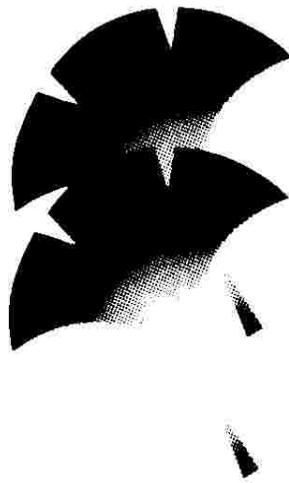


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Gabriele Vogt

Facing the Challenge of Immigration?

**The State, Civil Society
and Structures of Interdependence**

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Abstract:

**Facing the Challenge of Immigration?
The State, Civil Society and Structures of Interdependence**

Is labor migration a solution to Japan's shrinking workforce? The basic numbers tell us yes. The question, however, gets complex when we take into account political and societal factors influencing the current debate around this question. This paper addresses the facts and figures of labor migration to Japan as well as the evolving discourse on the issue. Of special interest is how civil society organizations shape this discourse. Specifically, how do civil society actors lobby their target actors? Do they make use of domestic and/or transnational structures of contentious engagement? Do they shape Japan's structure of political interdependence among state- and non-state actors by addressing the transnational issue of labor migration?

Key words: *labor migration, demographic change, foreign workers, civil society organizations, boomerang pattern, transnationalization, structure of interdependence.*

1. Introduction

Globalization has brought along an increase in border-crossing movements. These movements include the movement of goods and capital in trade and investment as well as the movement of ideas, such as in cultural exchange. It is the movement of people, however, which – in a post-9/11-world – has drawn the most attention. In many industrialized nations of the West, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 triggered a revision of immigration policies. Increased control over the (relatively) free movement of people which characterized the years after the end of the Cold War is one of the political directives of the hour. Host countries tend to view the border-crossing movement of foreign nationals, whether for leisure or business, for a limited time or for the purpose of settlement, as a domestic security issue. On the other hand, many of these industrialized nations are in the midst of demographic changes themselves. Their populations are aging and shrinking. The same holds true for their workforce. Against this background, the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) published a report in 2000 on how much replacement migration, in particular labor migration, eight industrial nations and two world regions would need in order to, for example, keep the ratio of working to non-working population on roughly the level it was at the turn of the millennium. These numbers suggest there may soon be large-scale labor migration to the nations and regions in question. The industrialized nations' need for labor migration, however, conflicts with their reluctance to open their doors to potential migrants.

The paper at hand will address the issues of demographic change and labor migration for the example of Japan. Japan is among the fastest aging societies in the world. The UNPD reports astronomic numbers for suggested labor migration to Japan. It is safe to say that if other demographic factors, such as retirement age or fertility etc. remain unchanged, Japan will need large-scale labor migration in order to keep its workforce at a level that ensures the functionality of the state. The nation's political elites, however, are hesitant about taking steps towards opening Japan's doors to such migrants. In fact, Japan has been

following the same route other industrialized nations, for example the US, have before: foreigners visiting Japan or coming to live in Japan are subject to comprehensive screening, and visa regulations and the work permit system are currently under revision. In other words, the ongoing debate on this issue suggests that these revisions will lead instead toward stricter immigration policies, not an open-door policy to labor migrants. This paper aims at shedding light on how Japan is facing the current challenges of immigration. Immigration seems to be economically required, and yet it is currently not backed by a political, let alone a social consensus. Which direction will Japan's immigration policy choose in this time of demographic change? Who are the actors involved in this decision making process, how do they impact each other, and what conclusions can we draw from their interaction, and how will all this affect the future development of the political structure of interdependence that binds these actors? To help answer this last question, this paper places special focus on the role of civil society organizations in Japan's political decision making process.

In the following section I will introduce my interdisciplinary research approach to these questions, which combines theories on migration and multi-level politics. Section three provides the statistics involved, i.e. the numbers of foreigners coming to live and work in Japan. The legal framework that regulates labor migration to Japan will be addressed as well. Section four will shed light on the ongoing discourse about reforming Japan's immigration guidelines by presenting a case study. A close examination of the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act (*Shutsunyūkoku kanri oyobi nanmin ninteihō*, in brief: *Nyūkanhō*) will clarify the role of CSO engagement in shaping the political discourse and the initial decision making process regarding revisions to Japan's Immigration Law. I will explain this process of debate in order to illustrate the positions of the various actors involved in agenda setting and decision making on the question of migration to Japan, thereby exposing the political structure of interdependence that binds these actors. Finally, section five will sum up my findings thus far and suggest areas of further research. (Disclaimer: The paper at hand is a work in progress. There are many loose ends in terms of

data and argumentation that need to be tied in through future research. It does not yet do justice to the methodological approach it proposes for itself; furthermore, it requires some structural revisions.)

2. Research Methodology

Looking through the lens of transnationalism, this study addresses how immigration guidelines to Japan might be revised, and how the underlying process of decision making affects the interdependent structure binding together the actors involved in the discourse. This focus seems appropriate not only because border-crossing movement of people is a transnational phenomenon per se, but also because this approach allows the most direct investigation of migration and its political impacts.

Transnational theory in migration studies examines migration against the background of globalization. Older migration theories, such as the *neo-classical economic perspective*, which focuses on the migrant as ‘human capital’, fail to grasp the increasing importance for the cross-border movement of people in what contemporary migration research has dubbed the “regimes of power and knowledge” (Nonini 2002: 5–6). Labor markets are not only shaped by purely economic determinants, but are also “culturally and politically produced” (Nonini 2002: 5). *Migration systems theory* hints at the importance of combining the macro- and micro-structures of migration, i.e. the large-scale institutional factors and the networks and practices of migrants themselves. This double perspective takes into account the importance of, for example, cultural and multi-level political factors when explaining migration movements. Building on *migration systems theory*, I argue that it is the so-called meso-structures, in particular the transnational meso-structures, that are of particular importance in shaping current migration realities, and to some degree migration policies themselves. Meso-structures are intermediate mechanisms linking the macro- and micro-levels of migration structures. They mediate between migrants and political or economic

institutions. Their importance increases with what migration researcher Stephen Castles and political scientist Mark Miller (2003: 29) call the “growth of circulatory or repeated mobility”, i.e. the growth of an environment in which “people migrate regularly between a number of places where they have economic, social or cultural linkages”, thus becoming *transmigrants*. Transnationalism in this regard is not a completely new phenomenon; however, its importance in terms of quantity and quality has increased significantly through globalization. Also, among the current *transmigrants*, a new distinction of two types of migrants evolves: On the one side we observe an increase of *transmigrants* in the service sector; on the other side there is an increasing “implementation in transnational corporations of new ‘world best practice’ criteria for professional work” (Nonini 2002: 7), i.e. an increase in numbers of highly qualified professionals who reach “world-class” status in their work and follow the incentives of the transnational labor market. Focusing on the transnationalization of migration puts civil society organizations (CSO), international organizations (IO) and the like at the center of my study, since they are the intermediating links between migrants and national political elites.

Understanding the ways these intermediating links help shape new immigration policy in Japan requires in-depth research not only on the actors themselves, but also on the political opportunity structure the actors find themselves situated in. The paper at hand will put special focus on CSOs, in particular those engaged in political lobbying, as actors in the current debate on how to revise Japan’s immigration policy. Of particular interest is the structure of the organizations themselves, in this case a single example of such a CSO engaged in political lobbying. Additionally, we must take into account the political opportunity structure in which a CSO finds itself, since this determines a CSO’s range of action. Thus both a CSO’s internal structures, as well as its political setting, are crucial factors for its success. Social movement literature used to argue that a CSO’s life cycle follows a circular model. Social movement researcher Sidney Tarrow calls this model the *cycle of contention*. According to Tarrow (1998: 141–150), every cycle consists of a mobilization phase and a demobilization phase. Each of the two phases consists of three

sub-stages: The mobilization phase starts with *conflict and diffusion*, i.e. a certain issue is at some point perceived as contentious by a critical number of people. Once this perception spreads among like-minded people, unrelated groups or even antagonists, a social movement may be sparked. The second stage in the mobilization phase is called *repertoires and frames*. Its most important tasks are to create symbols, frame meanings, and produce ideologies in order to justify collective action. *Increased information and interaction* consummate the mobilization phase: the rise in quantity and quality of information on a social movement, and the interaction between its supporters and the authorities in place, cause political tension to heighten. At this point, new centers of power might evolve. With this step the path towards a polarization of society is already laid. *Exhaustion and polarization* comprise the first stage of the demobilization phase. Exhaustion comes about because of the weariness and disillusionment of social movement activists; polarization by a decline of participation and by factionalization of the movement. *Violence and institutionalization* follow, i.e. a movement splits into radicals and moderates, often in a conflict over violence. The state reacts towards these developments in the form of *facilitation and repression*. A state's political control of a movement may lead to a sharp rift between a movement's factions: some will take part in negotiations with government authorities, others will split, radicalize further, and eventually be suppressed or – in rare cases – lead to a revolutionary turn-over of the government.

How can social movements break out of this *cycle of contention*? That is, how can they persevere despite internal conflicts and state pressure? Recent social movement literature calls our attention to the transnationalization of CSO activism as one way to overcome the seemingly predestined downfall of a contentious movement. To draw again from Tarrow's research, it has been the spread of mass communications and travel technology that has "sped up the process of transnational diffusion and given organizers new weapons of mobilization" (Tarrow 1998: 208). One may ask how these "new weapons of mobilization" function. Social movement researchers Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink argue that transnationalization of CSO activism "can amplify the demands of domestic groups, pry

open space for new issues, and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 13). They call the process by which a CSO intensifies its pressure on the national government via transnational alliance building a *boomerang pattern*. The *boomerang pattern* can prove particularly useful to CSOs in so-called strong states, i.e. in states with a restrictive political opportunity structure. For CSOs in a setting where they are blocked from direct lobbying of state authorities, information exchange and cooperation with CSOs in other states may open up new ways of putting pressure on the targeted government. Demands for responsiveness from this state can be expressed by other states or by intergovernmental organizations – either way, CSOs in other states can initiate this process of interaction. Keck and Sikkink’s *boomerang pattern* is shown in Figure 1.

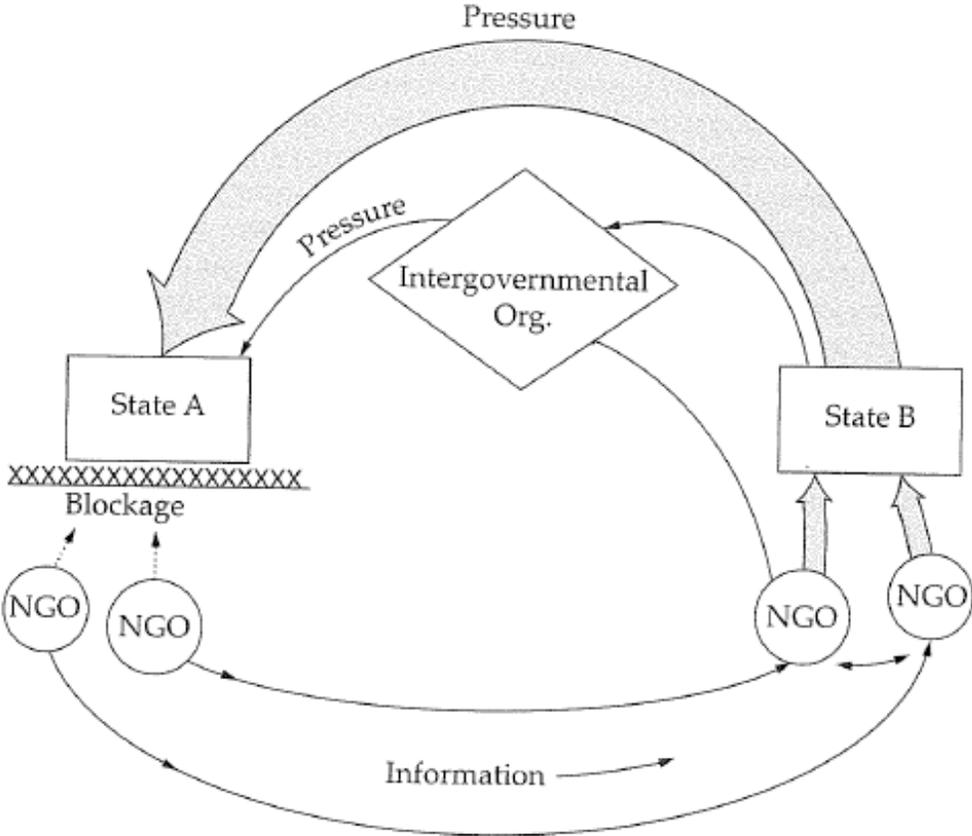


Figure 1: Boomerang Pattern of CSO activism
 Source: Keck and Sikkink 1998: 13

Regarding this graph, I have three points I would like to comment on, thus suggesting how Keck and Sikkink's model can be further developed. First, instead of intergovernmental organizations (IGO), it might be more appropriate to choose the broader term of international organizations (IO), which can include as members sovereign states and/or intergovernmental organizations. Secondly, instead of NGO, non-governmental organizations, I would choose the broader term of CSO, civil society organizations. This seems especially important for a case study on Japan, where NGO (and NPO, i.e. non-profit organizations) are understood differently from, for example, the US. Thirdly, the model might be expanded by including other relevant actors at the sub-state level, such as local governments or business associations. For this case study, however, I will follow the boomerang pattern in its current form, which delimits CSOs as sub-state actors; at the same time I will change the wording from NGO to CSO and from intergovernmental organizations to international organizations.

In this paper, I will study the current political debate on revising Japan's immigration policy in the context of the nation's demographic change by exposing the processes of transnationalization involved. My research methodology will combine the *transnational theory* of migration studies with the *boomerang pattern* of transnationalizing CSO activities. With transnationalism on the rise, both in terms of migration realities as well as political concepts of interdependence, I take into account the latest developments in migration patterns as well as multi-level politics. However incomplete, I aim to provide a glimpse at the current discourse on immigration policy in Japan and at its impact on that nation's political system. I will do so by closely examining how much CSO engagement in shaping new immigration policies in Japan has succeeded in applying the four concepts of transnational CSO activism, namely information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics.

2. Facts & Figures

Japan's population is aging and shrinking. There is a vast amount of data available on this development. I will not go into detail, since the most important point for my argument – Japan's demographic need for labor migration – is the decline of Japan's workforce in particular. For further details on the statistical development of Japan's population in general, one may refer to the information provided by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, located in Tokyo's Chiyoda ward. In Figure 2, I include one graph, designed by this research institute, which shows the projected development of the Japanese population divided into age brackets. It forecasts a decline of those 14 years old and under; there is an even sharper decline predicted for those aged 15 to 64. Only those 65 years and older will increase in number. A nation's workforce is usually defined by the 15 to 64 age bracket; those who are 14 and younger as well as those 65 and older count as the nonworking population. The graph in Figure 2 predicts that for Japan in 2050, the working and nonworking populations will roughly equal each other at some 50 million each. This development would lead to the breakdown of the nation's social services, its economic power, and global competitiveness in general.

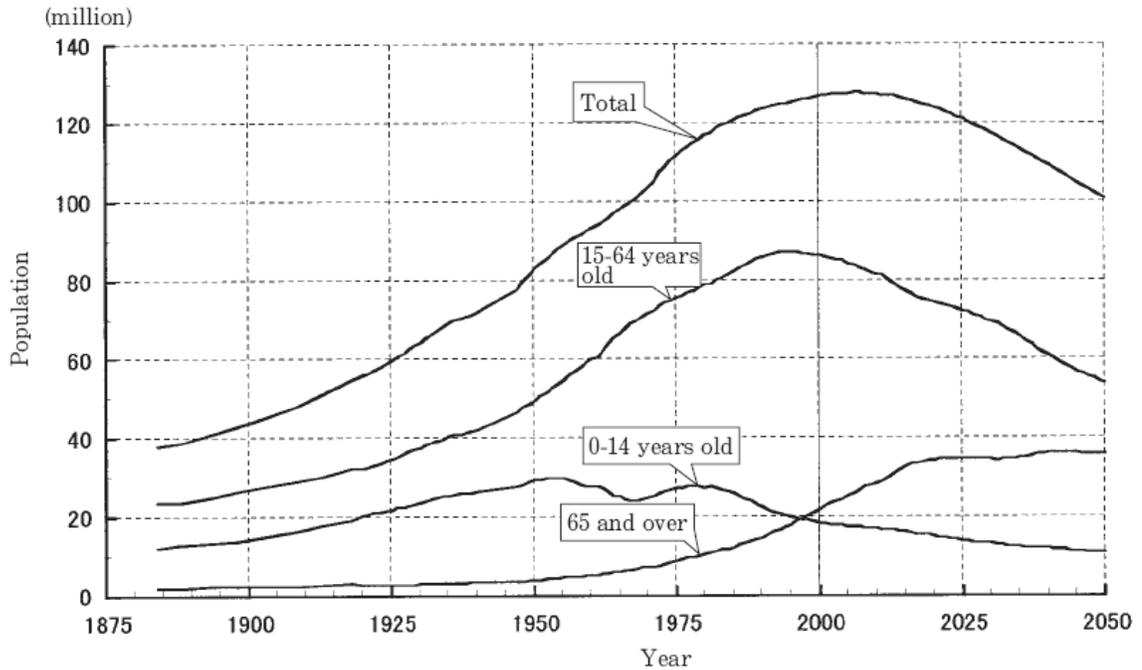


Figure 2: Population development divided into three major age brackets, 1884–2050
 Source: National Institute of Population and Social Security Research 2006: 13.

The United Nations Population Division (UNPD) study entitled *Replacement Migration: Is it a Solution to Declining and Ageing Populations?* (UNPD 2000, Internet) attested that Japan would need large-scale labor migration in order to keep its population at the 2005 level, the forecasted peak, to keep its workforce on the 1995 level, and/or to keep the ratio of working to nonworking population even. The last scenario, the requirements for stabilizing the ratio of working to nonworking population, is the most crucial one for Japan's economic strength. It is, however, also the scenario that requires the highest numbers of labor migration to Japan, i.e. 553 million immigrants by 2050, which comes to about ten million immigrants per year. By 2050 the Japanese population would have grown to 818 million people, with 87% of them being post-1995 immigrants and their descendants. Figure 3 illustrates this hypothetical development of Japan's population by 2050: the black bars symbolize the Japanese population, the white ones the population of post-1995 immigrants and their descendants.

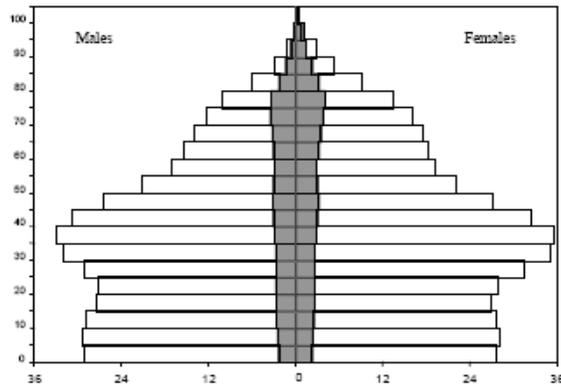
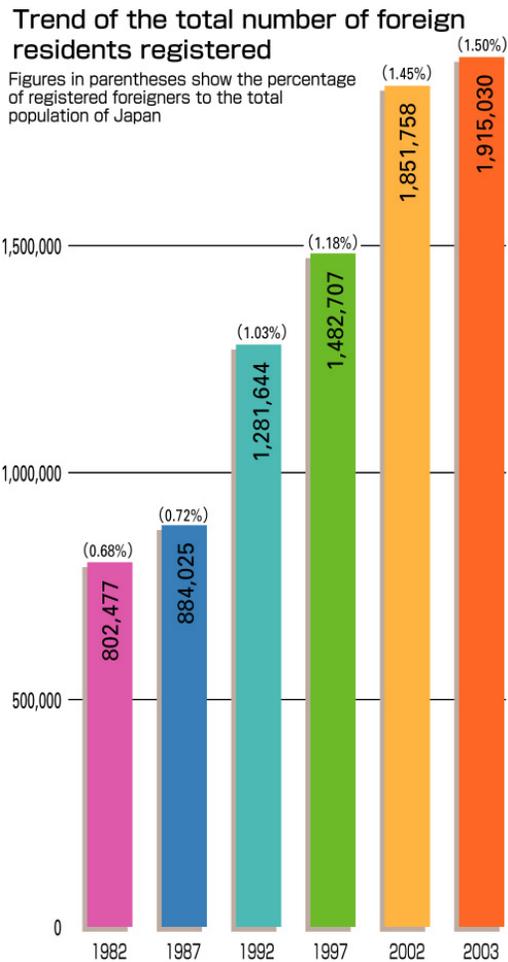


Figure 3: Japan's population pyramid by 2050; Japanese population (black bars) plus labor migrants and their descendants (white bars)
 Source: United Nations Population Division 2000, Internet

While the above cited numbers released by the United Nations Population Division and the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research may provide valuable insights into how Japan's population structure will evolve with or without labor migration to that nation, these numbers are also just projections of future developments that assume other relevant demographic criteria (such as retirement age, fertility etc.) remain unchanged. Thus, the numbers are hypothetical in character. In the following paragraphs of this section, I will introduce the facts and figures that describe the current reality of how many foreigners are living and working in Japan, what their countries of origin are, and in which sectors they found employment. Figure 4 shows how the numbers of foreign residents¹ in Japan have evolved since the early 1980s; Figure 5 breaks down the latest available numbers on foreign residents' nationalities, provided by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) in 2003.²

¹ Residency of foreigners in Japan is tracked by the records of foreigners' registration with the ward or city / town / village office of residence. According to the Law of Registration of Foreigners (*Gaikokujin tōroku-hō*, in brief: *Gaitō-hō*), any foreigner planning to stay in Japan more than 90 days is required to register with his local authorities within 60 days of arrival in Japan. Exempt from this regulation are holders of diplomatic and official visas as well as members of the US military and their dependents.

² I include the original graph provided by the Ministry of Justice, fully aware that the percentage given for "Others" in Figure 5 cannot be correct. The percentages given would, however, add up to 100 once this figure was changed to 14.5%.



Number of foreign nationals registered (Dec. 2003)

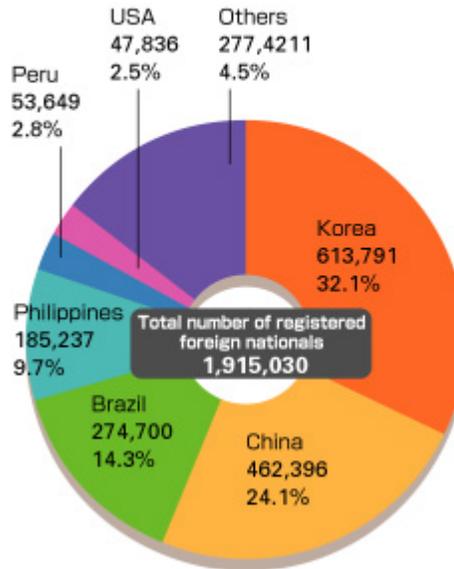


Figure 5: Foreign residents in Japan in 2003, according to nationality
Source: MOJ 2006a, Internet

Figure 4: Numbers of foreign residents in Japan 1982–2003
Source: MOJ 2006a, Internet

Over the past two decades, we observe a steady increase in numbers of foreign residents living in Japan. In 2003, the number was close to 2 million people, which comprises roughly 1.5% of the overall population of Japan. There are also an estimated 219,418 undocumented foreigners in Japan.³ We see that the largest group of foreign residents in Japan is Koreans, followed by Chinese, Brazilians and Filipinos. The same holds true for undocumented foreigners. Most Koreans and Chinese included in the data of registered

³ The Ministry of Justice draws this data by calculating the number of people who entered and left Japan, based on their respective visa status and granted period of stay.

foreigners in Japan are in fact *Zainichi Kankokujin* / *Zainichi Chūgokujin*, i.e. Koreans and Chinese who came to live in Japan before the end of the Second World War, and their descendants. In literature on migration to Japan these immigrants are called “old-comers,” as opposed to “new-comers,” who have migrated to Japan from the 1970s and onwards. The third largest group is Brazilians, who are overwhelmingly *Nikkeijin*, i.e. people of Japanese descent who follow a path of return migration to their ancestral homeland.⁴

Japan’s Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) releases data on foreign workers in Japan on a regular basis; the most recent publication dates back to June 1, 2005. Their data on the numbers by region and sector of foreign workers in Japan is gained through the so-called Reporting System for Employment of Foreigners (*Gaikokujin kōyō jōkyō hōkoku*). Data gained through this system, however, remains incomplete since it is not mandatory for companies to report their foreign workers’ employment situation to MHLW. For example, for the 2005 report, MHLW asked 155,009 companies to share their information on this; only 94,143 of them answered this request. 28,017 of them reported that they employ one or more foreigner/s in direct employment and/or through intermediating agencies (MHLW 2005: 1). 25,106 companies directly employ foreigners, a total number of 198,380 persons. Most of the foreign workers (43.2%) come from East Asia (China, excluding Hong Kong, and Korea), 30.4% from Central and South America (Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Argentine, Colombia, Paraguay, Mexico, and Chile)⁵, and 14% from Southeast Asia (Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, and Brunei). The majority of companies directly employing foreigners are located in Tokyo (5,097), followed by Aichi (1,792) and Kanagawa prefectures (1,550), Osaka (1,459), etc. A sector by sector division shows that 54.4% of them are employed in the manufacturing sector, 12.1% in the service sector, and 8.4% in education and teaching; 8.1% in small businesses, 8.0% in restaurants and hotels, 2.4% in transport companies and so on. Companies employing foreigners through mediating firms amount to 5,889; 90.8% of them

⁴ The concept of *Nikkeijin* does not imply any specific citizenship; many *Nikkeijin* currently residing in Japan, however, came to Japan from Brazil or Peru.

⁵ 89.6% of Japan’s foreign workers from Central and South America are *Nikkeijin*.

are in the manufacturing sector. They employ a total of 144,891 workers. Most of these employees (29,729 persons) live and work in Aichi prefecture, followed by Shizuoka prefecture (22,850 persons). No explicit data on the countries of origin of those employed through sub-contractors is given. Table 1 presents this data.

	<i>Direct Employment</i>	<i>Mediated Employment</i>
Number of companies	25,106	5,889
Number of foreign workers	198,380	144,891
Countries of origin of foreign workers	East Asia Central/South America Southeast Asia	(n/a) ⁶
Most popular sector/s	manufactory; service; etc.	manufactory (almost exclusively)
Most popular region/s	Tokyo, Aichi	Aichi, Shizuoka

Table 1: Direct and mediated employment of foreign workers in Japan
Source: Data by MHLW 2005

There is a striking disparity between the number of foreign *residents* in Japan – just short of two million persons (1,915,030 persons) in 2003, according to MOJ – and foreign *workers* in Japan – a total of 343,271 persons in 2005, according to MHLW. Assuming the numbers did not change drastically during the two year span between 2003 and 2005, this means that only 17.93% of foreigners in Japan were part of the labor force. Data the National Institute

⁶ Although no data is available with regard to the countries of origin of foreign workers in mediated employment, qualitative research results, for example by Takeyuki Tsuda (2003) of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California at San Diego, indicate that most of them are *Nikkeijin* from Central and South America. They work in the car manufacturing plants in Japan's Tokaidō and Northern Kantō regions, which generally employ foreigners through mediating firms. Initial contacts between the prospective employee and employer are often made through a mediator at offices abroad, such as in São Paulo.

of Population and Social Security Research (2006: 108) provides for 2006 show a different picture: the institute counts 1,157,354 persons in Japan's foreign population who are 15 years of age and over. 726,577 of them are in the labor force; 337,094 of them are not. According to this data 46.39% of foreign residents age 15 and over in Japan are in the labor force; the remaining 53.61% of foreign residents in Japan may a) not fall within the designated age bracket, b) live in Japan as dependents, i.e. as the family member of a Japanese national or a foreign visa holder, or c) are students or trainees, that is, holders of any other visa category that excludes being granted a work permit. This roughly 50:50 ratio of working to non-working foreign population in Japan is vastly different from the data MOJ and MHLW provide, which counts a 17.93% working population vs. an 82.07% non-working population. Given the non-mandatory character of the reporting system for employment of foreigners, the MHLW data are incomplete; nevertheless the disparity between the 50-50 and the 20-80 ratios seem rather large. Although no quantitative data on this is available, one could argue that it is the *Zainichi-Kankokujin* and *Zainichi-Chūgokujin* who are generally not reported by companies as foreign workers. Foreign residents in Japan who are holders of visas that do not impose any limits in terms of permission to work (permanent resident, long-term resident or spouse/child of Japanese national or permanent resident) often fail to be reported as foreign workers. This holds true even more once the persons blend in ethnically and culturally. This might explain why many *Nikkeijin* coming to Japan for example from Brazil, are reported nevertheless, even though they usually hold a long-term resident visa. Figure 6 shows a graph provided by MOJ which supports this argument. It shows the 2005 distribution of foreigners in Japan according to their visa status. The largest group by far, about one third of the overall number, is permanent residents (*eiijūsha*), which is once again divided into special permanent residents, the so-called old-comers from Korea and China, and general permanent residents. The second-largest group is long-term residents (*teijūsha*), i.e. *Nikkeijin*, and (the small number of) refugees in Japan. The next largest groups are spouse or child of Japanese nationals (*nihonjin no haigūsha*); college student (*ryūgaku*); and dependent (*kazoku taizai*).

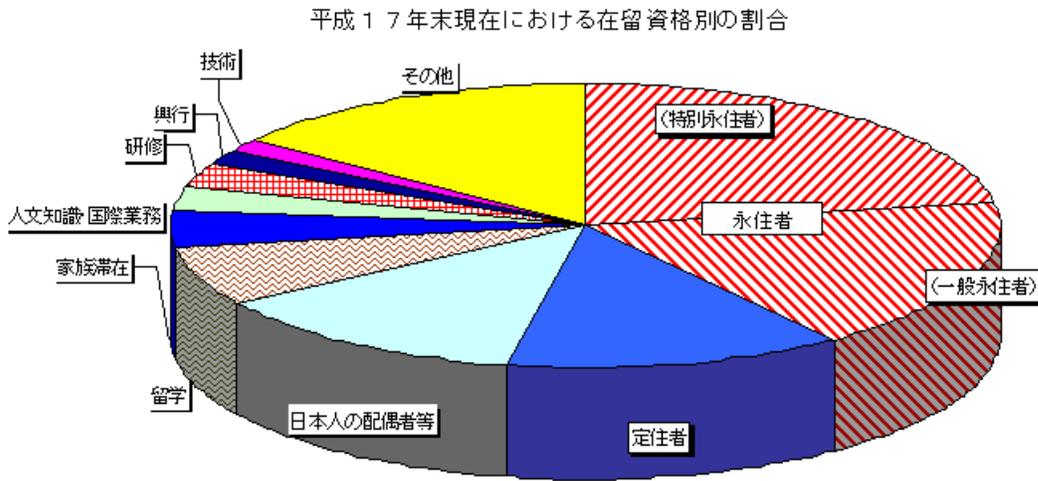


Figure 6: Foreigners in Japan according to visa categories (2005)

Source: MOJ 2005, Internet

Table 2 provides an overview of Japan's visa categories and their respective implications for being granted work permission. Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act distinguishes twenty-seven categories of residency for foreigners in Japan. Among these, as just mentioned, four groups are allowed unlimited permission to work; a further sixteen groups are granted permission to work within certain limitations that must be regulated before immigration; and one group (designated activities, *tokutei katsudō*) is eligible for permission to work, but is not granted so initially. Six groups are not eligible for work permission at all. The sixteen groups holding limited permission to work include professions that require high or medium qualifications. One of the central points currently in discussion on reforms to Japan's immigration guidelines is the question of whether or not to open the work permit system to unskilled labor. The differing positions held by Japan's political and economical elites as well as International Organizations, in this case the United Nations, will be addressed in the following section. Finally, I will introduce a case study on recent CSO political lobbying with regard to migration to Japan.

Visa Category	Work Permission		
	Without Limitation	Designated Activities	None
Diplomatic visa (<i>gaikō</i>)		✓	
Official visa (<i>kōyō</i>)		✓	
Professor (<i>kyōju</i>)		✓	
Artist (<i>geijutsu</i>)		✓	
Religious activities (<i>shūkyō</i>)		✓	
Journalist (<i>hōdō</i>)		✓	
Investor/Business manager (<i>tōshi/keiei</i>)		✓	
Legal/Accounting services (<i>hōritsu/kaikai gyōmu</i>)		✓	
Medical Services (<i>iryō</i>)		✓	
Researcher (<i>kenkyū</i>)		✓	
Instructor (<i>kyōiku</i>)		✓	
Engineer (<i>gijutsu</i>)		✓	
Specialist in Humanities/International Services (<i>jinbun chishiki, kokusai gyōmu</i>)		✓	
Intracompany Transferee (<i>kigyōnai tenkin</i>)		✓	
Entertainer (<i>kōgyō</i>)		✓	
Skilled Labor (<i>ginō</i>)		✓	
Cultural Activities (<i>bunka katsudō</i>)			✓
Temporary Visitor (<i>tanki taizai</i>)			✓
College Student (<i>ryūgaku</i>)			✓
Precollege Student (<i>shūgaku</i>)			✓
Trainee (<i>kenshū</i>)			✓
Dependent (<i>kazoku taizai</i>)			✓
Designated Activities (<i>tokutei katsudō</i>)		(✓)	
Permanent Residents (<i>ejūsha</i>)	✓		
Spouse of Child of Japanese National (<i>nihonjin no haigūsha</i>)	✓		
Spouse of Child of Permanent Resident (<i>ejūsha no haigūsha</i>)	✓		
Long-term Resident (<i>teijūsha</i>)	✓		

Table 2: Visa categories and work permission in Japan

Source: Data by § 2 II and § 19 Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act; Table design in cooperation with Dr. Jeannette Behaghel

4. Target Actors & CSO Activities

The discourse on labor migration to Japan currently evolves around the following two questions: First, should labor migration to Japan be opened to unskilled labor or remain restricted to the highly/medium qualified labor? Secondly, is labor migration to Japan a security issue for the nation? The actors involved in debating these questions are two of Japan’s government agencies, namely The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), as well as the Japan Business Federation, *Nippon Keidanren*, International Organizations such as the United Nations (UN), and civil society organizations in Japan and elsewhere, mainly in the immigrants’ origin countries. I argue that the positions taken by MOJ, MOFA, *Keidanren*, and the UN, the main actors in this discourse, can be mapped as shown in Figure 7.

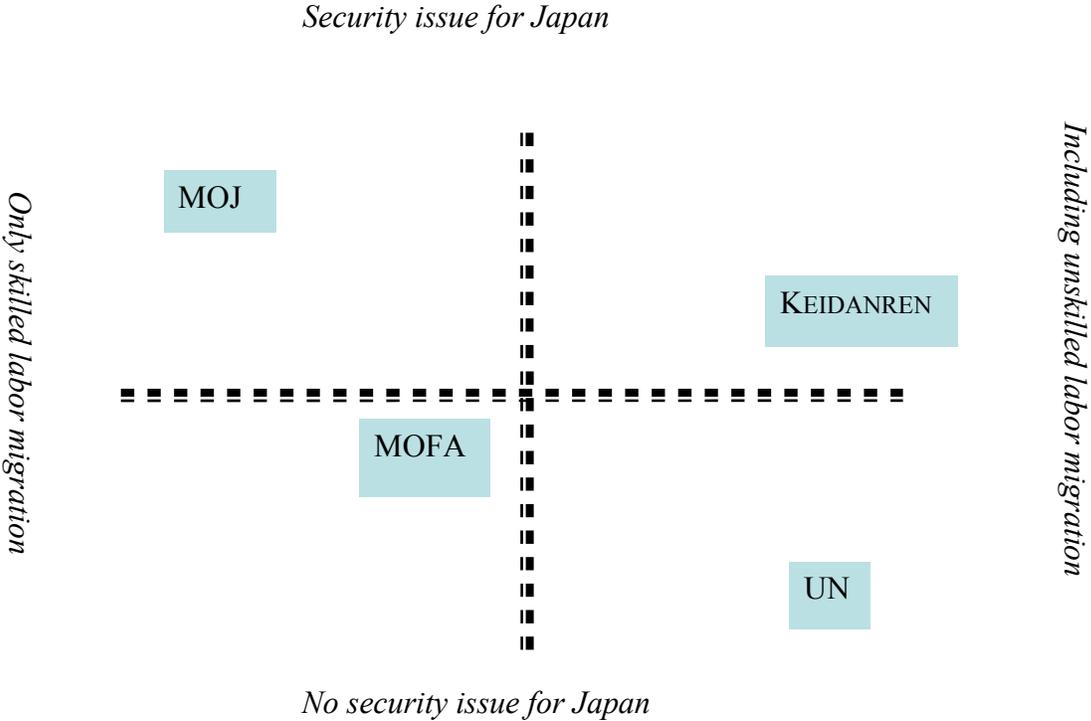


Figure 7: Labor migration to Japan: mapping the current discourse

The mapping of actors in Figure 7 does not follow a specific methodological approach; it is but a mere projection of results of a qualitative content analysis that studies the actors' positions on a) who should be granted permission to work in Japan (*x axis*) and b) whether or not labor migration to Japan is a security issue for that nation (*y axis*). Civil society actors are not included in this map for two reasons: First, I found it extremely difficult to decide where to include CSOs – their main concerns lie elsewhere, with the living and working environment of migrants in Japan and with processes of integration into the host society. They do not necessarily take a position on whether labor migration to Japan should be expanded or not. Secondly, it is the process of how CSOs engage in lobbying the mapped actors that I am particularly interested in. Bearing in mind the *boomerang pattern*, I pose questions such as: to what degree do CSOs in the field of immigration policy influence policy makers, and how do they try to exert pressure on the target actors? Do they have direct lobbying access? Do they make use of transnational exchange of information and building of alliances, that is, is the *boomerang pattern* relevant to them? Before addressing these questions, I want to clarify the positions of the actors in question, i.e. the CSO's target actors, as shown in Figure 7.⁷

MOJ is situated in the quadrant marked by “only skilled labor migration” and “security issue for Japan”. Drawing from an interview with Senior Vice-Minister of Japan, Kono Taro (2006/02/20, Interview), who heads MOJ's in-house advisory commission on immigration policy⁸, I argue that MOJ aims to protect Japan's restrictive immigration guidelines. In particular three points, all of which arose in this interview, help me build this argument. First, MOJ rejected reforming its most contentious immigration guideline: excluding non-skilled workers from labor migration to Japan. According to MOJ, vacancies in Japan's job market that will arise in the wake of the nation's demographic change are to be filled by more effectively recruiting female workers into the workforce, and by recruiting youths, especially the group of people ‘not in employment, education, or

⁷ For a more in-depth interpretation of Figure 7 please refer to Vogt 2006.

⁸ Justice Minister Sugiura Seiken called for this commission to be formed shortly after the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare had issued the latest numbers on Japan's demographic development in December 2005.

training’ (NEET). Secondly, MOJ toyed with the idea of revising the relatively generous immigration guidelines for *Nikkeijin*, who mainly hold long-term resident visas (*teijūsha*) and thus are granted work permission without limitation (Table 2). In order to ensure ‘cultural compatibility’ between the hosting society and the *Nikkeijin* immigrants, MOJ hopes to implement a language test for migrants to Japan.⁹ Since this would also include *Nikkeijin*, this reform must be interpreted as restrictive for *Nikkeijin* immigrants, for whom having a Japanese ancestor is right now the only requirement for obtaining a long-term resident visa. This policy aims at closing what so far has been a loophole allowing labor migration of ‘unskilled workers’ (*tanjun rōdō*) to Japan. Thirdly, MOJ announced it will push for stricter implementation of punishment for visa overstayers and their employers. Of special concern are exchange students (visa categories of *ryūgaku* and *shūgaku*) from China, who – according to MOJ – overstay their student visas in large numbers and find work as undocumented labor. Already in place at the time of this announcement was a campaign MOJ launched in 2004, the *fuhō shūrō gaikokujin taisaku kyanpēn* (Campaign against illegal work by foreigners). Figure 8 provides a sample of the 2006 version of the ongoing campaign, which calls for assistance from the general public and from employers in combating illegal foreign work in Japan.

⁹ This suggestion was first made public during a press conference held by Kōno Tarō on May 30, 2006, which announced the upcoming release of the commission’s first report (*Asahi Shinbun* 2006/05/31: 2).

それでも、



ルールを守って国際化

外国人の不法就労防止にご協力ください。

年々減少の傾向にありますが、それでも不法滞在外国人は220,000人(うち不法残留者は193,000人)にのぼると推定されています。

これは日本における中都市の人口と同程度の数であり、その多くが不法就労に従事していると推定されています。



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Figure 8: MOJ campaign against illegal foreign workers: sample pamphlet
Source: MOJ 2006b, Internet

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), as opposed to MOJ, does acknowledge a need for labor migration in order to compensate for the shrinking national workforce that is resulting from ongoing demographic changes in Japan. MOFA creates opportunities for persons of certain professional qualifications and of certain citizenships to come to Japan and work in the country for some limited time. Via the so-called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA), MOFA encourages labor migration to Japan, including the medium and/or lower skilled workforce, without going through the lengthy process of instituting legal reforms. Negotiations on an EPA with the Philippines began in November 2004; it will shortly be signed by representatives of the two countries. Negotiations on an EPA with Thailand began in September 2005; others are in negotiation or have been signed already. The Japan-Philippines-EPA (MOFA 2004), for example, focuses on allowing qualified nurses and careworkers from the Philippines to find employment in Japan: the agreement thereby addresses a business sector which in the near future will be strongly affected by demographic changes in Japan. Not only will there most likely be a significant number of vacancies in these professions, but there will also be rising numbers of patients to be taken care of. In other words, the expanding requirements of this job market will have to be met from outside the shrinking pool of Japanese workers. Under the EPA regulations, certified caregivers (graduates of four-year universities) will be given a work permit in Japan for up to four years, qualified nurses (graduates from nurse's colleges) for up to three years. Applicants in either group will, however, have to pass a Japanese language test before being granted a work permit.

For several years now, *Keidanren*, under its chairman Okuda Hiroshi, has been arguing for the internationalization of Japanese business and society. In 2003 it published a paper titled *Japan 2025: Envisioning a Vibrant, Attractive Nation in the Twenty-First Century* (*Nippon Keidanren* 2003b, Internet). This paper draws a picture of *Keidanren*'s visions on how Japan's economic policies, societal structures, and international relations could evolve in order to make Japan a powerful contestant in international competition:

Non-Japanese who come to live in this country will bring diverse viewpoints and talents. Japan must create an environment where foreigners can actively participate in economic and social activities. On an individual level this will require greater tolerance toward diversity; on the administrative level, the government must open Japan's doors to people from around the globe so that they can display their ability in this country.

What at first glance reads like enthusiastic support for an open-door labor migration policy is modified in an amendment to *Keidanren's* initial report. In that paper (2003a, Internet), *Keidanren* argues explicitly for four measures that should be taken in order to help Japan regain "socioeconomic vitality" through internationalization. These include creating an attractive living and working environment for the international community in Japan; preparing the farming and service sectors, the sectors which in the near future will be in need of foreign workers the most, for accepting and integrating this new workforce; reforming the currently existing visa categories and expanding the system of EPAs; and creating a so-called "Office for Non-Japanese Worker Acceptance", i.e. an administrative body in charge of all matters regarding the life and work of foreigners in Japan. *Keidanren*, however, also stresses that it is not arguing for the unlimited acceptance of foreign workers into Japanese society; there need to be limits, which are to be set by the requirements of the market.

The position of the United Nations (UN) on labor migration to Japan is represented here by the views of two UN bodies: the United Nations Population Division (UNPD), and the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR). The UNPD report has been briefly introduced in section three of this paper. In its essence it states that Japan – assuming that the current demographic development continues without change – will need labor migrants in large numbers. It is, however, also obvious that the numbers in question are way too large to gain political or societal consensus in today's Japan. While UNDP gives empirical proof of how much labor migration Japan would need to meet certain goals, UNHCHR focuses on qualitative research to describe the living environment of foreigners and national minorities in Japan. UNHCHR special rapporteur Doudou Diène, who visited

Japan in summer 2005, published his research results in January 2006 in a final report titled *Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and all Forms of Discrimination* (United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights 2006, Internet). The report concludes that there is racism, (racial) discrimination and xenophobia in Japan. It calls upon the Japanese government to acknowledge its existence and to show the political will to combat it. Also, a national anti-discrimination law should be passed and implemented; a commission for equality and human rights established. Finally, he asks the Japanese government to revise its policies regarding the writing and teaching of history. The UNHCHR report describes today's Japan as a country unfavorable to national minorities and foreigners: if Japan is to accept border-crossing labor migration, it needs to change its attitude towards foreigners.

The actor analysis above explains the reasons for how the current discourse on labor migration to Japan is mapped in Figure 7: MOJ is in the first quadrant with high ratings on both issues, since it explicitly and openly argues for accepting only skilled labor migrants and sees Japan's public security threatened by an increasing number of foreigners living and working in Japan. *Keidanren* also acknowledges that an increase of foreign workers is a security issue for Japan, however to a much lesser degree. The business federation, nevertheless, very pragmatically calls for accepting foreign workers on a market-regulated basis. They assert that unskilled labor migration simply cannot be a taboo issue. *Keidanren* is in the second quadrant; the United Nations is in the third. Through statistical analysis, UNDP shows that Japan will need significant labor migration, including "unskilled" workers, in the near future. According to UNHCHR, the increase in foreign population in Japan is not so much a security issue for Japan, but rather for the migrants themselves. Finally, MOFA is in the fourth quadrant, albeit not far from the point where the two axes cross over. MOFA acknowledges Japan's need for labor migration and actively promotes it, yet it restricts its engagement with the issue to certain professions urgently needed in Japan. At the same time, it puts efforts into integration policies so as not to let labor migration evolve into an issue of public security for Japan.

Now, having defined the actors targeted by CSO activism in the field of Japan's immigration policy, I will turn to a case study that highlights one of the central CSOs in this field, the Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan [translation by the group] (SMJ). The group's Japanese name reads *Ijuren*, short for *Ijurōdōsha to rentai suru zenkoku nettowāku* (Nationwide network for solidarity with migrant workers). It was founded in 1997 in reaction to a nationwide conference held in Fukuoka in 1996, which focused on the issue of how to improve the working and living conditions of foreigners in Japan.¹⁰ *Ijuren* has not yet applied for NPO status; it functions as an informal network, supported by individuals and CSOs. The organization has one full-time staff member, co-founder and chairperson Manami Yano; several volunteers work for the group, one or two of them at times in the office (located in Tokyo's Bunko ward, in the *Tomisaka Christian Center*), and a larger number of volunteers work from home or 'out in the field'. There are several co-representatives in *Ijuren*, namely Keiko Otsu of *Women's Shelter HELP*, Masao Niwa of *RINK (Rights of Immigrants Network in Kansai)*, Satoshi Murayama of *Kanagawa City Union*, Kazumi Moriki of *Asian Women's Empowerment Project*, Shigeru Yui of *Asian Labor Solidarity* and Hidetoshi Watanabe of *Kalabaw-No-Kai*. *Ijuren* states the following three goals as their mission: "*tsukuru / tsunagaru / tsutaeru*." They translate this mission statement into English as "advocacy / networking / publicity." By 'advocacy' *Ijuren* means it wants to be a public voice that is heard, on the state level, in the debate on reforming immigration policies, i.e. it seeks to lobby relevant political parties and ministries. It also desires to empower local groups involved in the day to day, grassroots level work of creating decent living and working conditions for foreigners. *Ijuren* explains its second field of engagement, its 'networking' activities, as "*zenkoku fōramu, ajia nettowāku ni yoru kyanpēn nado*" (campaigning through a nationwide forum and an Asian network). *Ijuren* elaborates on its border-crossing activities as follows:

¹⁰ The Fukuoka national conference followed in the tradition of several regional conferences on related issues, the first one of which had been held in Japan's Kantō region in 1991. Since 1996 nationwide conferences have been held on a yearly basis; the most recent one took place in Sapporo on June 24/25, 2006.

Nihon kokunai no NGO dake de ha naku, Ajia chiiki no nettowāku soshiki ya kaigai no dantai, NGO to jōhō kōkan ya kyanpēn ya ibento kaisai nado wo okonatte imasu.¹¹

The third main area of *Ijuren's* activities is dedicated to 'publicity'. The group maintains its own website, which provides information on the issue of foreign workers in Japan; ongoing events; the texts of national laws and international conventions; a FAQ section; an exhaustive collection of links to obtain further information; and more. *Ijuren's* (2006, Internet) website operates in four languages – besides Japanese these are English, Korean, and Tagalog. However, the quantity of information available in each language varies, as does the frequency of updates of the various sites. Furthermore, *Ijuren's* active or supporting members receive a free subscription to the group's bimonthly newsletter, the so-called "Migrant's Netto" [Migrant's net], and access to an e-mailing list, called "migrant-j", which *Ijuren* maintains. Annual membership fees are 12,000 Yen for groups, and 6,000 Yen for individuals. Membership fees and donations are *Ijuren's* main source of income; additionally, they rely on contributions in kind by church organizations and private citizens.

I will study *Ijuren's* activities in the field of shaping a new immigration policy for Japan according to the four key concepts of CSO activism – information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics. I will focus particularly on *Ijuren's* transnational activities. By means of qualitative content analysis, I examine *Ijuren's* publications ("Migrant Netto"; "migrant-j"; website updates) from March to June 2006, the time frame during which there was intensified debate in the public and political arenas on whether replacement labor migration could be a solution to Japan's shrinking workforce. I also draw from a personal interview with Manami Yano (Interview, 2006/04/10), the only full-time staff member and the official representative of *Ijuren*. (Data collection at this point is obviously still a work in progress. In my larger research project on labor migration to Japan, of which this paper is just a portion, I aim to broaden the scope of material to be

¹¹ Author's translation: "We exchange information, share campaigns and hold events not only with NGOs all over Japan, but also with network organizations in Asian regions and with other overseas groups."

analyzed by using both qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Obviously, I will also need to include more actors in this larger study: other CSOs in Japan and abroad. Since my research interest lies in the dynamics of changing interdependence structures between state- and non-state-actors, it may be advisable to study other relevant political actors outside the traditional scope of state-actors, i.e. actors involved in the multi-level approach of policy making in both Japan and the origin countries. Again, their range of action will be viewed through the lense of transnationalism.)

Information produced by CSOs generally needs to meet two criteria: it must be reliable and well documented in order to be credible; on the other hand, it needs to be dramatic and timely, in order to gain attention. *Ijuren* seems to meet both these requirements: its website is updated with information on ongoing events on a regular basis, the bimonthly “Migrant Netto” sums up and discusses the latest political developments in migration policy, and “migrant-j”, *Ijuren*’s e-mailing-list, sends out an average of three to four messages a day to keep its members informed, again about ongoing events such as conferences and demonstrations, and to call for their participation. The list is unmoderated, i.e. information can be sent not only by Manami Yano, *Ijuren*’s chairperson, but also by any of its members, many of whom are activists in other CSOs. Only hours after the Upper House’s May 9 hearings on revisions to Japan’s Immigration Law, which follows some of the US counter-terrorism measures such as fingerprinting of foreigners (holders of diplomatic and official visas will be except from this requirement, as will members of the US military, their dependents, and special permanent residents), one member of the e-mailing-list, himself an activist with the Saitama-based “119 Network for Foreigners”, posted his own personal minutes of the hearing, i.e. of the Q&A between Justice Minister Seiken Sugiura and selected members of the Upper House’s juridical consulting committee, namely Shōzen Tanigawa, Kantarō Koba, Keiko Chiba, Tōru Matsuoka, Sōhei Nihi, and Ikuo Kamei. In short, the data available via this e-mailing list is very rich. Bearing in mind that both the magazine and the e-mailing list are, however, available only to *Ijuren*’s members, the amount of information the group provides to the general public is significantly lower than

the amount provided to persons sympathetic to its activities. This members-only type of information politics proves problematic once the political struggle over information becomes, as it does today, a defining force in the distribution of power among political actors. It is also not favorable for initiating *conflict and diffusion*, i.e. spreading knowledge on a contentious issue, which – according to Tarrow’s concept of *cycles of contention*, introduced in section two – has the potential to spark off a broad social movement. Given a CSO’s setting in the political opportunity structure, in which access to and distribution of information are crucial factors in shaping public opinion and setting the political agenda domestically and transnationally, the policy of withholding information from public access comes as a surprise.

Closely connected to information politics is the second of the four aspects to be discussed here, namely symbolic politics. Shaping symbols of activism or interpreting symbolic events can become a catalyst for the growth of networks. This means that symbols and symbolic events are part of the process of issue framing a CSO undergoes in what Tarrow calls its mobilization phase. Keck and Sikkink (1998: 22) classify symbolic interpretation as a “process of persuasion by which networks create awareness and expand their constituencies.” The MOJ campaign, as shown in Figure 8, makes some use of the power of symbols when it illustrates a walking man – an undocumented foreigner coming to Japan? – in the shape of what is to be understood as the Chinese character 人 [person]. The pamphlet announces there are 220,000 undocumented foreigners currently in Japan; though the number has been falling recently, it is still a threat to Japan, as signaled by the red color of the eye-catching combination of Latin numbers, Chinese character and the picture/character of the walking man. *Ijuren*’s work on symbolic politics contrasts strongly with MOJ’s pamphlet. In its pamphlets as well as in its bimonthly magazine, the main symbolic element *Ijuren* chooses are portraits of smiling non-Japanese, thus sending of the message that multiculturalism is interesting, sympathetic, in short: positive. *Ijuren*, however, has no strong and eye-catching symbol for its activism that could have the power to trigger attention among the general public in Japan and/or in the origin countries of migrants. Its

banner is a yellowish square that reads “SMJ” in large letters; it includes its full name in English and Japanese in smaller letters. A curved orange stripe runs through the larger letters, which could possibly be interpreted as a shooting star. *Ijuren*’s rather neutral banner¹² is also found, on the top page of the *Asian Migrant Centre*’s website (2006, Internet), thus linking *Ijuren* to this Asia-wide setting of transnationally engaged CSOs.

Thirdly, leverage politics measures the effectiveness of a CSO, i.e. it is a tool for determining to what degree a CSO’s target actors (government agencies, private corporations, and international organizations) respond to their demands. Social movement literature distinguishes between material leverage and moral leverage. Material leverage links the issue at stake to money or goods; moral leverage involves the “mobilization of shame” (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 23), i.e. the target actor and its responsiveness are forced into the spotlight of (international) media coverage. The more vulnerable a state is toward this material and moral pressure, the more effective a CSO can be. Issues that revolve around either bodily harm to vulnerable individuals or legal equality of opportunity generally trigger the highest responsiveness in states, since they exert moral pressure in terms of normative and juridical logic. Living and working conditions of foreigners in Japan is an issue which combines both the normative and the juridical aspects. *Ijuren* has managed to make public its engagement in combating human rights violations against foreigners in Japan by being included in the list of Asian CSOs that actively promote the quality of life of migrants. This list, which is provided by *humantrafficking.org*, an online platform implemented by the *Academy for International Development* (2006, Internet), is an institution funded by the US State Department. However, *Ijuren* – and other CSOs in the field – have not managed to frame the issue of foreigners in Japan, as well as immigration policy affecting foreigners in Japan, contentiously enough to increase domestic public concern toward government policies. Transnational issue framing has also had little impact

¹² This banner stands in sharp contrast to, for example, the picture of the dugong, a sea mammal that serves as symbol of an Okinawan CSO engaged in opposing the construction of a new US military base in Henoko / Okinawa, the northernmost known habitat of the dugong. The group’s symbol transported the group’s political demands onto the arena of transnational CSO engagement and was, for example, adopted by Greenpeace USA for their campaign to preserve the off-shore flora of Okinawa (Vogt 2005).

so far on the target actors', here mainly MOJ's, reactions or on the general public opinion. On the contrary, an opinion poll conducted by the Prime Minister's Office (2004, Internet) in May 2004 showed that the majority (53.1%) of Japanese follow the "*gaikokujin rōdōsha mondai*" (issue of foreign workers) with concern. This is up from 49% in 2001, and 48.6% in 1991. The steady increase in Japanese citizens who perceive foreign workers in Japan as a threat to public safety and national security, reflects the government's attitude on the issue, and aids the government's argument for the need of a stricter immigration policy. *Ijuren*'s and other CSO's activities in terms of leverage politics (whether material or moral) have not managed to impose strong pressure on its target actors.

Fourth, accountability politics can be understood as a follow-up to leverage politics: A target actor must be put under material and moral pressure strong enough to lead it to make public statements on policy guidelines; if it does not follow these guidelines, the pressuring CSO can "expose the distance between discourse and practice" (Keck and Sikkink 1998: 24), thus embarrassing the target actor in the eyes of the public. In short, neither *Ijuren* nor other CSOs in the area of immigration policy have so far managed to impose accountability politics onto one of their target actors, which are mapped in Figure 7. A public statement by MOJ in mid-June 2006 which offered to hear the opinions of those concerned about the revision of Japan's immigration policies is the closest Japan's CSOs have come in terms of accountability politics. MOJ has made the preliminary results of its in-house commission under Senior Vice-Justice Minister Kōno publicly available as a PDF file on its website (MOJ 2006c, Internet). The site that provides the link to the PDF file also contains a call for sending in opinions on these suggested revisions to the Immigration Law. However, hearing somebody's opinion (*minasama no goiken wo matometai to kangaete imasu*) is still a long way from showing responsiveness toward external political pressure.

To sum up this brief case study on *Ijuren*'s activities in the area of shaping new immigration policy in Japan, I will go back to the questions posed at the beginning of this section: To what degree do CSOs in the area of immigration policy influence policy makers

and how do they attempt to exert pressure on the target actors? Do they have direct lobbying access? Do they make use of transnational exchange of information and building of alliances, i.e. is the *boomerang pattern* relevant to them? *Ijuren* attempts to put pressure on the target actors in question, not so much on government agencies themselves, but on the members of Japan's Lower and Upper Houses, in particular on the members of the respective juridical consulting committees. Right before the Upper House juridical consulting committees' meetings on 4/27 and 5/9 in 2006, for example, *Ijuren's* supporters initiated demonstrations and sought personal interviews with committee members, in particular with those belonging to parties other than the LDP. This is because those members' responsiveness – according to Yano (2006/4/10, Interview) – is generally higher than that of the members of the ruling party/parties. Given the limited (financial) resources of the group and Japan's political opportunity structure, which is generally tight for non-state actors, direct lobbying access for *Ijuren* is limited. To some degree, the group makes use of transnational exchange of information and alliance building; its activities are, however, not coercive enough to put pressure on the national government in form of a *boomerang pattern*. One could, for example, have expected the group to join the bandwagon of press coverage on the Diène report on xenophobia in Japan, which triggered some public interest in Japan when it was published. This did not happen. Direct CSO pressure on the national government, i.e. domestically, or indirect pressure, i.e. transnationally, does not trigger the target actors' responsiveness at this point.

5. Conclusion

Which direction will Japan's immigration policy choose in this time of demographic change? Who are the actors involved in this decision making process; how do they impact each other; and what conclusions can we draw from their interaction for the future development of the political structure of interdependence binding these actors? These are the questions I posed in the introductory section of this paper, and, at this point, hope to provide some preliminary answers.

Labor migration is currently a highly contentious topic in Japan's public and political discourse. It is also an issue that takes place in the transnational space of a globalized world: *transmigrants* and transnational migration shape the political realities and political structures of both the sending and receiving countries. In my research I ask whether *transmigrants* and transnational migration also shape other transnational processes of political life, such as transnationally occurring CSO engagement. Social movement literature argues that transnationally occurring CSO engagement, by bypassing the limitations imposed by domestic political opportunity structures on non-state-actors, has the potential to reform structures of political interdependence between state- and non-state-actors. The paper at hand analyzed the current debate on labor migration to Japan, and within this process the CSO engagement in that area, thus serving as a case study for the line of argumentation outlined above.

The actors involved in shaping the current debate include the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), *Nippon Keidanren*, two bodies of the United Nations, namely the United Nations Population Division (UNPD) and the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (UNHCHR), as well as civil society organizations (CSO) in the field. Figure 7 maps the position the actors – excluding CSOs – hold with regard to two defining questions of the current debate. These questions are whether or not labor migration to Japan should be opened to workers without any specific professional

qualifications, and whether or not labor migration to Japan is a security issue for that nation. What becomes clear from mapping these actors is that the traditional structures of potential coalition building, i.e. government agencies and economic associations on the one side vs. international organizations and CSOs on the other side, no longer hold true. New structures for potential coalition building, at least on an issue-related case by case basis, seem possible. CSOs are involved in the process of shaping Japan's immigration policy by lobbying target actors, i.e. government agencies, economic associations, and international organizations. According to Keck and Sikkink's *boomerang pattern*, this lobbying activity is most effective once it emerges from a domestic environment and broadens its range of action into the transnational level of policy shaping. This paper has traced the transnational activities of one Japanese CSO, *Ijuren*, which is central to the group of CSOs engaged in immigration issues in Japan. Following the four concepts of engagement in information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics, I showed that *Ijuren's* activities reach a transnational level to a small degree. So far the group has fallen short of lobbying its target actors in a way that would lead to political leverage and/or accountability.

The question of how transnational migration will shape and in return be shaped by the transnationalization of CSO engagement and a potential change in the domestic structures of political interdependence between state- and non-state actors remains subject to further research. So does the question of what the future of Japan's immigration policy will look like. One preliminary result of observing the current political debate on Japan's immigration policy is that large-scale labor migration to Japan, though demographically required, is not backed by society and at this point finds no political consensus.

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