

## Book Reviews

*Population Aging and International Health-Caregiver Migration to Japan.* By Gabriele Vogt. Cham: Springer, 2018. \$50.41 (ebook ISBN 978-3-319-68011-8)

Japan began accepting migrant health-care workers from South-East Asian countries under an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in 2008, making the country a reluctant latecomer. The topic has continued to attract the scholarly attention of many researchers from various disciplines since that time, and Vogt's book is a welcome contribution to the growing body of literature on migration in Japan today. Situating the migration of health-care workers to Japan against the backdrop of a rapidly aging population and a shrinking workforce, the book succinctly weaves in policies and practices on supranational, national, and neighborhood levels using various sources, including interviews with policy-makers, while also examining the EPA program and its outcomes.

Chapter 1 provides the context and overall structure of the book, while Chapter 2 lays out the transformation of the labor market and families, and discusses how the introduction of long-term care insurance has resulted in the outsourcing of care. Chapter 3 compares Japan's EPA with the triple win program (TWP), which is a program to recruit migrant health-care workers to Germany. Japan and Germany share similar demographic transitions, and have designed similar programs to recruit migrants, although there are some differences that should be noted—particularly for policy-makers. Finally, the book situates the migration of health-care workers within its broader context and discusses the

issues of multiculturalism, the welfare state, and citizenship.

The literature on health worker migration is largely concentrated in English-speaking countries, so comparing the cases of Japan and Germany is illuminating. As there is no mutual recognition of licensure in either country, migrants must learn the host language and take the nursing or care worker examination. Vogt argues that from the perspective of the international political economy both the EPA and TWP are “designed to fail” (p. 38). The parameters for measuring success are (i) attractiveness to potential migrants and their potential employers and (ii) the systems' effectiveness in mitigating the shortage of labor (p. 46). Japan's EPA sets its acceptance quota at 1,000 people per nation per year, but this has never been met. Using secondary data, the author explains that employers are reluctant to accept migrant health-care workers due to uncertainty about their communication skills. For Germany's TWP, migrants must also go through language training and pass a German language proficiency test as a precondition for taking the nursing exam. At the time of writing the number of nurses who come under the TWP program remains very small, as Vogt explains that the language training and nursing examination are the two factors that make the system unattractive.

Here, one wonders whether the perspective of the international political economy alone would be appropriate to measure the success of international health-care worker migration programs. Japan's technical internship trainee program has attracted more than 250,000 migrant workers in

“unskilled” work, which has mitigated the labor shortage to some extent. With numerous cases of human rights violations and runaways, however, the program cannot be called a success. Considering the nature of care work, moreover—which is performed in a highly intimate sphere—language and professional training are needed to ensure workplace safety, as well as to protect both the receiver and the provider of care. In other words, making health-care worker migration programs attractive should not lead to compromising safety or security in the workplace, and the protection of migrant workers must continue to be prioritized.

Particularly illuminating is the book’s comparison between Japan’s EPA and Germany’s TWP, which share numerous similarities in many respects, along with significant differences. First, the UN high-level dialogue on migration and development serves as a reference in the process of policy formation for the TWP. It links migration and development agendas and regards the ultimate goal of migration as poverty reduction in the countries of origin (p. 56). On the contrary, migrant care workers under the EPA came as a result of a political compromise and subsidiaries promoting free trade, and failed to create linkages between Japan and the sending countries. The migration and development approach effectively visualizes and links international migration and sustainable development in the sending countries—thereby enhancing policies and programs to address structural inequality.

Second, the discourse on accepting migrants is different in Japan and Germany. By employing a migrant worker via the TWP:

[T]he hospital or elderly care welfare institution will be introduced to health care practices, which they may not have been familiar with. They will profit from an overall gain in intercultural competencies, which might enhance the institution’s preparedness for international cooperation and international competition alike. (p. 56).

Even though this is an ideal and may not necessarily represent reality, the positive representation of migrants is seldom seen in official discourse in Japan—whether in embracing diversity or seeing migrants as members of the community. Vogt emphasizes the importance of “trust learning” as the basis of democratic foundations, and political actors play a role in dividing or uniting society over its commitment to the equality of its citizens (pp. 71–72).

Third, the institutional framework between the two programs differs significantly. Japan’s EPA is administered by Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services under the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor; but this ministry was not the leading actor in negotiation the EPA. Moreover, the Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services does not have enough resources or expertise in administering migration and development. Germany’s TWP has been administered by the Center for International Migration and Development. This organization has 30 years’ experience in the area of international labor mobility. It was co-founded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, the German development agency under the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the International Placement Services under the Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs. These governance frameworks on health-care worker mobility shape the outcome of migration management and processes.

Finally, the impact of supranational institutions in shaping migration policies are different. Japan’s EPA is a bilateral agreement, but has no relationship with supranational institutions. On the other hand, Germany’s migration policy is subordinate to the process of European integration and the formulation of international norm-building. Vogt states critically that in both cases, however, there is a lack of a sustainable policy vision for borderless labor

markets and governance mechanisms (p. 62). For the overall argument of the book, Vogt gives two reasons for the failure of the EPA: the unattractiveness of the program and the fact that migrants are placed in large hospitals and nursing homes, and detached from the local communities.

Having researched migrant care workers for the past 10 years I do not see the EPA as a total failure. First, the unattractiveness of the program is unavoidable due to the high expenses involved in language and professional training, which are necessary in non-English speaking countries like Japan. That said, however, the examination pass ratio is higher than what it was 10 years ago. Some migrant care workers have settled down with families and some have been promoted to a managerial level.

Second, the EPA served as a litmus test for both the state and society to accept migrants in the health-care sector. As it is a bilateral agreement and because the care workforce will depend on migrants in the future, both the government and employers have tried to create a positive environment for migrant care workers. The government provides an extension for migrant care workers to stay for an additional year, and national examinations for nurses and certified care workers have changed to be more migrant-friendly by extending the allotted examination time, as well as adding English and *hiragana* to technical terms. In many cases the hospitals and care facilities are well prepared and welcoming, although some labor-related problems have been documented. In addition, countless Japanese care workers, language teachers and elderly people have familiarized themselves with migrants, and are actively supporting them. Such efforts have all served to encourage multicultural coexistence at the grassroots level.

Third, migrants are not necessarily detached from their communities, especially in rural areas—and they often take part in various local festivals and activities. After

passing the national exam, migrant care workers can provide home care in their communities if they wish to do so.

Finally, when migration policy was expanded in 2017, the EPA set a reference framework for the care worker migration programs that followed. It is worth noting, however, that these positive changes are unintended consequences of the policy and that change is taking place rather slowly.

Migration in Japan is still negligible, comprising less than 2 percent of the total population. With the shrinking workforce, however, in 2018, the Abe administration quickly decided to open up the labor market without substantial discussions on protection of human rights and social integration. The book successfully encapsulates the issues entailed in migration under the EPA—a first-time experience for Japan—in an engaging manner. It is therefore strongly recommended for scholars and students in political science, sociology, and migration studies, as well as for experts in Japanese studies.

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*Housing in Post-Growth Society: Japan on the Edge of Social Transition.* By Yosuke Hirayama and Misa Izuhara. Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. 184 pages, £110.00. (hardback ISBN 978-1-138-08500-8)

## Housing and Social Stratification

*Housing in Post-Growth Society*, the first book in the Explorations in Housing Studies series, delves into the meaning of housing in “post-growth society,” with a special focus on Japanese society. The housing field is of particular importance for gaining an appropriate understanding of the post-growth