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**Workshop Report:**

"Negotiating and Reconstructing Identity: The Survival Strategy of International Migrants"

Date and Time: January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (Fri.) 17:30 -20:15 Place: Online Event (Zoom)

**Participants:**

• Yejia Ke: PhD student, Graduate Program in International Relations of Global Studies, *Sophia University*

“Identity as a Survival Strategy: A Case Study of Vietnamese Nung Female Migrants in China”

• Razia Rezaie: Graduate student, *Sciences Po Paris Division of International Affairs*

“Migration and Perceptions of Belonging and Home: A Case Study of Afghans in Japan”

• Vy Vu Hong Huynh: PhD student, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, *Waseda University*,

“Vietnamese Skilled Migrants’ Life in Japan: Their Strategies for Social Mobilities and Identity Negotiation”

**Commentators**

• Elena Barabantseva, Senior Lecturer, The University of Manchester

• Gracia Liu-Farrer, Professor, Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

• Xinyu Promio Wang, Assistant Professor, Tokyo College, UTIAS, University of Tokyo.

**Workshop Summary**

This workshop discussed the lived experience of international migrants in the host countries and how they use identity reconstruction, not only as coping mechanisms, but as survival strategies when facing discrimination and threats to their existence there. Transitioning to a different geographical space, especially when migrating from one country to another, requires significant effort to both gain social acceptance from the host societies and to cultivate a sense of belonging. For marginalized groups that suffer from negative social stigmas, such as the Vietnamese and Afghans in Japan or Vietnamese Nung ethnic women in China, these migrants often experience situations in which their self-worth is questioned, thus are more prone to suffering an identity crisis. Whether trying to adapt their self-identification to various social contexts, separating themselves from their own ethnic group, or developing complex perceptions of home and belonging, these migrants’ strategies are not simple attempts to attain social acceptance but attempts to regain a sense of agency. This workshop raised awareness of international migrants’ identity issues whilst encouraging the view that such migrants are not just suffering the stigmas of discrimination but thriving to develop a strong sense of self and position in their host societies.

The workshop was held online and conducted in English. It was divided into three parts: the presentation, commentators' opinions of the presentations, and a Q&A for presenters. The three presenters address the centrality of identity politics and how migrants navigate the questions of social status, acceptance and belonging. The first student presenter was Yejia Ke, a PhD student at Sophia University’s Graduate School of Global Studies. Ke’s research focus is Vietnamese Nung ethnic women who immigrated to the border village between China and Vietnam. Those women are international migrants, but at the same time seen as a cross-border ethnic group by the local people of the host society. Therefore, Ke explained how those migrants use their different identities as their survival strategies depending on their situation. The second presenter, Razia Rezaie, is a Graduate

student at the Sciences Po Paris Division of International Affairs. Her presentation title was “Migration and Perceptions of Belonging and Home: A Case Study of Afghans in Japan”. Rezaie explored the complex perceptions of meaning and experience of home in its various dimensions. Locating migrant identities and sense of belonging in a geographical space, Rezaie described how both migrant perceptions and experiences of belonging and home are numerous yet interlinked. After this presentation, one of the commentators invited Rezaie to consider the status and conditions for naturalization of the research objectives, which is those of Afghans in Japan. The third presenter was Vy Vu Hong Huynh, a PhD student at Waseda University’s Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies. Huynh presentation was titled “Vietnamese Skilled Migrants’ Life in Japan: their strategies for social mobilities and identity negotiation”. Huynh’s presentation offered insights into the cross-cultural adaptation of Vietnamese skilled migrants by focusing on their experiences and strategies of identity negotiation.

During the Q&A section, the presenters received both enthusiastic comments from and engaged in lively discussion with the audience. Both audience questions and commentator’s comments provided the three presenters with an opportunity for deeper thinking on their research.