

Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture

Special Lecture Series: Vulnerable Populations in Japan under Covid-19 - 6

Invites you to a discussion with **Bao Quyen Tran**, Sophia University,

“Vietnamese Technical Trainees in Japan Voice Concerns Amidst COVID-19”

Date: Wednesday, February 17th, 2021

Time: 7pm-8pm (Tokyo time)

Presentation will be followed by Q and A

On Zoom. Open to all; Language English



Please register [HERE](#)

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=p-YOaaVN3E-jFrtZnYKlopSDtnsMuJVAtzRnSitkskJUMDFUJhIWEpVNUJBMDE1WFILSIJVotJUi4u>

The Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) – a short-term labor rotation system that originated in 1993 – brings young and middle-aged workers from developing countries to Japan with a stated objective to transfer Japanese vocational skills and techniques to these workers. However, the program faced criticism for doing little more than covering the chronic labor shortage in unskilled blue-collar jobs that are regarded unfavorably by many Japanese in recent years. This paper highlights the heightened vulnerability of the technical intern trainees as cheap and disposable sources of labor, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on digital communications with 16 Vietnamese technical trainees and an analysis of the content on media platforms since the outbreak of the pandemic, the paper extends my previous work on the challenges faced by technical intern trainees, analyzing the handling of Japanese governments and the accepting companies. The article also introduces the roles of support groups in Japan devoted to protecting vulnerable technical intern trainees. At a moment when the Japanese government is reforming and promoting the TITP, this analysis of Vietnamese technical trainees during the COVID-19 crisis is particularly timely.

Bảo Quyen Trần graduated from Sophia University in Fall 2020 with a Master degree in Japanese Studies. Her research interest lies in the changing patterns of inbound migration in contemporary Japanese society. For her M.A. dissertation, she focused on the Technical Intern Training program, examining its actual role and challenges through a study of current Vietnamese technical intern trainees.

Bao will be discussing her recently published paper: [“Vietnamese Technical Trainees in Japan Voice Concerns Amidst COVID-19”](#) from our collection in the [Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus](#)

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Notes on the full series: This discussion is the first in a series we will hold over the autumn on the causes, effects and current status of vulnerable populations in Japan during the Covid-19 pandemic. Each discussion will be moderated by David Slater and will give listeners a chance to meet the authors and others associated with the articles (advocates, activists, supporters, and participants). The authors will provide insight into the articles, as well as background to the conditions of data collection in the age of Corona, an update on the situation and a look forward—asking if we are any better prepared for next time.

An introduction to the whole collection here: [Vulnerable Populations in Japan under Covid-19: A lull in the storm](#) by David H. Slater

Abstract for the full collection of papers: This is a collection of original articles on diverse vulnerable populations in Japan in the wake of the new coronavirus pandemic. The effects of COVID-19 are felt differently, with some among us at much greater risk of infection due to preexisting health and welfare conditions. For others, perhaps more than the risk of infection, it is the precautions taken to mitigate the risk for the whole population, such as lockdowns and business closures, that have pulled away the already fragile safety net of state and civil society organization (CSO) support, leading to increased marginalization and social exclusion. The goal of this set of papers is to document the conditions of those that have been most directly affected by the virus and to provide background on the conditions that made them vulnerable in the first place, notably chronic conditions that are brought into more obvious relief in light of emergency measures. Each of the authors had a pre-established relationship with those affected populations and employed various ethnographic approaches, some face to face, others digitally via Zoom interviews and SNS exchanges. In this moment of what appears to be relative calm, we hope that our collection, quickly compiled in an attempt to capture the ever-changing situation, will give some insight into how those most vulnerable are faring in this time of crisis and provide information that will allow us to prepare better before the next wave comes our way.

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