



Title	Towards a Sustainable Foreign Workers Policy: A Theoretical Ideal or a Feasible Direction?
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Citation	大阪大学, 2025, 博士論文
Version Type	
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/103147
rights	
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Abstract of Thesis

Name (Shah Sardar Ahmed)	
Title	Towards a Sustainable Foreign Workers Policy: A Theoretical Ideal or a Feasible Direction? (サステイナブルな外国人労働者政策に向けて： 理論上の理想か、実現可能な方向か?)
<p>Abstract of Thesis</p> <p>Labor migration provides benefits to both sending and receiving countries as well as to foreign workers and migrant communities. At the same time, it also continues to be a highly contentious and politicized phenomenon, due to the social and economic costs it puts on the different stakeholders, which leads to labor migration being considered undesirable and to there being efforts to limit and manage migrant flows. On the other hand, the concept of sustainability is not just limited to ecological issues, but scholars have pointed out that it essentially deals with the issue of social equity and the maintenance and improvement of desirable conditions (Dresner, 2008; Jacques, 2021). Therefore, this thesis aims to discuss and answer the research question: what would a 'sustainable' foreign workers policy look like? It uses a conceptual methodology comprising of three tiers: building upon previous analytical approaches, finding overlaps between the academic approaches and selected institutional understandings, and finally adding the insights from standalone views from migration studies and sustainability principles. The process results in a reconceptualization of a 'sustainable foreign workers policy' consisting of five interrelated and interconnected factors that would present sustainability in labor migration policy as an analytical concept. The thesis contributes to the sporadically and irregularly studied, but needed and timely, research area of sustainable labor migration conceptualization, and introduces a focused, comprehensive and logically engaging redefinition that can be useful as an analytical concept to evaluate the ever-evolving labor migration schemes and policies.</p> <p>The thesis is composed of four chapters with the first two discussing the two concepts of labor migration and sustainability in separate, standalone disciplines, the third discussing the two in relation with each other and the final one presenting the reconceptualization of sustainable labor migration. The first chapter discusses the theories and policies of migration, focusing on labor migration studies, and the insights they give regarding the migration phenomenon. The second chapter discusses the fundamental principles of sustainability, including factors such as balancing different trade-offs, making decisions as well as the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability. The third chapter starts with discussing the merits and usefulness of 'sustainable labor migration' as a concept, before moving to the explanation of the three-tier methodology used in answering the research question, and then mainly includes the detailed discussion of the conceptual and institutional approaches and their commonalities. The final chapter of the thesis presents and discusses the five part reconceptualization of 'sustainable foreign workers policy'. The last two sections of the final chapter are composed of a case example where the reconceptualization is applied to assess the sustainability of a present specific labor migration policy of Japan, before ending with the possible limitations of the conceptualization and its future implications.</p> <p>Keywords: labor migration, sustainability, migration policy, foreign workers, sustainable migration</p>	

論文審査の結果の要旨及び担当者

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論文審査の結果の要旨

This thesis aims to elucidate what makes foreign worker policies ‘sustainable’, through an examination of literature and policies relating to labor migration and the concept of sustainability. Globalization has brought about a growing demand for cross-border labor movement, and yet the concept of sustainability - an interdisciplinary concept that focuses on social, economic, and environmental dimensions - remains significantly under-researched in the context of labor migration. The existing literature discussing sustainability in relation to labor migration is relatively limited, and the findings of such research do not always align with the positions taken by international institutions engaged in the field, nor with the practical realities of how labor migration unfolds in various national contexts -circular migration being a notable case in point.

In an effort to define what sustainable labor migration policies might involve, this thesis builds on previous analytical approaches, identifies areas of overlap between academic theories and selected institutional understandings, and incorporates perspectives from standalone contributions in migration studies and sustainability-focused frameworks.

The thesis is structured into four chapters. Chapter One explores labor migration by providing an overview of different models of migrant labor and the policies that are formulated to either encourage or regulate such movements. Chapter Two turns to the concept of sustainability, examining its core principles and interdisciplinary foundations. Chapter Three synthesizes the discussions from the previous chapters, offering a critique of both academic and institutional treatments of sustainable labor migration, while also identifying points of convergence. Finally, Chapter Four draws these elements together to propose a reconceptualization of what could make foreign worker policies sustainable. It concludes with a short case study that applies the proposed sustainability criteria to Japan’s Specified Skilled Worker Programme.

The thesis puts forward five key factors that determine whether a labor migration policy may be considered sustainable: 1) common and differentiated costs and benefits; 2) equal treatment to local citizens; 3) contributes to sustainable development in sending societies; 4) allows multiple pathways and long-term settlement on principle of selection; 5) managed through pre-defined, clear and agreed upon bilateral legal frameworks.

This research systematically critiques and substantively builds upon existing literature on sustainable labor migration. It provides a normative framework for evaluating such policies, grounded in conceptual theory, institutional practice, and empirical evidence. In doing so, it challenges dominant assumptions and adds depth to the understanding of what sustainability means in the context of labor migration. The thesis offers a valuable contribution to the literature and also has the potential to serve as a tool for assessing current and future policies concerning foreign workers.

The Committee members agreed that this thesis meets the requirements for the award of a Ph.D. degree.