise. Her expertise spans teacher education, sustainability, and curriculum development, particularly in underserved and remote areas like Southwest Sumba and Papua. Melisa holds a Master of Arts in Education and International Development from the University College London (UCL-IOE), funded by the LPDP Scholarship, where she explored student teachers' capabilities in Indonesia. Melisa is passionate about bridging research and practice to amplify young people's aspirations and agency within education systems in Southeast Asia.

Suspended Childhoods: Migration, Temporality, and the Everyday Lives of Indonesian Migrants' Children

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This paper introduces the concept of "suspended childhood" to examine how transnational migration creates distinctive temporal experiences that reshape childhood development, agency, and meaning-making. Based on eighteen months of ethnographic fieldwork with Indonesian mothers working as domestic workers in Taipei, Taiwan, I analyze how children navigate the complex temporalities of prolonged parental absence through their mothers' intimate observations and accounts. Rather than positioning migrant children as passive victims of family separation, this research reveals their sophisticated temporal strategies and future-making practices that challenge conventional understandings of childhood vulnerability. The analysis demonstrates how children develop "digital intimacy skills" and "temporal agency," the capacity to actively shape their relationships to past, present, and future within transnational family constraints. Children master asynchronous digital communication across time zones, engage in sophisticated moral reasoning about responsibility and care, and create innovative strategies for maintaining family relationships while protecting parents from excessive worry. These capabilities often exceed conventional expectations of childhood development and reveal alternative pathways of social maturation within Asia's extensive domestic worker migration networks. Theoretically, suspended childhood contributes to migration studies by foregrounding temporality as a central analytical lens, revealing migration as fundamentally a temporal rather than merely spatial phenomenon. Within the context of intra-Asian labor mobility, particularly the massive flows of domestic workers from Indonesia to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, this framework challenges deficit models that dominate policy discussions, instead recognizing children's active participation in family migration projects and their capacity to influence long-term family trajectories.

Anastasia Melati Listyorini is a PhD candidate at Taipei National University of the Arts. Her research focuses on the lived experiences of Indonesian migrant workers and their families, exploring how migration reshapes everyday life across distance and time. She is especially interested in how separation, longing, and hope circulate between those who leave and those who stay, and how children and youth, often left behind, grow up negotiating the emotional and social consequences of migration. Her work is grounded in long-term ethnographic engagement with migrant communities in Taiwan and Indonesia, and seeks to understand how people sustain relationships, navigate uncertainty, and imagine futures while living through the disruptions that migration brings. She is drawn to questions of care, agency, and belonging, especially as they emerge in the quieter corners of family life shaped by economic necessity and mobility. Alongside her research, she remains committed to conversations that connect migration studies with broader reflections on human resilience, intergenerational ties, and the social worlds shaped by movement in contemporary Asia.

Cross-National Youth, Aspirations, and Intergenerational Ambivalence in Singapore

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Amid broader transformations across Asia—such as the expansion of higher education and increased individual mobility—young people today are experiencing greater autonomy in crafting their life courses. Yet, this autonomy unfolds amid uneven and competitive global labour markets, where structural constraints and unequal access to opportunities complicate the promise of choice and self-determination (Cahill & Leccardi 2020; Kaland 2021; Woodman & Wyn 2015). In this constantly evolving landscape, aspirations emerge not merely as expressions of individual ambition, but as relational and temporal projects, unfolding across unpredictable transitions over time.

This paper brings the aspirations framework in migration studies into dialogue with the concept of *intergenerational ambivalence* (Kurt and Karl 1998) to examine how cross-national children's imagined futures are shaped through the intimate dynamics of family life. Upholding intergenerational transfers of aspiration can be fraught, as children from cross-national families may navigate conflicting expectations from both parents, who themselves may occupy different social, cultural, or economic positions within the host society. While existing scholarship on intergenerational dynamics in Asia has largely focused on the provision of care and reciprocity, less attention has been paid to children in cross-national, mixed-status families, where parents may differ in legal status, cultural identity, or migration history. These asymmetries introduce both pressures and possibilities that influence how cross-national youth envision their educational and occupational futures, as well as their aspirations for mobility.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with 29 cross-national youth aged 16-25 residing in Singapore, this paper illuminates how aspirations serve as a lens through which intergenerational transmission is negotiated. The paper first foregrounds how these children's aspirations are deeply relational—shaped not only by individual goals, but also by parental migration histories, sacrifices, and divergent visions of success. Parents' contrasting imaginaries, that are partly rooted in different national and cultural backgrounds, migration trajectories, and experiences of both opportunity and constraint, creates uncertainty and intergenerational ambivalence, as children are forced to navigate future life decisions without a clear moral or emotional anchor. On the other hand, there are cross-national youth in the study who are encouraged—particularly by their foreign mothers—to pursue what is commonly seen as the 'Singaporean pathway' to success: one that prioritises academic achievement, social integration, and upward mobility. Yet this transmission of aspiration is marked by tensions: while children recognise their foreign mothers' efforts as expressions of care and hope, this encouragement is also bound up with the pressures of having to pursue a narrowly defined model of success—one that leaves little room for alternative pathways. Finally, although the lives of some cross-national youth and their families are deeply intertwined with cross-border mobility, migration and networks, these youths do not necessarily aspire to lives abroad; rather, some show rooted aspirations—anchored in familiar spaces and the continuities of everyday life in Singapore.

Bernice Loh is Research Fellow in the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. Her research centres on cross-national marriages and families, including the experiences of mixed children and youth from these households. Her work lies at the intersection of migration, gender, identities, and intergenerational dynamics within the cross-national family, and has been published in journals such as *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*.

Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA is Raffles Professor of Social Sciences, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. She is also the 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. She 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; and cultural politics, family dynamics and international marriage migrants. She has published widely in these fields. Her recent books include, *Handbook of Asian Migrations* (Routledge, 2018 with G. Liu-Farrer); *Student Mobilities and International Education in Asia: Emotional Geographies of Knowledge Spaces* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020 with R. Sidhu and K.C. Ho); and *Handbook on Transnationalism* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022 with F.L. Collins).

Theodora Lam is Research Fellow in Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (NUS). She obtained her PhD in Geography from NUS and her dissertation focused on understanding changing gender subjectivities, web of care and relationships within the family in the wake of transnational labour migration. Her research highlights the voices of return migrants as well as carers and children who have remained in the home countries. Theodora is currently involved in a longitudinal research project, Child Health and Migrant Parents in Southeast Asia (CHAMPSEA): Waves 1 and 2. Her research interests cover transnational migration, children's geographies and gender studies. She has co-edited several special journal issues and has also published on themes relating to migration, citizenship and education in various journals and edited books including *American Behavioral Scientist*, *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *Environment and Planning A* and *Population, Space and Place*.

Esther Goh is Associate Professor of Social Work at the National University of Singapore. Her research champions a dynamic view of children and their mothers from low-income families as active agents in their lives and environments, rather than passive recipients of aid. She led the first longitudinal study on low-income families in Singapore funded by the Social Science Research Council, which identified key protective factors that buffer against mental health risks. Building on this evidence and existing literature on risk, Esther and her team are co-creating with relevant stakeholders a culturally grounded intervention to strengthen the innate resilience of these families. Her work integrates research and practice to inform policies and programmes that uphold dignity and potential in disadvantaged communities.

The Option to Stay: Parental Migration and Children's (Im)mobility Aspirations and Capabilities in the Philippines

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In seeking to counterbalance the prevailing 'mobility bias' (Schewel, 2019) in migration studies, this paper examines how the transnational labour migration of one or both parents over the early life-course of left-behind Filipino children shapes their aspirations and capabilities to *stay* as they transition to young adulthood. Drawing on de Haas' (2003, 2010) aspiration-capability framework, we focus on how these young adults – whose educational pathways have been largely funded by remittances from parental migration – make decisions regarding whether to follow in their migrant parents' footsteps to seek work opportunities abroad, or to turn away from the path of migration and instead carve out localized livelihoods in their home towns. We take a temporal approach to decision-making over the life-course by juxtaposing two critical junctures for young adults: the first in their late teens (17-19 years old) when they are nearing the completion of their educational or training pathways, and the second when they are young adult participants (23-26 years old) embarking on working life. By tracing the changes in the aspirations and capabilities of Filipino children growing up in the Philippines from migrant and non-migrant households, we explore three interrelated research questions. First, how does parental migration shape left-behind children's *aspirations* to stay in the homeland as they transition to young adulthood? Second, how does parental migration influence left-behind children's *capabilities* to stay in the homeland over the two life-course junctures? Thirdly, how do the intergenerational *temporalities* of the transnational family shape young adults' aspirations for future children? The paper is based on in-depth interviews with 25 Filipino children in the Philippines from migrant and non-migrant families over two time points, first in 2016/17 and then again in 2023/24.

Kristel Acedera is Research Associate in the Asian Migration Cluster, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore (NUS). She holds an MSocSci degree in Geography from NUS. Her current research interests explore how the intimacies of transnational familyhood unravel in and through the digital spaces and temporalities of communication technologies. She has published her work on this in peer-reviewed publications like *Journal of Ethnic Migration Studies*, *International Journal of Communication*, *Current Sociology*, and *New Media and Society*.

Brenda S.A. Yeoh FBA is Raffles Professor of Social Sciences, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. She is also the 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. She 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; and cultural politics, family dynamics and international marriage migrants. She has published widely in these fields. Her recent books include, *Handbook of Asian Migrations* (Routledge, 2018 with G. Liu-Farrer); *Student Mobilities and International Education in Asia: Emotional Geographies of Knowledge Spaces* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020 with R. Sidhu and K.C. Ho); and *Handbook on Transnationalism* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2022 with F.L. Collins).

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How Institutional Time Shapes Mobility Trajectories and Temporal Lived Experiences of Transnationally Mobile Youth from China: A Longitudinal Study between 2020 and 2025

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There is a dearth of literature that examines the role of institutional time in shaping (im)mobile subjects' mobility trajectories and lived experiences. Drawing on three rounds of interviews conducted in 2020, 2021 and 2025, this paper examines how institutional time shapes the mobility trajectories and temporal lived experiences of 19 transnationally mobile Chinese youth. Time adherence during the COVID19 pandemic has given rise to various decisions about and experiences of transnational and everyday (im)mobilities that constitute the complex relational mobility continuum and generated three distinctive temporal lived experiences. These include (1) an excessive influx of alone-time, (2) a sheer sense of void and time loss and (3) re-prioritised and re-thought time. However, in 2025 when these youth looked back, they framed their interactions with these institutional time from a 'time inheritance' perspective, articulating how despite the challenges during the pandemic, they achieved distinction through capitalising on their 'inherited' institutional time to gain advantageous career and further studies positions. This article makes theoretical contributions by offering a theorisation of institutional time and empirical contributions by providing a longitudinal perspective into the mobility and immobility lived experiences of transnationally mobile Chinese youth.

Cora Lingling Xu (PhD Cambridge) is Associate Professor at Durham University, UK. She is a sociologist interested in education mobilities and social inequalities. Her research examines how the intersection of class, gender, ethnicity, rural-urban divides, time, and geopolitics can shape social agents' educational and life trajectories. She is an executive editor of *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. Cora's research on Chinese international students has been featured in BBC Radio 4's documentary *Chinese on Campus*, and on BBC News. Cora was a visiting scholar at the Centre for International Higher Education (CIHE), Boston College, USA in Spring 2025. Cora's latest book *The Time Inheritors* (SUNY Press, 2025) reveals the role of time in shaping students' navigation of rural-to-urban, cross-border and transnational education within and beyond China.

Mengwei Tu is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Swansea University, Swansea, UK. Mengwei's research focuses on international migration, specifically on two streams: first, she looks at international student cohorts both from China and to China and investigates their post-study career and migration trajectories; second, she explores the familial side of highly skilled migration by conducting qualitative longitudinal research on transnational families between China and the UK. Her academic career across China and the UK has enabled her to carry out empirical research in both countries, thus develop a transnational and comparative lens to her research subjects. Mengwei is the author of *Education, Migration, and Family Relations between China and the UK* (Emerald, 2018). She also leads a funded project "Student/Graduate from Belt-Road Countries in China: Migration Networks and Career Trajectory" (2018-2023).

Navigating the Invisible Hand of Mercurial Mobility: Student Border Crossers and Border Biopolitics along the Malaysia-Singapore Causeway

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This paper extends the concept of biopolitics through mobility by examining the experiences of student border crossers along the Singapore-Malaysia Causeway. Adopting mobility as method, I analyze how the congestion problem along the Causeway governs the spatio-temporal practices of these students. Approximately 15,000 students, predominantly Malaysian-Chinese, commute daily from their homes in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, to attend public school in Singapore, then return home to Johor Bahru at the end of the day. I propose the concept of *mercurial mobility* as a biopolitical tool - one that governs not through deliberate design, but through the capriciousness of the Causeway congestion. Unlike a carefully engineered mechanism of institutional governance, mercurial mobility is an unintended consequence of persistent institutional inadequacies in resolving cross-border congestion. Among various groups of border crossers, students are particularly vulnerable to temporal instability along the Causeway. I demonstrate how, under the regime of mercurial mobility, student border crossers are conditioned to adhere to strict time-discipline, ultimately internalizing it as a moral imperative. Yet, student border crossers manage to wrestle back some degree of temporal agency by donning a disposition of detached indifference to the unpredictability of the Causeway congestion and crippling fear of being late for school. This disposition has even emboldened them to gamify wait times. In doing so, they not only disrupt the temporal design of mercurial mobility and capitalistic time-discipline but also unlock the spontaneous possibilities of play even in austere conditions. This paper draws on open-ended interviews with student border crossers, participant observation, and content analysis of media discourses. It contributes to the growing relevance of biopolitical perspectives in border studies, and to scholarship at the intersection of mobility studies and political geography. I confirm that this paper has not been published or committed elsewhere, and I am willing to revise it for potential inclusion in a special issue of a journal.

Emma Goh is a Master of City Planning student at the University of California, Berkeley, graduating in May 2025, and an incoming doctoral student in City and Regional Planning at the same institution. Her research interests lie in the politics, planning, and governance of infrastructure systems in Southeast Asia. Her past projects include examining the production of infrastructural dissonance within Singapore's illiberal planning system by analyzing the institutional arrangements behind its network of covered walkways, and exploring biopolitical regimes governing border infrastructures through the spatio-temporal practices of border crossers along the Malaysia-Singapore Causeway. Her upcoming doctoral research will investigate the relationship between regional cooperation and the development of renewable energy infrastructure in Southeast Asia. Prior to graduate school, she was a research assistant at the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities, where she worked on planning age-friendly neighbourhoods and critically examined the role of innovation in urban development. She holds a BA (Honours) in Urban Studies from Yale-NUS College (2022).

Rethinking Transition Temporalities in Asia-Australia Youth Mobilities

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The crisis of youth transitions has precipitated extensive transnational mobility for young people seeking alternative pathways to securing their futures in precarious times. Transnational mobility amongst 'middling' youth (as opposed to the highly elite or disenfranchised) seeking ways to secure or improve their socio-economic status and establish new trajectories towards adulthood is a relatively recent but rapidly growing phenomenon, not least amongst the rising middle class in parts of Asia. However, what these transition outcomes consist of, and the kinds of temporal framings within which they are achieved, are becoming more complex than normatively assumed. Mobility is often perceived as a brief period of time for accelerating progress towards transition milestones: a phase undertaken prior to, or on the quest towards, the achievement of adulthood and that results in a settled return. But mobility may disrupt and transform transition markers, trajectories and imaginaries as much as it facilitates them. In this paper we draw on a mixed methods longitudinal study of over 800 young people entering or departing Australia (the 'Youth Mobilities, Aspirations and Pathways' project -YMAP) to explore temporal transition turbulence amongst mobile youth. With a focus on qualitative longitudinal interviews with participants from South, Southeast and East Asia coming to Australia for study, work and self-development, we explore how new and unanticipated transition temporalities emerge around their imaginaries and experiences of adulthood and life course markers. We consider how their contestations of transition time provoke a shift away from understandings of mobility as a brief 'time out' experience and challenge assumptions about return and settling.

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Footloose Youth: Joblessness, Micro-Mobilities, and Agentive Capacity in North India

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Young people's transitions from education to employment have become more difficult amid conditions of neoliberalisation, precarious labor markets, and varied socio-political changes across contexts (Jeffrey 2010; Honwana 2014). Following year-long ethnographic fieldwork in Meerut district, western Uttar Pradesh, north India in 2022-23, I found vast sections of rural, lower middle class young people who had opted for more educational qualifications simultaneously struggling to find jobs commensurate with their degrees and educational investments. Instead of following popular norms of migrating to big cities or engaging in international migration, they travelled to and from the rural parts of the district to the central city hub on a daily basis, engaging in 'looping', micro-mobilities (Bissell 2013, Susewind 2021), to find work or prepare for secure employment. Thinking about young people who invested in educational pursuits especially as mobile individuals accessing urban Meerut over a long period of time as a 'generation' using Mannheim (1952), this paper examines how this generation of 'footloose youth' seek to find 'work' in the absence of formal avenues of secure employment. I use the term 'footloose' as a comparative theoretical tool, taking from Breman (1996, 2020), to examine to what extent and how young people who engage with global images of education empowerment and micro-mobilities bereft from the structures of the formal economy generate informal, precarious sources of employment in the political, economic, and educational spheres. Unemployed young people's 'work' involves participation in youth politics, economic entrepreneurship, and government job preparation across different spaces from the formal university to the shadow education markets in Meerut to navigate the limbo in their lives. This strategy is especially informed by regional notions of success and agency as well wherein notions of class and caste played a crucial role.

Avishek Jha is a PhD in Human Geography from The University of Melbourne, Australia. His research looks at the diverse ways in which young people navigate educational privatisation and unemployment in contemporary north India. In doing so, his thesis examined educated, unemployed young people's social, educational, and cultural actions especially with a focus on newly emerging commercial educational spaces that they term libraries in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India. He has published in *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, and *Studies in Indian Politics*. He is the co-author of the book, *When People Rise in Protest: Mobilizing for Equal Citizenship in India*, with Professor Zoya Hasan published by the Three Essays Collective in 2024. He is also the co-convenor of the South Asia Forum at the University of Melbourne.

Youthfulness in Taiwan's Distant-Water Squid and Saury Fisheries – Young Indonesian Migrant Fishers

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Building on an ethnographic study among Indonesian migrant fishers in Taiwanese fishing ports and drawing on scholarship on 'youthful labour', this workshop contribution sheds light on young people's experiences in the context of Asian labour migration. The workforce in Taiwan's distant-water squid and saury fisheries is largely composed of young Southeast Asian men. I argue that Taiwan's distant-water fisheries not only profit from these young migrant workers' labour power in an abstract sense. Rather, the industry appropriates their masculine youthfulness: their physical capacities as young workers, their bachelor status, their aspirations and desires. Work on squid and saury distant-water fishing vessels implies being at sea for several months and very limited possibilities to contact one's family. Workers perform unskilled and semi-skilled labour during extensive work shifts, and they are exposed to a highly dangerous work environment. Considering the conditions and labour processes on these vessels, migrants' youth subjectivities become conceivable as a beneficial quality to the industry. The young Indonesian men I met in Taiwan cherished the isolation of work at sea as an opportunity to focus on work and be free from worries about their precarious economic situation and familial expectations at home. Working on the distant-water fishing vessels for a limited period of time, they aspired to earn money before starting a family or further pursuing their education. And they looked for the adventure of travelling the world. Yet, these young migrant workers' subjectivities cannot be reduced to benefiting the interests of Taiwan's fishing capital. Through their youthful aspirations, these workers also express a striving for respect, dignity, and equality, thus challenging the harsh and degrading conditions of their labour. The lens of youthfulness allows for a dynamic and complex picture of migrant labour on distant-water fishing vessels, which in public discourses is globally often reduced to victimising portrayals of migrant workers.

Samia Dinkelaker is Postdoctoral Fellow with the Asian Migration cluster of the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. She earned a PhD from the University of Osnabrück, Germany, with a dissertation on Indonesia's brokerage of domestic workers to Hong Kong. Her latest research project studied the labour, lives, and subjectivities of Indonesian migrant workers in Taiwan's fishing and manufacturing industries. In extension of this research project, she has also engaged in comparing Taiwan's current labour migration regime with West Germany's post-WW II "guest worker" regime. In her scholarly activity so far, she conducted extensive fieldwork in Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Crossing the Border for Education and Marriage: The Cosmopolitan Projects of Vietnamese and Thai Female Youths in Guangxi China

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International migration in the post-pandemic world of tightening border control, geopolitical realignments, and economic uncertainty poses both challenges and opportunities for mobile youths, especially international students who typically leverage overseas education for social mobility and self-formation. While scholarly writings have tracked how recent macro-structural shifts continue to impact upon education-migration infrastructures and international student mobilities, there remains relatively little focus on the role that gender plays in the reconfiguration of students' aspirations, strategies, and identities around migration.

This paper addresses this gap through an examination of how female international students navigate their overseas education projects within a wider set of intersecting migration pathways including those organised around marriage, family, and work. We draw on interviews conducted during December 2024 with 9 Thai and 8 Vietnamese migrant women who are living, studying, and/or working in Nanning of the Guangxi province, as part of a larger project investigating how China's Belt and Road Initiative is shifting educational linkages and student mobilities in Southeast Asia. While the Thai and Vietnamese women are of varying ages, class backgrounds, and at different life course stages during the time of interview, they tell a common migration story that connects overseas education with romantic encounters that would lead to marriage and eventual settlement in China.

Conceptually, we adopt a unique focus on borders and border thinking as a departure point for analysing the education-marriage-migration nexus at the intra-regional border context of southern China, Thailand, and Vietnam. In particular, we draw on Mignolo's notion of border cosmopolitanism to frame the intersecting (and interconnected) migration pathways as integral to the ways that women migrants engage in cosmopolitan projects of self-making. Adding to Mignolo's emphasis on the border as a site of negotiation informed by local histories and struggles, we underline how personal understandings of futures –both hopeful and uncertain – also shape gendered experiences, strategies, and outcomes of migration and mobility projects. In viewing these women's border-crossing journeys as cosmopolitan projects, this paper demonstrates how Thai and Vietnamese young women seize opportunities to locate and relocate themselves – socially, culturally and geographically – across the spheres of education, marriage, family, and work, and sheds light on how wider economic and geopolitical shifts combine with gender and class to shape the ways these young Asian women navigate and actively shape migration chances and actual pathways over the life course.

In doing so, this paper makes two contributions to the scholarship on international student mobilities. First, it provides original insights on the gendered dimensions of student mobilities as well as the extended lives –and temporalities– of international students beyond the predominant focus on education and (post-study) work. Second, it highlights the importance of paying heed to transnational contexts where the border serves as paradoxical space of cosmopolitan project-making; a simultaneously constraining and enabling space where practices of resistance, remaking, and refuturing form a critical part of how mobile youths respond to the complex interplaying of gender cultures, narratives about modern selves, aspirations for economic and social mobility, evolving geopolitical ties, and shifts in regional-global outlooks.

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Sivarin Lertpusit is Assistant Professor at the College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Thammasat University, Thailand. Her research focuses on the New Chinese in Thailand with broad interests in the sociology of migration and multiculturalism.

Navigating Spirituality in the Midst of Academic Aspirations: Indonesian Students at a Singaporean University

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As Indonesian youths of various religious backgrounds migrate to Singapore for higher education, how do they navigate their religious identity as they simultaneously work toward educational achievement?

Migration potentially affords a creative agency as “a fertile ground to venture into alternative forms of religiosity and develop new paths to transcendence that circumvent the duties of tradition” (Brown and Yeoh 2018, 15). This is particularly relevant for the age group which is the focus of this study, as experiencing new forms of sociality and religiosity through the experience of educational migration may lead young people at a “vital juncture” (Johnson-Hanks 2002) to question or move away from their established religious practices or beliefs. However, young people across Asia are not just questioning or moving away from religion; subsets of youth are becoming decidedly more conservative in their religious leanings (Cornelio 2016), even as they work to engage popular culture and digital media within these relatively conservative moral frameworks (Parker and Nilan 2013, 7).

This paper draws on 25 semi-structured interviews with Indonesians seeking higher education in Singapore, of various religious backgrounds (Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, and agnostic). Findings focus on the entanglements of the students’ educational and religious journeys. While orientations towards religion and strategies were varied, this paper focuses on a subset of these students who became more engaged in religious practice and community to make sense of their educational achievement and/or in address the stresses and challenges of university student life.

Erica M. Larson is Senior Research Fellow in the Religion and Globalisation research cluster at the Asia Research Institute. Her research interests include education, religion, ethics, and politics in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Her current ethnographic research focuses on Indonesian university students active in religious organizations and their attitudes and beliefs about corruption as a lens on normative state-society relations and notions of ethics, piety, and responsibility. She is also conducting research on the Indonesian diaspora in Singapore, focusing on students/young professionals as well as religious groups and networks.

“You Study Abroad, but You’re Still Stuck”: Emotional Geographies of Chinese Students in Southeast Asia

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International students' journeys encompass imaginative, corporeal, and emotional dimensions, yet emotional aspects remain significantly underexplored despite their fundamental role in shaping mobile youth experiences. This paper explores how Chinese international students in Singapore and the Philippines navigate the emotional and strategic dimensions of educational mobility in times of uncertainty. It focuses on how students make decisions about where to study and what futures to pursue, amid shifting geopolitical/economic conditions and mounting domestic pressures in China, and how emotional experiences both shape and are shaped by those decisions.

Based on interviews with 58 Chinese international students in Singapore and the Philippines, this study identifies three interwoven themes: precarious aspiration, emotional labour, and temporal disjuncture. First, students' aspirations are shaped not only by desires for upward mobility but also by emotional response to structural pressures—particularly frustration, anxiety, urgency and fatigue triggered by the intensifying competition in China's education and labour markets. These emotional pressures compel to look outward—not solely in search of global opportunities, but as a response to emotional exhaustion and uncertainty at home.

Second, students' decision-making processes often involve ongoing emotional labour: sustaining hope, managing doubt, and reconciling competing demands from family, internalised ideals of success, and perceived self-worth. While some experience these decisions as emotionally driven, others adopt frame them more pragmatically—shaped by affordability, access, or timing. Singapore is often viewed as a practical and regionally credible choice, balancing prestige with familiarity. The Philippines, by contrast, becomes a site for emotional recalibration and strategic compromise. Across both contexts, students do not simply choose destinations; they come to emotionally inhabit them, investing meaning and value into uncertain paths.

Third, students experience temporal disjunctures as they navigate educational and personal timelines. Many delay, fast-track, or sidestep normative life-course stages in pursuit of educational mobility, often while contending with emotional tensions related to instability and risk. Their post-graduation decisions—whether to stay abroad or return to China—are shaped as much by emotional considerations (hope, fear, obligation, ambivalence) as by perceived opportunities, visa regimes, and labour market access. The pressure to reintegrate into China's hyper-competitive job market further intensifies the emotional terrain, complicating linear narratives of return or settlement. This paper argues that navigating uncertainty—across aspiration, emotion, and time—is central to how Chinese international students shape their educational and post-educational trajectories. By foregrounding emotional geographies, the study reveals how students give meaning to constraint, negotiate futures marked by uncertainty, and emotionally invest in pathways that are often unpredictable and uneven. In doing so, it challenges instrumentalist accounts of international student mobility and contributes to a deeper understanding of mobility as an affective and temporal project, shaped by uneven access to opportunity, structural limits, and the shifting politics of aspiration.

Kris Hyesoo Lee is Research Fellow with the Asian Migration Cluster at the Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore. Her research focuses on the intersection of migration and education, transnationalism, inward and outward mobilities in Asia, and critical approaches to migration. Dr Lee is currently working on the Belt and Road Initiative and Student-Mobilities in China-Southeast Asia (BRISM) project to better understand how BRI is (re)shaping the knowledge spaces and circuits of educational mobilities in Southeast Asia.

Madeleine Shutler is currently pursuing a Master of Social Sciences at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. Her research explores the intersection of physical and virtual spaces, focusing on how mixed-race youth in postcolonial Singapore negotiate race, belonging, and construct their sense of self. Her broader research interests span migration, gender, and transnational identity formation, particularly within postcolonial and diasporic contexts.

Certain Cosmopolitans: Precarity and Possibility in the Lives of Migrant Children in the Gulf

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Children born to those classified as “skilled” migrants in the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states often grow up in a situation where they are long-term migrants in a country where there is no possibility of ever gaining citizenship or staying permanently. Many of them are second or third generation migrants, whose family has been in the GCC for generations and have little connection to their home country. However, at certain life stages, these migrant descendants have to make strategic and affective decisions about whether to stay on, and how; or whether to leave their adopted homelands.

These dual elements of precarity and possibility are drivers that are present throughout the life course but more acute at certain junctures such as retirement of parents, after graduation, or when making joint familial decisions about education and citizenship. Many of these decisions are taken-for-granted by the majority of immobile peoples. However, the case study of children of GCC migrants provides unique insights to these specific stages in the life course. This example exposes more distinctly how structural forces of immigration and citizenship regimes interact with agency and family-level actions that shape migrants’ lives in important ways.

Echoing other scholars of the Gulf (Vora et al 2020, Akinci 2020, Assef 2020), this research contributes to studies of migrants in the GCC that aims to de-exceptionalise that space. Drawing from in-depth interviews with descendants of migrants in Qatar and the UAE, this paper demonstrates that migrant children in the GCC face similar constraints experienced by their counterparts elsewhere in Asia. However, their unique position as permanent transnationals cultivates the adoption of a cosmopolitan perspective to life and the future. In exploring this process, this paper contributes to research on migrant identities, affective cosmopolitanism and the migration industry.

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Growing Diaspora in Japan: Shifting Landscapes of Migrants' Children

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This study explores how Japan's growing dependence on migrant labour is generating new temporalities and transitions in its demographic and social landscape. While scholarly debates about Japan have largely centred on how to attract and retain foreign workers, less attention has been given to the long-term, generational implications of these migration flows—particularly for children and youth born into migrant families.

Drawing on quantitative national statistical data, the study examines childbirth trends across different migrant communities in Japan. It compares long-established groups from East and Southeast Asia (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, Thailand) with more recently arrived populations from South and West Asia (e.g. Nepal, India, Bangladesh). The analysis reveals contrasting reproductive trajectories: while fertility rates among older migrant groups remain constrained by Japan's legal and institutional frameworks, newer migrant populations show a steady and rapid increase in birth rates, largely independent of such regulations.

These emergent demographic patterns signal a critical social transition: the formation of new migrant households and diasporic communities. The rising number of children born into these newer migrant groups introduces a temporal shift in Japan's social fabric—one that may provoke issues of inclusion, integration, and recognition.

This paper argues for the development of a new analytical framework to better understand immigrant-receiving countries in Asia, such as Japan. Japan can no longer rely on outdated notions of mono-ethnicity, nor can it simply adopt Western human rights frameworks that focus on securing nationality for migrants' children. East Asian countries are often seen as “generational transit points” for onward migration to the West, and Japan's context is further complicated by its distinctive citizenship regime. Japan has a unique citizenship regime to secure “almost full” citizenship for foreign nationals; the regime was first built on the history to secure *Zainichi* Koreans, but subsequently, adopted to all foreign nationals. In light of Japan's growing diversity, it is essential to craft a context-specific framework for understanding the experiences of migrants' children—one that does not merely replicate Western paradigms. The birth of children into newer migrant communities is framed not merely as a demographic fact, but as a signal of social transition—where Japan's policy, institutional frameworks, and national identity struggle to keep pace. Here, children are positioned as a symbolic and social hinge between migrant histories and Japan's future. They are markers and agents of social change.

Sari K. Ishii is a sociologist with a particular interest in the minority and transnational transformation of identity, values, and life strategies over cross-bordering socioeconomic spaces. Specifically, her key research themes cover the politics of identity and space in the fields of trans-border migration and cross-cultural tourism. Her main research fields are Southeast Asia (particularly Thailand), East Asia (particularly Japan), and trans-border space bridging. Her main research interests are social reproduction, transgenerational life strategies, social class mobility, education, diasporic communities, transnational care, children, youth, 1.5 generation / second generation of migrants from Southeast Asia in Japan. She is the author of *Marriage Migration in Asia: Emerging Minorities at the Frontiers of Nation-States* (2016, NUS Press/Kyoto University Press), “Access to citizenship for abandoned children: how migrants' children become ‘stateless’ in Japanese orphanages” (2020, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 47(5)), “Remarriage migration of women in Asia: The case of Japan” (2022, *International Migration*, 61(4)).

The Temporality of Ethnic Belonging among Children Growing Up in Korean Chinese Transnational Families

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The Korean minority in China, known as Korean Chinese (Chaoxianzu; 朝鲜族; 조선족), is an officially recognized ethnic minority whose ancestors emigrated generations ago from the Korean peninsula and settled down in present-day China. The large-scale population movements between China and the Korean peninsula gradually diminished with the end of World War II and resumed following the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea. Since the 1990s, Korean Chinese have become increasingly mobile between China and South Korea as pioneering transmigrants in the region. The unprecedented outflow of Korean Chinese migrating from China to South Korea as migrant laborers has resulted in numerous families living separately in the two countries. Using temporality as the analytical lens, this article explores how growing up in transnational families shapes the ethnic belonging of Korean Chinese children through the temporalities of separation and reunion. Drawing narratives from in-depth interviews with younger-generation Korean Chinese who grew up in transnational families, this study captures their transnational memories of waiting for their parents in the northeastern Chinese borderlands adjacent to the Korean Peninsula and visiting their parents in South Korea. Their ethnic belonging is mediated in the times of ethnic bonding, the moments of ethnic dilemma, and in the temporality of a contingent future. Embedded in transnational ways of life, children of transnational families, on the one hand, have benefited from the remittances sent back by their parents abroad and developed future aspirations through geographical mobility and transnational networks. On the other hand, the borderland memories and transnational experiences have left a lingering emotional residue that complicates their sense of belonging and their roles in the family. The temporal perspective advances our understanding of the subjectivation of children growing up in transnational families. Through juxtaposing the narratives of the three interviewees, this article illustrates how their sense of ethnic belonging is mediated in moments of ethnic bonding, instances of ethnic dilemma, and in the temporality of a contingent future.

Ruixin Wei is currently a doctoral candidate in the department of Korean Studies at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. Her PhD project revolves around the transnational and translocal mobility of younger generation Korean Chinese in and between China and South Korea. Ruixin has published articles and reviews in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *Journal of Multiculture and Education*, *The Review of Korean Studies*, *European Journal of Korean Studies*.

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Bernice Loh is Research Fellow in the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. Her research centres on cross-national marriages and families, including the experiences of mixed children and youth from these households. Her work lies at the intersection of migration, gender, identities, and intergenerational dynamics within the cross-national family, and has been published in journals such as *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*.

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