Historical Social Research

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doi: 10.12759/hsr.51.2026.08

Published in:
Historical Social Research 51 (2026) 1

Cite as:

Pei-Chia Lan, Samia Dinkelaker
& Chih-Hsuan Chang. 2026.
From Migrant Workers to Future Immigrants?
"Guest-worker" Programs in Contemporary Taiwan
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Historical Social Research 51 (1): 200-227. doi: 10.12759/hsr.51.2026.08

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From Migrant Workers to Future Immigrants? “Guest-worker” Programs in Contemporary Taiwan and Post-World War II West Germany

Pei-Chia Lan, Samia Dinkelaker & Chih-Hsuan Chang *

Abstract: *»Von Arbeitsmigrant:innen zu zukünftigen Einwander:innen? „Gastarbeiter“-Programme im heutigen Taiwan und in Westdeutschland nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg«.* This paper examines the divergence of “guest worker” migration regimes in contemporary Taiwan and postwar West Germany. Both countries sought foreign temporary workers to do “3D” jobs, but their “guest worker” programs followed distinct paths. In West Germany, family migration from Southern Europe and Turkey was allowed, leading numerous migrants to eventually settle. In contrast, Taiwan tightly controlled the stays of Southeast Asian migrants until 2022, when it introduced a limited “long-term retention program” for “middle-skilled” workers. Explanations for regional variations in Western European and East Asian labor migration regimes typically focus on state-supported ethnonationalism and developmental ideologies. In contrast, we propose a multiscalar argument that identifies four socio-spatial factors that contribute to the persistence or transformation of “guest worker” regimes: trajectories of industrial development, demand for female migrant workers, geography and border enforcement, and recruitment infrastructure. We also examine factors related to social space that may affect the future course of Taiwan’s labor migration program, including the spatial allocation of migrant workers, competition with other receiving countries, and the consolidation of migrant communities.

Keywords: Guest worker, migrant worker, labor migration, West Germany, Taiwan, migration infrastructure, spaces of migration, varieties of refiguration.

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Historical Social Research 51 (2026) 1, 200-227 │ published by GESIS
DOI: 10.12759/hsr.51.2026.08

1. Introduction: Divergence in “Guest Worker” Regimes[1, 2]

Taiwan established a “guest worker” program in the early 1990s with the presumption that migrant workers would not become permanent residents.[3] They have therefore been subject to strict regulations that limit the duration of their contracts and prohibit them from bringing their families to Taiwan. However, the Taiwanese government has recently taken steps to relax its “guest worker” regime to some extent, especially by introducing a program to retain “middle-skilled” workers that provides them with longer-term prospects under certain conditions.

Will Taiwan’s “guest worker” regime open up more in the future? What are the structural conditions that enable and constrain the possibilities of reform? We approach these questions by comparing Taiwan with West Germany’s post-World War II “guest worker” program (1955–1973). Similar to Taiwan, West Germany recruited low-skilled migrants to be a flexible, temporary part of the labor force. However, despite official declarations that “Germany is not an immigration country,” a substantial number of “guest workers” began bringing their families during the 1960s. Some of them stayed permanently and gradually became a significant component of West German society.

References to Germany’s “guest worker” program have repeatedly appeared in public debates on Taiwanese state policy. In the late 1980s, a research report commissioned by the government of Taiwan referred to West Germany’s program as a negative example that allegedly proved migrants could not adapt to local cultures, caused social problems, and placed a burden on social welfare systems (Research, Development and Evaluation Commission 1992). Thirty years later, the West German case suggests rather contrary conclusions: Taiwanese legislators now view it as an example of migrant workers’ integration into society, and they accept family reunification and migrants’ long-term

[1] This publication was funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology in Taiwan (MOST 110-2410-H-002 -162 -MY3, NSTC 113-2811-H-002-009) and Taiwan Social Resilience Research Center at National Taiwan University (Ministry of Education, HESP 113L900304).

[2] We are grateful to Nina Baur and other workshop participants for their valuable comments. We also thank Lauren Stokes and Marcel Berlinghoff for helpful discussions and Michael Pedersen for his copyediting service. All errors are, of course, our own responsibility.

[3] The term “guest worker,” now widely used to describe temporary labor migration programs across the globe, is a translation of the German term *Gastarbeiter*. The term first appeared at the start of the 20th century and justified the exclusion of migrant workers from local society. National Socialist propaganda adopted the term during World War II, using it to justify the exploitation of forced laborers from Nazi-occupied territories and spheres of influence. *Gastarbeiter* was reintroduced in the 1960s when postwar West Germany began to recruit migrant workers again, and the term was adopted in various other geographical contexts. By placing “guest worker” in quotation marks, we align ourselves with authors who recognize the racist origin of this term (see Rass 2023).

presence as an inevitable result of historical development (Legislative Yuan 2023, 17).

Comparing contemporary Taiwan and post-WWII West Germany, this paper examines the convergence and divergence of "guest worker" migration regimes. We identify four socio-spatial factors that contribute to the persistence or transformation of "guest worker" regimes. Our arguments align with this issue's focus on the interplay between spatial arrangement and social transformation. We explore how the refiguration of labor migration regimes reflects broader socio-spatial conditions in these two countries, including trajectories of industrial development, demand for female migrant workers, geography and border enforcement, and recruitment infrastructure. We also consider the refiguration of social space as an outcome of labor migration. From relatively early on, "guest workers" in West Germany were able to extend their stays and bring over their family members, thus reshaping the spatial and social composition of society. However, for Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan, the possibility of staying long-term is only open for a limited number of workers; state policy and labor management have continued to safeguard the social and spatial isolation of migrant workers, thus maintaining their status of temporariness in society.

Our study is based on a synthetic analysis of English, Mandarin, and German language literature on "guest worker" migrations in their respective contexts. It is also informed by our ethnographic research on migrant workers in Taiwan. In the following sections, we first review the literature on the comparison and taxonomy of "guest worker" regimes. We then identify the shortcomings of these arguments and propose our own theoretical perspectives. Next, we briefly describe the "guest worker" programs in Taiwan and West Germany and identify four conditions that shaped the distinct directions taken by these regimes: 1) trajectories of industrial development; 2) demand for female migrant workers; 3) geography and border enforcement; and 4) recruitment infrastructures. We end the paper by discussing how factors related to social space may affect the future course of Taiwan's labor migration program.

2. A Comparison of "Guest Worker" Regimes

"Guest worker" programs are a state-authorized means of recruiting temporary migrant workers, often for jobs that do not require formal qualifications and are not desired by local citizens. By ensuring that these workers remain temporary residents, the governments of receiving states seek to limit the social impacts of migration on the local societies (see, e.g., Castles 2006; Hahamovitch 2003; Surak 2013). In Southeast and East Asia, such temporary migration regimes have become a typical method of regulating "low-skilled" labor migration (Baas 2018; Lu 2013). Comparative literature that includes

Asia's "guest worker" regimes in its analysis can be broadly divided into three categories discussing the macro economy, political ideologies, and migration infrastructures.

The first category examines how structural contexts of the *macro economy* have shaped the evolution of labor migration regimes across the 20th century. Surak (2013, 90-9) categorizes "guest worker" regimes into five primary forms based on the location and scale of their presence within the labor market, namely *core-industrial*, *regional-supplemental*, *national-supplemental*, *primary*, and *marginal*. West Germany is thus characterized as national-supplemental. Unlike France or the Netherlands, which previously had colonial hinterlands, West Germany promoted a national-scale "guest worker" scheme to boost its postwar economy. Taiwan and other East Asian countries fall into the marginal category, as the number of migrant workers there is strictly controlled by the state. Despite the threat of severe labor shortages, these governments resisted opening their borders in the beginning. Taiwan did not set up a formal "guest worker" scheme until the early 1990s, while Japan and South Korea remained reluctant and adopted similar plans much later.[4] Until recently, the rights of permanent residency and family reunification were completely off the table for "guest workers" in these countries.

While we find Surak's typology to be helpful, we argue that at present the scale of the migrant worker presence in Taiwan's labor market has already passed beyond marginal. Even with the limited quotas imposed by the state, the number of migrant workers has increased and expanded to more sectors in the last three decades. In addition, Surak's typology is derived from economic factors concerning the labor market and industrial growth, but it overlooks how political processes and competing interests within states mediate labor demand. Moreover, it omits how social structures such as recruitment infrastructures shape the supply of migrants. We consider these additional factors as we address the divergent transformations of "guest worker" regimes in Northwestern Europe and East Asia and their implied refiguration of spatial and social orders.

This brings us to the second body of literature, which examines the factors of *national and state ideologies* and utilizes them to explain regional divergences. This literature focuses on the persistently restrictive migration policies in East Asia, particularly in the region's three highly industrialized and democratic countries: Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. In both explicit and implicit juxtaposition with the immigration countries in Northwestern

[4] The "guest worker" systems in South Korea and Japan were not official programs at first, but in the early 1990s, they set up trainee programs to recruit low-skilled workers (in the case of Japan, this was based on earlier trainee schemes). South Korea transformed its trainee programs into a state-organized "guest worker" program in 2003, thus representing an exceptional case of strong state involvement. Since 2019, Japan has maintained a trainee program parallel to one for migrants holding "specified skills."

Europe, the restrictive migration regimes of these countries are explained via claims of ethnocultural homogeneity and developmental ideologies.

On the one hand, scholars have argued that the ideology of monoethnic nationalism in East Asian countries obstructs a more open stance towards labor migration despite severe labor shortages (Castles and Davidson 2000, 196-9; Haas et al. 2020, 187). South Korea and Japan have generally maintained a self-image of racial and ethnocultural homogeneity, even though minority groups have existed on a small scale in both countries and experienced oppression and legal uncertainty (Kim 2016; Lie 2004). The principle of citizenship in Taiwan, as in South Korea and Japan, has been based primarily on *jus sanguinis*. Concerns about threats to Taiwan's supposed ethnic homogeneity from the presence of migrant workers accompanied debates on the design of the country's labor migration program (Tseng and Wang 2013, 4).

On the other hand, scholars have proposed developmental ideologies as an alternative explanation for the restrictive immigration policies in East Asia (Chung 2022; Chung et al. 2024; Seol and Skretny 2009). These scholars emphasize that East Asian states have historically prioritized economic growth, social stability, and national security over migrant workers' rights (Chung et al. 2024, 651). A social contract based on economic development and performance justifies migrants' exclusion from citizenship in these countries. In this literature, East Asian "developmental migration states" are juxtaposed with Western "liberal migration states." The transformation of "guest workers" into immigrants in Northwestern Europe is typically situated in the 1970s, when most countries stopped recruiting new migrant workers, and it is explained by liberal policy norms and a humanitarian political culture gaining ground at the time. This argument is supported, for instance, by reference to West German court rulings, which interpreted the country's Basic Law in favor of family reunions (Chung et al. 2024, 641; Seol and Skretny 2009, 597 with reference to Hollifield 2004; Joppke 1998).

We concur with this second body of scholarship in considering how political actors' interests mediate labor demands. Yet, in our view, the implicit binary it presents – between ethnonationalist developmental states in East Asia and liberal immigration states in Northwestern Europe – tends to essentialize the role of policy norms. First, the liberal norms that increasingly prevailed in the 1970s did not have the only deciding influence on the "guest worker" settlement in Northwestern Europe. As recent historical research has demonstrated in the West German case, the settlement had already gained momentum in the 1960s due to unanticipated factors that undermined the rationale that "guest workers" were only temporary residents (e.g., Mattes 2005; Sonnenberger 2003; Stokes 2022). Second, a binary perspective risks downplaying the persistence of nationalist forces in Northwestern Europe that have enforced limitations on immigration and family reunions (but see Chung et al. 2024, 639). Third, it fails to explain recent, although hesitant, moves toward relaxing East

Asia's strict labor migration regimes. Rather than attempting to explain divergences based on distinct ideologies, we suggest examining competing interests – economic, nationalist, and developmentalist – of states in both Northwestern Europe and East Asia against the backdrop of structural conditions, such as the divergent trajectories of industrial development, in their respective contexts.

The third category of literature examines variegated configurations of *migration infrastructures* underlying the spatial practices of recruiting and managing migrant workers (Xiang and Lindquist 2014). This literature shifts the focus from macroeconomic factors and policy norms to the actors that organize the migration of "guest workers." Programs for this purpose may be arranged by the state, but in many cases, they also involve non-state actors. However, the interests of such intermediaries do not necessarily align with the state priority of ensuring that migrant workers remain only temporarily in the country. For instance, toleration of informal recruitment channels can facilitate the establishment of self-perpetuating networks (Haas et al. 2020, 119; Massey et al. 1993). Private broker agencies often play a critical role in labor provision, but they have little "intrinsic concern" in policing migrant workers' return (Surak 2018, 4). Hence, states actively incorporate non-state actors in controlling labor migration (Anderson and Franck 2019).

Variations *within* "guest worker" programs in East Asia have prompted scholars to center migration infrastructures in their analyses and systematize the relationship between state and private actors (Surak 2018; Kim 2020). A closer look at migration infrastructures is also revealing when comparing the "guest worker" regimes in Taiwan and post-World War II West Germany. In this study, we show how the latter's tolerance of multiple recruitment channels, in addition to official state organized migration channels, helped migration processes develop momentum, while the Taiwanese state has more or less effectively integrated private broker agencies and employers into its more tightly controlled migration regime.

Based on existing comparisons of "guest worker" systems along with political-economic studies of international migration, we assume that the demand for flexible labor is a main driver of "guest worker" programs (Haas et al. 2020, 15; Surak 2013, 86). However, as previous comparative literature has shown, how this demand is translated in different regimes varies in terms of scope and migrant workers' residence conditions. "Guest worker" programs are shaped by competing interests within states and by the forms in which migration is organized. Based on our close reading of "guest worker" regimes in contemporary Taiwan and postwar West Germany, we complement the existing literature by incorporating specific gendered labor demands, geography, and border technologies into our analysis.

Following the theme of this special issue, we view divergent labor migration regimes as "varieties of refiguration," which refer to the interplay between

spatial arrangements and societal transformations across different contexts (Kirchner and Baur 2026, in this special issue). Highlighting the broader socio-spatial conditions that contribute to refiguring spaces of migration, we adopt the following approaches to study the pathways of "guest worker" regime transformation: First, we consider how a state's capacity to regulate and govern migration is mediated by economic development, geography, and border technologies. Second, we scrutinize the highly gendered demand for migrant labor as well as variations across industries and sectors. This demand creates certain conditions that both open and constrain possibilities for migrant workers to arrange family reunifications and long-term stays. Third, we examine recruitment infrastructures and their impact on the dynamics of migration processes.

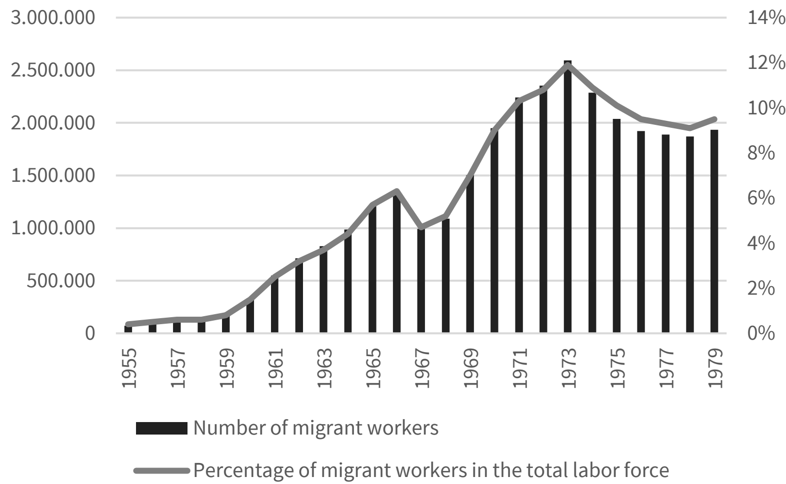
3. West Germany's Post-World War II "Guest Worker" Program (1955–1973)

The Federal Republic of Germany's "guest workers" sustained the country's postwar economic boom, which had been initiated by aid from the United States and Britain in the context of the Cold War and continued up to the early 1970s. In the 1950s, the first labor shortages of this period began to occur in agriculture. Subsequently, rapid industrial expansion and the adoption of new mass production techniques led to a sharp increase in labor demand in the 1960s, especially for manufacturing. Employers had already begun hiring migrants from Southern Europe on their own initiative in the 1950s (Bojadžijev 2008, 100). By concluding agreements with Italy (1955), Spain (1960), Greece (1960), Turkey (1962), South Korea (1963, 1971), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunesia (1965), and Yugoslavia (1968), the West German government formalized the recruitment of migrant labor.[5]

From just under 300,000 in 1960, the migrant worker population in West Germany reached one million by 1965, with the steady increase in workers only interrupted during the recession of 1967. Growth rates recovered rapidly, and from 1968 onward, migrants were recruited again on a massive scale. Between 1968 and 1971, as many additional migrants were employed in West Germany as in the entire period before 1968. Italians made up the largest number of migrant workers during the 1960s, but they were replaced in the early 1970s by Yugoslavs, followed by Turkish migrants, who numbered around 450,000 in 1972 (Herbert 1990, 203).

[5] The agreements with South Korea and Morocco of 1963 were restricted to the recruitment of mining workers. The 1971 agreement with South Korea specifically targeted the recruitment of nurses.

Graph 1 The Number of Migrant Workers and the Percentage of Migrant Workers in the Workforce in West Germany (1955–1979)



Source: Developed by the authors, based on numbers cited from Herbert 1990, 203.

The accepted term *Gastarbeiter* ("guest worker") captured the essential idea of migrant workers, integrating their primary economic function, flexible purpose, and temporary residence. This concept was mainly implemented through their legal status. Residence and employment permits were granted only for limited periods. "Guest workers" usually received an initial one-year employment permit bound to a contract with a specific employer. Extension of this permit was at the discretion of the authorities (Herbert 1990, 214).[6] Migrant workers' legal status perpetuated their position at the lower stratum of a segmented labor market, carrying out heavy, dirty, and health-damaging work as well as repetitive production processes. This segregation was also supported by a policy guaranteeing the preferential treatment of native German workers on the job market (*Inländerprimat*) (Goeke 2014, 170).

In the late 1960s, migrant workers' presence in West Germany had already become more permanent. Due to the massive demand for their labor during a period of sustained growth, employers preferred to keep experienced workers rather than replace them with new ones (Schönwälder 2001, 255). Local authorities routinely renewed migrants' short-term permits. After working in West Germany for five years without interruption, they qualified for an extended employment permit valid for another five years (Schönwälder 2001, 511). Some "guest workers" also brought their families. In its early recruitment

[6] The regulations were relaxed in 1971, when migrant workers could get an initial employment permit for two years that was not bound to a specific employer (Schönwälder 2001, 511).

agreements, the government had already included the possibility of family reunion, following a precedent set by other receiving countries in Northwestern Europe (Goeke 2020, 37).[7] Although certain factions in the government later attempted to impose stricter regulations on family reunions, family and chain migration could not be prevented. In the fall of 1973, 877,000 (40 percent) of the 3.9 million registered foreigners in West Germany had lived there for eight years or longer (Schönwälder 2001, 560). This included an increasing number of adult family members and children who were not active in the labor force.

Despite these developments, most policymakers were convinced that West Germany "was not an immigration country." In the late 1960s, state officials began questioning the cost-effectiveness of hiring migrant labor, and they were increasingly concerned about its long-term social consequences (Herbert 1990, 234). Their "guest worker" policies had not been designed to provide social infrastructure for migrants, but these workers nonetheless asked for better housing conditions, childcare facilities, and schooling for their children. Moreover, they had participated in and even initiated labor struggles that culminated in a series of wildcat strikes in 1973 demanding that their conditions be improved (Bojadžijev 2008, 155, 230; Goeke 2014, 177-80).

The watershed moment of West Germany's "guest worker" program came in 1973 (Berlinghoff 2013). Justifying its actions with the so-called oil crisis and the economic recession that it assumed would result, the government imposed a ban on the recruitment of migrant workers in November 1973 and urged those in the country to return to their places of origin. The ban, however, had unintended consequences. Of the fourteen million "guest workers" who had come to West Germany, about three million stayed. After the ban was imposed, family reunions remained one of the few channels for migrants to legally enter and remain in West Germany.

Migration policies after the recruitment ban were characterized by ambivalence. The government did take some steps to promote the "integration" of migrants, and it allowed long-term residence for some. Furthermore, beginning in 1973, several court cases were decided in favor of family reunions for "guest workers," thus recognizing such reunions as a right (Stokes 2022, 15). At the same time the state attempted to discourage family migration, pressured "guest workers" to return, and limited migration ever more aggressively throughout the following decades. There was a pragmatic recognition and acceptance of the effects of immigration in everyday life, including on municipalities, cities, and neighborhoods (Mattes 2005, 60). It was only in 2000, with the reform of Germany's citizenship law, that it was officially named an immigration country. This change significantly reduced the threshold for foreigners to obtain German citizenship and allowed children born in Germany to immigrant parents to claim German citizenship.

[7] Belgium, for instance, had allowed family reunions as a measure to attract mining workers (Rass 2010, 53).

4. Taiwan's Labor Migration Program (1989–ongoing)

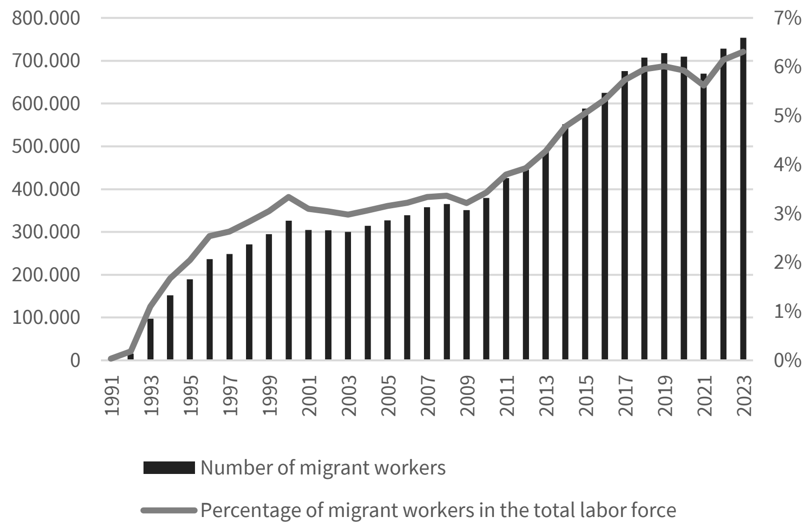
In Taiwan, the recruitment of Southeast Asian migrant workers dates from the late 1980s, when Taiwanese employers began to face difficulties hiring and retaining local workers, especially in labor-intensive industries. Manufacturing and construction businesses responded by bringing in undocumented workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. However, there were not enough of them to satisfy employers' labor demands, which put pressure on the government to formalize migrant worker recruitment (Tierney 2007, 209).

In 1989, Taiwan launched a pilot project to hire migrants for public construction projects. Passing the Employment Service Act in 1992, the government expanded its "guest worker" program to cover labor-intensive manufacturing, fisheries, domestic work, and caretaking. Recruitment of migrant workers was initially restricted to four countries in Southeast Asia, namely the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, although no substantial number of workers was ever recruited from Malaysia. Vietnam was added to the list in 1999 (Lan 2006, 39-41).

The Taiwanese government followed Singapore's model and adopted strict mechanisms to prevent permanent settlement, rule out family migration, and keep employment of migrant workers flexible according to industry needs (Lu 2011, 95). To control migrant workers' sojourn in the country and avoid an influx of new workers, the legal status of Southeast Asian migrants is tied to a three-year contract with one specified employer that cannot be changed without official permission. Today, migrant workers can extend their contracts up to four times. Laborers must leave the country after 12 years, while private caretakers have 14 years. The government also introduced quotas that limit the intake of migrant workers in certain sectors (Tierney 2007, 207-8). Such limitations have been lifted for the fishing industry and private caretakers, but they still exist in other areas.

The total number of Southeast Asian migrant workers increased significantly from 3,000 in 1991 to 326,000 in 2000. It remained relatively steady during the 2000s until it dropped in the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2007–2008. When the economy improved after the crisis, the government increased quotas and loosened regulations on migrant workers. Between 2010 and 2023, the number of migrants increased substantially from 379,500 to 735,000 and only declined during the pandemic in 2021. Today, Southeast Asian migrant workers represent 6 percent of the labor force, yet their share is significantly higher in specific industries. In the early years, most migrants came from Thailand, while Indonesians are in the majority today at 276,855. Vietnamese workers, numbering 163,263, make up the second largest group (Ministry of Labor 2024).

Graph 2 The Number of Migrant Workers and the Percentage of Migrant Workers in the Total Labor Force (1994–2023)



Source: Developed by the authors, based on numbers cited from Ministry of Labor 2024.

The Taiwanese government further expanded its "guest worker" program to meet increasing labor shortages. It opened the agricultural sector to migrant labor in 2019 and the private construction sector in 2023. It also relaxed migrant worker quotas in manufacturing, agriculture, and institutional care in 2023 (Focus Taiwan 2023). Moreover, in February 2024, it signed a memorandum of understanding with India to access its migrant labor power (Chen 2024).

A major leap in Taiwan's migrant labor policies was the introduction of a new resident status in 2022, "middle-skilled labor," which grants qualified migrants longer-term prospects. The program aims to retain experienced blue-collar migrant workers along with international students with associate degrees by incentivizing them to stay in Taiwan (Fahey 2022). Migrant workers who have worked in Taiwan for six years or longer, with certain proven skills, can apply for reclassification.[8] For those reclassified as middle-skilled, work permits have no residency limitation. After working for another five years, they are entitled to apply for permanent residency through professional or technical certifications. Moreover, middle-skilled workers can sponsor their family members, at least theoretically (Executive Yuan 2023).

[8] Factory workers must have certifications of training, and care workers are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of caregiving training and pass a language test (Ministry of Labor 2022).

However, the number of reclassifications targeted by the government per year remains moderate at 20,000 (Yeh 2023).[9] Despite the program's promise to open a door for migrant workers' long-term residency, they face a high threshold of qualification for reclassification as middle-skilled workers. First, workers cannot apply by themselves but must rely on their employers to apply on their behalf, which hinders their agency and reinforces the employer's authority. Second, middle-skilled migrant workers, caregivers in institutions, and caregivers in private homes need to earn a monthly average wage of at least TWD 33,000 (USD 1,230), TWD 29,000 (USD 905), or TWD 24,000 (USD 750) respectively to become eligible. These numbers are significantly higher than the average wages received by migrant workers.[10] Such salary requirements also make it difficult for middle-skilled workers to find new employers if they wish to change jobs, and this insecurity can impact their prospects of remaining in Taiwan. Lastly, it is almost impossible for middle-skilled migrant workers to sponsor their family members, as they must earn an unrealistically high monthly wage of TWD 53,000 (USD 1,600) on average to be eligible for family reunification (Fahey 2022).

5. Explaining the Divergent Pathways of Regime Transformation

Tracing the "guest worker" programs in postwar West Germany and contemporary Taiwan reveals their divergent courses of development. We view these two labor migration regimes as instances that demonstrate the interplay between structural change and spatial refiguration as addressed in this special issue. We identify four major socio-spatial factors that help explain the divergent pathways of "guest worker" regimes, and these factors indicate a variety of spatial practices and logics discussed in the introduction of this special issue. First, the trajectories of industrial development demonstrate the networks and movements of capital. Second, the demand for female migrant workers reflects the spatial and gender division of labor across public and private spheres. Thirdly, geography and border enforcement indicate territory and the logic of demarcation. Finally, the recruitment infrastructure arranges routes and transits for migrant workers.

[9] By November 2023, the accumulated number was 21,351, including 8,447 factory workers and 12,894 care workers, according to the Minister of Labor.

[10] Migrant factory workers and institutional care workers usually earn Taiwan's minimum wage (TWD 27,470, or USD 850, as of 2024) plus overtime. The typical salary for migrant private caretakers, not subject to minimum wage protection, is TWD 20,000, or USD 620, as of 2024.

5.1 Trajectories of Industrial Development

West Germany recruited migrant workers on a massive scale to meet the demands of its mass production sectors, such as the automotive industry, during a period when it was believed that rapid economic growth would continue along with a commensurate rise in profits. In contrast, Taiwan has sought to recruit migrant workers as a strategy to cope with expected economic fluctuations and to help its labor-intensive, export-oriented industries survive and stay competitive in the global market.

The rapid growth and massive labor demand in West Germany allowed government factions that favored less restrictive migration policies, often represented by the Ministry of Labor, to assert their interests against those that desired a more regulatory approach, generally associated with the Ministry of the Interior. In the 1960s, the latter body made several attempts to impose the compulsory rotation of migrant workers and, anticipating the long-term consequences of family migration, attempted to regulate family reunions more strictly (Schönwälder 2001, 255; 288, 338). However, the Ministry of Labor preferred to rely on existing "market-conforming" measures (Stokes 2022, 23). For instance, instead of introducing additional regulations, they counted on the effectiveness of temporary employment permits that could be waived during times of recession (Schönwälder 2001, 342).

Initial opposition from the West German labor unions towards hiring migrant workers also decreased in the 1960s (Goeke 2014, 168-9). These unions represented local, male workers who benefited from the employment of "guest workers" and the racialized segmentation of the labor market. The concentration of "guest workers" in low-paid and manual occupations allowed many native male Germans to move into higher and better-paid positions in departments and companies. According to one calculation, from 1960 to 1970, 2.3 million native Germans were promoted from blue- to white-collar positions (Goeke 2014, 169). Many employers made training courses available to native German workers, which qualified them for promotion. Migrant workers, who were expected to stay only temporarily, were neither offered such courses nor provided German language classes to prepare them for training (Goeke 2020, 51-2).

In 1973, facing rising wages, declining profits, and wildcat strikes launched by local and migrant workers across Europe, the West German government switched to policies restricting labor migration. This policy turn was backed by the labor unions, which demanded a limit on the intake of migrant workers. Anticipating rising unemployment because of the oil crisis that year, they sought to protect both local workers and migrant workers already resident in West Germany from competition with new arrivals (Goeke 2014, 171).

In contrast to West Germany, Taiwan began recruiting migrant workers at a moment when the country's old model of economic growth was undergoing a

transformation. Before the 1980s, this model relied heavily on the export-oriented production of consumer goods in special economic zones alongside small- and medium-sized enterprises employing local workers, including many women (Lee 2004). With labor costs, activism, and shortages all growing in the 1980s, some factories upgraded their productive capacity while others relocated abroad, especially to the People's Republic of China (Lee 2004, xiv; Tierney 2007, 207). Recruiting low-paid migrant workers from Southeast Asia helped businesses whose production remained in Taiwan, especially smaller factories, to stay competitive. Policymakers in Taiwan advocated strict regulations to ensure that the migrant presence continued to be temporary and only a supplement to the local labor force. This approach was also a concession to local labor unions, which demanded cutbacks to the entry of migrant workers especially in the early years of their recruitment (Ford 2019, 39; Tierney 2007, 212).

Nevertheless, the number of migrant workers in Taiwan has continued to grow, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Over the years, the maximum period of stay for migrant workers has been extended from two years in the beginning to twelve years for factory workers and fourteen for caretakers.[11] Employers support these extensions because they can avoid training new workers (Yang 2018, 52-4). Since 2016, many Taiwanese companies have brought their factories home to escape rising labor costs in Mainland China (Executive Yuan 2021). They desire temporary migrant workers not only to lower employment costs but also to maintain flexibility in working hours and production cycles. To stay competitive in global supply chains, these manufacturing industries rely on flexible just-in-time production methods to meet the fluctuating demands of international brands and retailers.[12]

While the high-tech industry has boomed, Taiwan has experienced general economic challenges and fluctuations in the last few decades. Compared to other advanced countries, Taiwan's wages are low, working hours are long, and housing costs are high (Ngerng 2024). In particular, young people struggle to make ends meet in low-wage sectors of the economy, with high rents and uncertain futures. Policymakers are therefore hesitant to open up the labor migration regime further, considering the economic pressures on the local working class.

[11] In 1992, the maximum duration migrant workers could stay in Taiwan was set at two years. It was extended to three years in 1997, six in 2001, nine in 2007, and twelve in 2011. Finally in 2015, it was raised to fourteen years for domestic caretakers under the condition that their employers applied for the extension and the authorities approved the application based on a performance evaluation.

[12] According to a 2015 report by the International Labour Organization, more than half of the total employment in Taiwan lies in global supply chains (International Labour Organization 2015).

5.2 Demand for Female Migrant Workers

One of the most striking differences between "guest worker" migration in contemporary Taiwan and post-World War II West Germany is the possibility for migrant workers to arrange for their families to join them. We argue that gender-specific labor demands and the positioning of female migrants significantly shape this divergence. Facing difficulties in recruiting single female migrants, West Germany turned to married women working in factories, whom we call "factory wife workers." The state thus decided that family migration was a suitable way of encouraging the relocation of women needed in female-dominated sectors. In contemporary Taiwan, women migrants are largely recruited as "surrogate family workers" who serve their employers' families and are prohibited from bringing their own.

In postwar West Germany, there was high demand for both local and migrant women workers in textile and other kinds of manufacturing, certain branches of the electronic and metal processing industries, hotels, restaurants, canteens, and hospitals. Employers in these areas could save costs by hiring women workers. In the manufacturing industry, for example, female-dominated jobs designated as "unskilled" and "simple" were remunerated according to "light-work" wage categories, which meant that women workers earned 30 to 40 percent less than their male colleagues (Mattes 2005, 96).[13]

Employers, however, found it increasingly difficult to recruit local women. The reserves of local single female workers were drying up, while postwar gender norms and family policies in West Germany discouraged married women and mothers from participating in the labor market. Men were assigned the role of breadwinners, and women were designated as homeworkers, while public child and elderly care was provided only at a minimal level (Stokes 2022, 23). Hence, employers tried to mobilize female migrants, and in consequence, the proportion of female workers among the migrant labor force increased from 15 to 30 percent between 1960 and 1973 (Mattes 2005, 10).

Single female migrant workers were the preferred choice of employers, but recruiting them proved to be challenging, especially because the sending countries placed restrictions on their migration. Ideas about female morality made the recruitment of single women a delicate matter, especially in the conservative Catholic Mediterranean countries, but similar obstacles were also present in Turkey (Mattes 2005, 82-5). To increase the proportion of women in the migrant labor force, employers recruited couples, and they additionally

[13] In this section, we focus on the consequences of the demand for female migrants in the manufacturing industries on the accelerated formation of migrant families in West Germany. It should be noted, however, that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the share of female "guest workers" in institutional care, hospitality, and the cleaning sector also rose significantly (Mattes 2005, 202).

accepted women who already had children.[14] Some female migrants brought their children with them clandestinely, and others brought them at later stages (Mattes 2005, 88-9; 127-34).[15] On the policy level, government officials, especially those in the Ministry of Labor, encouraged family reunions and defended their more liberal stance against attempts by the Ministry of the Interior to tighten the requirements for "guest workers" who wanted to sponsor family members (Stokes 2022, 24-6). It is also important to note that government officials supported family reunions for reasons that were not solely economic. Some officials, along with social workers and other experts, were concerned about the formation of multinational couples. Motivated by racializing stereotypes about male migrants from Southern Europe, they believed that family reunions could prevent foreign men from forming relationships with West German women (Stokes 2022, 31-6).

Half a century later in Taiwan, the feminization of migration has become prevalent, partly due to the expansion of the reproductive labor sectors. Today, 60 percent of the migrant labor force is employed in the manufacturing sector, while 30 percent work as caretakers in private households and care institutions. About half of all migrant workers are women, while all migrant work in the care sector is done by women (Ministry of Labor 2024). Taiwan has adopted a "familistic model" to cope with elderly care in a rapidly aging society, and the bulk of migrant care labor is performed in private households (Lan 2016, 257). In some Asian sending countries, such as Bangladesh and Thailand, domestic labor migration is considered incompatible with ideals about female morality (Oishi 2005). Even so, Indonesia and the Philippines have actively supported the out-migration of their female labor force, especially to fill the market niche for outsourced care needs in receiving countries (Guevarra 2010; Killias 2018).

Lan (2006, 101) has described the employment of live-in migrant care workers among Taiwanese households as "subcontracting filial piety." Traditionally, adult children, sons in particular, are expected to care for their elderly parents, and sending them to a nursing home violates the norm of filial piety. Taiwanese employers therefore hire live-in migrant workers to outsource part of their filial duties, especially hands-on care for their parents. Yet, care labor performed in private households requires a worker's full availability and conflates public work and private life. It is therefore unlikely that employers would acknowledge the right of migrant caretakers to reunify their families, as this would conflict with their role as "surrogate family workers" for their clients.

[14] Despite the growth of family migration, more than 40 percent of female migrant workers were either single or lived in West Germany without their husbands in 1968 (Mattes 2005, 189).

[15] Since foreign children under the age of 16 did not require visas or residence permits in West Germany, the state had no legal instrument to prohibit migrant parents from bringing their children with them (Stokes 2022, 6).

5.3 Geography and Border Enforcement

Geographic factors have further shaped distinct paths of recruitment and mobility for migrant workers in West Germany and Taiwan. Land borders in the former are more porous than the maritime borders in the latter. West Germany was surrounded by nine countries, and migrants could enter via several means of transport, including by bus and private car. In contrast, Taiwan is an island in the Pacific Ocean, and flights are the primary, if not only, way to cross its borders.

In West Germany, land barriers motivated the use of unofficial channels for migrants to enter, work, and live there. When they tried to enter as tourists but were rejected at the border, or when those who were already in the country failed to obtain legal status, migrants did not necessarily return to their places of origin. Some obtained visas and work permits at West German consulates in neighboring countries (Karakayali 2008, 115; Sanz Díaz 2010, 99). Migrants could also enter without going through border controls. West Berlin, for instance, did not impose any border restrictions with East Berlin. As a result, several thousand migrants from Turkey and elsewhere entered West Berlin via Schönefeld Airport in the East without proper authorization (Hunn 2005, 262). The lack of technological means of surveillance and identification further complicated border enforcement and the control of migration (see, e.g., Bojadžijev 2008, 127; Sanz Díaz 2010, 41).

In addition, starting from the late 1960s, private cars allowed "guest workers" to return to their home countries for their annual leave. Family members or friends could then join them on their way back to West Germany. Some brought their children, too (Pfaffenthaler 2023, 123; Mattes 2005, 135). The transnational mobilities they experienced in their annual visits ultimately encouraged migrant workers to stay longer in West Germany.

In contrast to West Germany's land borders, Taiwan's island geography makes unauthorized entrance into the country difficult, as migrants must rely on highly surveilled air travel. Furthermore, 21st-century visa systems and biometric technologies have become more sophisticated and strengthened immigration controls worldwide (Czaika et al. 2018; Scheel 2019). Border enforcement has been a crucial concern for Taiwanese policymakers, and the state has outsourced surveillance responsibilities to employers and broker agencies.

It is interesting, however, that despite its geographic factors and effective surveillance, the share of migrant workers living in Taiwan without valid visas or employment permits is around 10 percent of the total migrant workforce (Ministry of Labor 2024). Most of these workers overstayed their visas and left their designated employers. As a comparison, West German estimates from the beginning of the 1970s suggested that just 10 to 15 percent of the migrants

were employed “illegally,” meaning they had used unofficial channels to enter and remain in the country (Goeke 2020, 43).

5.4 Recruitment Infrastructures

In West Germany, the great majority of “guest workers” were organized by state recruitment commissions, yet migration via other routes was tolerated to varying degrees. The possibility of “named recruitment” along with the availability of unofficial recruitment channels gave impetus to chain and family migration. In contrast, the Taiwanese government outsources hiring to private broker agencies that usually recruit migrant workers anonymously, thus impeding chain migration. It also incorporates these private agencies as well as employers into its efforts to control and manage migrant workers, and “guest worker” dormitories are critical sites of this control.

The West German g5overnment established a recruitment bureaucracy that aimed to efficiently meet the demands of employers and regulate the scope of labor migration in the most effective way possible. Through the Federal Labor Bureau, the West German state established hiring commissions in the countries with which it had negotiated recruitment agreements, but given the large and specific demand for labor, the government tolerated other recruitment channels.[16] Migrants could obtain work visas directly from German consulates or embassies without undergoing the processes required by the hiring commissions, which were lengthier and mandated stricter health examinations, but they could also take unofficial channels by entering West Germany as tourists and obtaining work and residence permits afterward (Goeke 2020, 35; Sonnenberger 2003, 74-82).

Both official and unofficial migration channels were subject to stricter regulation from the mid-1960s. Yet, to varying extents, the West German government tolerated routes outside the official recruitment bureaucracy due to increased or specific demands for labor that were not met through the state hiring commissions. For instance, the possibility of applying for work visas directly from German embassies was left open for female migrant workers, who were in high demand (Sonnenberger 2003, 79, 90).[17] Meanwhile, the option for migrants to enter West Germany as tourists and obtain legal status afterward became increasingly restricted, and by the late 1960s, more migrants who had entered West Germany as tourists were staying without authorization (Karakayali 2008, 133-4).

[16] It is worth mentioning that workers from Italy, which was a member of the European Economic Community (EEC) were exempted from obtaining employment permits in West Germany and therefore did not have to undergo formal recruitment from 1968 (Sala 2007, 113).

[17] For example, even before the West German government concluded a recruitment agreement with Yugoslavia in 1968, this possibility was used to hire around 100,000 female migrants from Yugoslavia especially to do menial care and cleaning labor in hospitals and other institutions (Mattes 2005, 143).

In combination, the different recruitment channels supported chain and family migration and allowed migration processes to develop their own dynamics. The official hiring commissions allowed the intake of migrants through "named recruitment." That is, employers could request a specific person by name. Typically, they also asked for the person's family members, friends, or neighbors (Stokes 2022, 28).[18] Moreover, when migrants applied for work visas directly at West German consulates or embassies without going through a recruitment commission, they requested to be hired by a specific employer whom they knew through friends and family who were already in West Germany. Couples and families also used named recruitment and unofficial channels to reunite with their families. In doing so, they circumvented the hurdles of the formal family reunion process. One such obstacle was that migrants were required to prove "adequate housing" when sponsoring close family members. Meeting this standard was not easy, given the shortage of housing and the discriminatory housing market in the country (Sonnenberger 2003, 87, 96).

Because of family reunions and the community support that developed as a result of chain migration, some migrants arranged more permanent stays. They increasingly rented private apartments – often in substandard condition – instead of living in company-owned dormitories. While in 1964, 84 percent of "guest workers" had lived in such dormitories, most lived in private apartments by 1968 (74 and 57 percent of female and male workers, respectively) (Goeke 2020, 54).

In Taiwan, despite the possibility of direct hiring, which allows employers to recruit migrants directly based on their personal relationships, private broker agencies have formed the primary recruitment infrastructure. The government considers this to be the most efficient approach (Surak 2018, 9). This means that migrants usually cannot choose their employer and workplace, impeding chain migration. To ensure that migrant workers' sojourn in Taiwan remains temporary, the government has bestowed on private broker agencies and employers the task of monitoring migrants and preventing them from overstaying their visas or staying in the country after an unauthorized job transfer (Tseng and Wang 2013, 13).

The delegation of labor management to private agencies also helps employers supervise workers and maintain flexible manufacturing and just-in-time production. Unlike in West Germany, where migrant workers increasingly left company dormitories in the late 1960s, most factory workers in Taiwan continue to live in dormitories. These are provided either by employers or broker agencies and are usually located nearby to the factories. This arrangement constitutes a typical "dormitory labor regime" (Smith and Pun 2006), where working and non-working lives are intimately joined. Dormitory labor regimes

[18] Employers had an interest in named recruitment because they reckoned that they could retain workers longer if they also invited their families.

lower reproduction costs and therefore allow the depression of wages, and the spatial concentration in dormitories also allows broker agencies and employers to monitor migrant workers' whereabouts more efficiently. Moreover, the persistent accommodation of migrant workers in dormitories has the effect of isolating them from local society, thus perpetuating their role as "guests" without social roots.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has contributed to the literature on labor migration regimes by offering an innovative comparative design that juxtaposes the development of Taiwan's labor migration program over the past 30 years with the transformation of West Germany's postwar "guest worker" regime. Our study challenges simplified arguments based on state ideologies or policy norms, especially those implicating a binary division between the liberal immigration state and the ethnonationalist, developmental migration state, which are commonly used to explain divergent pathways between East Asia and Northwestern Europe. Instead, we propose a multiscalar argument that identifies critical socio-spatial conditions enabling and constraining the transformation of temporary labor migration regimes. Our argument is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Summary of our Comparison Between the "Guest Worker" Regimes in Postwar West Germany and Contemporary Taiwan

Socio-spatial conditions	West Germany (1955–1973)	Taiwan (1989–present)
Trajectory of industrial development	Expected ongoing boom; Industrial mass production	Expected economic fluctuation; Labor-intensive, export-oriented businesses
Employer demand for female workers	Recruitment of "factory wife workers"	Demand for "surrogate family workers"
Geography and border enforcement	Land borders; Border porosity	Island geography; Sophisticated visa regimes and biometric border control
Recruitment infrastructure	Recruitment bureaucracy and unofficial recruitment channels	Private brokers in charge of recruitment and management
Divergent pathways	After 1973: ended "guest worker" regime but family migration remained	After 2022: retaining middle-skilled workers on a limited scale

Source: Developed by the authors.

Our argument aligns with the refiguration of spaces framework proposed in this special issue, particularly its attention to the overlapping and

interconnected dynamics of multiple scales (see also Kirchner and Baur 2026, in this special issue). Our comparison highlights four structural conditions operating across macro, meso, and micro scales: the trajectory of economic development, the demand for female migrant workers, geography and border enforcement, and recruitment infrastructures. These conditions also demonstrate varied spatial formations with distinct logics of action, including capital's networks and mobilities, spatial and gender division of labor, territory and demarcation, and route and transit.

First, rapid and continued economic growth in West Germany led policymakers to maintain "market conforming" policies until the 1970s, while the outflows of capital and economic fluctuation pushed the Taiwanese government to take a stricter stance on regulating migration. Second, West German employers and government officials supported family migration as a strategy to fill the shortage of female factory workers, while local women were encouraged to stay home. By contrast, to enable local women to participate in the labor market, Taiwan's reproductive sector heavily depends on female migrants who act as "surrogate family workers," while leaving their own families in their countries of origin. Thirdly, West Germany's more accessible natural features together with car travel permitted, to a certain extent, the maintenance of unofficial migration routes, while Taiwan's island geography allows for stricter border control. Finally, several recruitment channels in West Germany supported chain migration while in Taiwan, commercial agencies dominate recruitment infrastructures and facilitate the spatial control of migrants, for instance, in the dormitories.

The presence and refiguration of labor migration have transformed social spaces in the receiving countries. In West Germany, the increase in family and chain migration have led to the development of migrant communities, along with the changing social landscapes. Migrant couples increasingly rented private apartments instead of living in dormitories. By contrast, Taiwan has so far maintained control over migrant workers' living conditions in private households or factory dormitories and over their mobility in the labor market. These spatial conditions highly constrain the possibility of family reunification for migrant workers.

"Guest worker" regimes face fundamental contradictions and challenges to their sustainability. Receiving governments aim to maintain the transitory nature of migrant workers, but this principle can be undermined by employers' demands for more, or certain kinds of, workers and by their economic interest in retaining them. Migrants themselves also want to extend their residence for economic and personal reasons. Meanwhile, migrant worker networks provide infrastructures that support family and chain migration. What can we learn from the experience of West Germany, in which these contradictions have resulted in the permanent residence of a significant number of "guest workers" to envision the future of Taiwan's own "guest worker" system?

Taiwan is facing an expanding labor shortage due to a decline in fertility and an aging population.[19] Despite these problems, reform of its “guest worker” policies, including a retention program for middle-skilled workers, is moving slowly and has yet to demonstrate that it will help address labor shortages in the future. Comparing this situation with the West German case, we identify three spatial factors at different scales that may constrain or enable future changes in Taiwan’s “guest worker” regime, including the spatial allocation of migrant workers, increasing regional competition for workers, and the consolidation of migrant communities in Taiwan.

First, the spatial accommodation of migrant workers has a significant impact on the likelihood of their settlement. If the Taiwanese government is serious about opening up long-term residence for middle-skilled migrants, it needs to simultaneously reform the existing working and living conditions of migrant workers. For instance, migrant care workers should be allowed to provide dispatched service or day work. Such an arrangement can better protect their private lives and guard against the time demands and moral burden caused by living with clients. NGOs in Taiwan have also advocated that factory dormitories be reformed, especially after a series of fires that resulted in multiple fatalities due to the lack of separation between work and living spaces (Chang 2018; Migrant Empowerment Network in Taiwan 2018, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the overcrowded dormitories drew public attention for their unsafe and unsanitary conditions, which presented a high risk of infection. The Migrant Empowerment Network in Taiwan (MENT) and other migrant groups have called for legal reforms to improve living standards for migrant workers, including sufficient space, reasonable management, and relocation away from work sites in the interest of safety (Taiwan International Workers’ Association 2021; Hsieh 2021).

Second, regional competition with other receiving countries may put more pressure on labor migration regimes to change. Post-World War II “guest worker” migration in Europe is a case in point. Sending countries used the competition between receiving countries as leverage to negotiate conditions with West Germany (Rass 2012, 218-21). These countries had, for instance, a certain amount of leverage concerning family reunions, given that before sending their labor power to West Germany, they had already concluded agreements with other countries in Northwestern Europe that had institutionalized more open policies.

Taiwan is facing competition with other receiving countries, especially South Korea and Japan. Both countries seek to attract more migrant workers from Southeast Asia to cope with the challenges of severe labor shortages and aging societies (Cho and Kim 2024; Faber 2024; Liu-Farrer et al. 2023). Both

[19] Taiwan’s fertility rate ranked the lowest worldwide in 2023 (Statista 2023). In the 2060s, there will be more than two dependent people, that is people 65 and older, for every person of working age in Taiwan (Mazza 2024, 120).

business and government actors in Taiwan have promoted the further opening of Taiwan's labor migration regime to avoid falling behind in regional competition. Our own research with Indonesian workers shows that Taiwan remains a popular destination country because its recruitment processes are viewed as quicker and less demanding in terms of language qualifications. Even so, the governments of Southeast Asian states have made some demands on the Taiwanese government. For instance, in 2020, Indonesia unsuccessfully demanded that Taiwan shift recruitment fees and related costs from Indonesian workers onto employers (Ling 2024). The actual possibility of family reunification is still largely missing across labor migration regimes in the region, and it remains to be seen whether sending states will make demands affecting migrant workers' longer-term residence.

Finally, the development of migrant communities can create transformational dynamics in migration processes. The realities of migration, as with West Germany's "guest workers," are not only a result of official policies and recruitment practices, but also of actions and spaces taken by migrants themselves. West German "guest workers" developed their own networks and communities, which met their social and cultural needs and offered legal, material, and moral support. Despite several attempts by the state to prevent or limit the long-term presence of migrants in West Germany, and even though many "guest workers" never planned to settle there, the social infrastructures they developed were one factor motivating them to stay more permanently (Bojadžijev 2008; Hunn 2005).

For most Southeast Asian migrant workers in Taiwan, their migration prospects appear limited. In 2020, the largest share of documented workers, 40 percent, had resided in Taiwan for less than three years, while 6 percent of industrial workers and 10 percent of migrants in the social welfare sector had been there for more than nine years (Control Yuan 2022). Nevertheless, migrant workers have established communities in the form of associations, religious groups, and subcultures (Dinkelaker 2024). The convenient transportation networks throughout the island facilitate formal and informal gatherings among migrant workers during their days off. In addition, some migrants have settled by marrying Taiwanese citizens and having children with them. They join nearly 200,000 migrants from Southeast Asian countries who have come to Taiwan through marriage in the past few decades.[20] Some of them run businesses and offer important infrastructures for migrant worker communities. In the future, these existing communities, their infrastructures, and spaces may become further established and developed as they provide social, cultural, material, and emotional resources for family and chain migration.

[20] Taiwan saw a rise in cross-border marriages in the 1990s and a peak in the early 2000s, when migrant women were actively recruited as spouses for an increasing number of unmarried men in rural areas. Such active recruitment has ceased, but marriage to native citizens remains one of the few pathways to permanent settlement and acquisition of citizenship (Chung et al. 2024, 647; Lan 2024, 2).

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