2017

Newcomers, Welcome? Exploring the Connection Between Demographic Change, Immigration Legislation Design and Policy Mobilities in Ageing Japan

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by

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Waterloo – Laurier Graduate Program in Geography, 2017

THESIS

Submitted to the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for

Master of Arts in Geography

Wilfrid Laurier University and The University of Waterloo

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Abstract

Japan is ageing, and its population is declining. Given the potential detrimental economic and social consequences brought about by this sort of demographic change, it has been suggested that the Japanese could benefit from the implementation of more liberal (im)migration policies. This thesis studies the *demographic change – immigration policy development* nexus from the perspective of the state in the context of Japan and assesses the role that immigration plays within the larger population debate. A constructivist grounded theory methodology is utilised to analyse primary and secondary qualitative data. Additionally, two theoretical approaches of political demography (Robbins and Smith, 2016) and policy mobilities paradigm (see Baker et al. 2016) are employed in order to explore how demographic change may be informing immigration policy design and how Japan might be interacting with other nations and international organizations in such process. The thesis concludes with the observation that the immigration option has not been prioritized to address the various challenges that have been brought about by population decline and ageing. The available evidence gathered for this project also indicates that the latest amendments to the law – which are more *liberal* in nature – do not consider immigration to be a replacement for the loss in population. These amendments do, however, facilitate the mobility of foreign human resources with a view to partially alleviating specific labour shortages and having newcomers contribute to economic growth while, at the same time, respecting the current 'façade' regarding immigration control policies as well as the country's nationhood regulatory principle. As such, this work makes the case that Japan's strategy regarding immigration policy change is that of 'highly selective, cautious, progressive incrementalism'. This thesis also suggests that Japanese policy-makers closely examine other countries' systems and keep track of the latest trends regarding immigration control management but remain reticent to actively engage with other nations and international organizations in the design of the legislation.

Keywords: Demographic Change, Immigration, Japan, Political Demography, Policy Mobilities

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Introduction

The question of demographic change is a recurring topic in most conversations that discuss politics in Japan. Whilst the debate has been active for about four decades, the discussion has gained further momentum over the last few years. This is due primarily to the pressing labour gaps that have emerged as of late as the Japanese economy has continued to grow and the working-age cohort has kept dwindling. To minimize the effects brought about by ageing and population decline, the government has enacted a series of policy measures which have, among others, fostered female labour participation (MOFA, 2017), raised the age of retirement eligibility (Rodionova, 2016) and encouraged the development of labour saving technologies (Murai, 2016). Aside from these initiatives, various influential voices have advocated for the implementation of more liberal (im)migration regulations. Given the current imperative need for comprehensive economic and social policy reform, and the new heights that the immigration debate was reaching at the time of writing, this thesis set out to explore the connection between demographic change and immigration policy design in the context of Japan.

Building from the demographic data which is analysed in *Chapter One*, and taking into consideration how ageing and population decline pose a substantial challenge - and an opportunity - for the Japanese (the relationship between demography and economics, social policy and others is laid out in *Chapter Two*), this thesis employs a constructivist grounded theory methodology guided by the theoretical approaches of *political demography* and *policy mobilities* to examine how population change and immigration policy design are connected and how Japan might be interacting with other foreign entities in such process. *Chapter Three* provides the reader with more details about how this study was conducted. *Chapter Four* serves as an introduction to the field of immigration in Japan, explores how the policy making process takes place, and offers a concise historical account of the development of the current legislation. *Chapter Five* addresses the first research goal of this thesis, which is to document the latest immigration policy developments, especially how they are

contextualized in relation to demographic change. To do so, current visa categories are grouped into four main groups, examined in detail, and compared against the larger socio-economic and cultural framework. Based on this analysis, broader patterns are identified, which help to explain the underlying rationale that possibly motivated the introduction of the latest amendments to the legislation and to elucidate the connection between the latter and the realm of demography. In short, there is compelling evidence to suggest that whilst the immigration option has not been prioritized (to address the various challenges that have arisen due to demographic change), the latest developments are in fact more *liberal* in nature. These new amendments do not seem to be designed to consider immigration as a replacement for the loss in population. Yet, they do facilitate the mobility of foreign human resources to partially alleviate specific labour shortages and have newcomers contribute to economic growth – while respecting what is referred to in this project as the country's 'nationhood regulatory principle' as well as the current 'façade' regarding immigration control. Given these insights, this thesis suggests that Japan's strategy regarding immigration policy change over the last few years has been that of 'highly selective, cautious, progressive incrementalism'.

Chapter Six delves into the area of *policy mobilities* and details how Japan has and is interacting with other national entities and international organizations in the production of its immigration law, be it through policy learning processes or collaborative immigration legislation design – addressing thus the second research objective of this work. The available data indicate that the Japanese, who have traditionally been a nation of 'borrowers', have learnt from other international examples and closely examined 'best' and 'worst' practices in the field of immigration management, primarily from Western nations. This thesis also proposes that despite the openness towards foreign influences, the Japanese State does not share immigration policy design competencies with foreign nations and international organizations for a number of reasons (which are further discussed in this section). Finally, *Chapter Seven* reflects upon the conclusions reached herein and offers further details about the series of contributions and limitations of this study.

This thesis contributes to the growing field of migration studies in the context of Japan. Building upon the insights offered by population geography, it embraces diversity of perspective and favours multidisciplinary research to make sense of the rapidly changing immigration policy landscape. This work also advances knowledge within the emerging field of policy mobilities and explores Japan's involvement in the global circulation of immigration policy models and ideas – an area which had traditionally received little attention in academic research.

1. CHAPTER ONE: THE DYNAMICS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN JAPAN

To have a deeper understanding of the *demographic change – immigration policy development* nexus in the case of Japan, it is first necessary to describe how the country's population composition has evolved throughout time. This initial chapter summarizes some of the major developments in this regard and focuses primarily on three phenomena: population decline, ageing, and the shrinking of the working-age cohort. *Chapter One* also explains how Japan became the 'front-runner of super-aged societies' and analyses some of the latest demographic trends – with the aim of setting the foundations for this thesis. As we shall see, it is well known that demographic change is one of the main underlying forces that helps explain many of the social and economic challenges that Japan faces today. Population dynamics have, as a result, sparked much of the contemporary debate about comprehensive policy reform. This conversation, as it has been argued previously, also features the current discussion about immigration policy change and the possible revision of the country's immigration legislation. It is because of these very reasons that becoming familiarized with the country's demographic context is fundamental in this case.

The Japanese are ageing, and their population is declining. This, however, is not news. The discourse about 'ageing Japan' initially emerged in the 1980s (Coulmas, 2007:4) and demographers, economists, and sociologists alike have been vehemently warning about the series of challenges which are associated with an ageing, declining population since then. Based on the statistical indicators which have been produced over these past four decades, it has been argued that the consequences of this demographic shift have been so significant and ubiquitous that "no social domain, institution or individual has remained unaffected" (Coulmas, 2007:2). Today, the country's demographic question still remains a pressing matter of debate which transcends all spheres and plays a crucial role in countless legislative processes.[1] Indeed, Prime Minister Abe himself, though allegedly "not worried

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[1] Policy efforts to address the consequences brought about by demographic change became more apparent since the decade of the 1990s (Peng, 2016:1).

about the country's demography" (Reuters, 2016:1), is well aware of the exceptionally disruptive implications of such population trends, and explicitly referred to this question in his 2017 New Year's Speech[2] – identifying it as a serious challenge, along with concerns about deflation and escalating geopolitical tensions.

Japan is demographically shrinking, and it is doing so at a remarkable pace. According to the latest census data, Japan's population stood at 127,094,745 as of October 1st, 2015 (Statistics Bureau, 2016). This represents a decline of 962,607 - or roughly 0.8 % - from the available data for the year 2010. In fact, the country's population has been on the decline since 2008, when it peaked at just over 128 million (Statistics Bureau, 2013). While these figures already represent a matter of concern for many, it is the population projections that are particularly striking. As indicated by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPPS, 2012:4), the Japanese have recently entered what will most likely be a long period of population decline: "the (current) population is expected to decrease to around 116.62 million by 2030, fall below 100 million (…) in 2048, and drop to 86.46 million by 2060".[3] If such a scenario were to take place, the country could potentially shrink to two thirds of its current size by 2060 and lose, on average, roughly one million of its citizens annually during the period 2030 – 2055.[4] What is more, the working-age cohort, which had increased significantly during the post-war era, and reached its peak in 1995 at 87.26 million, will continue to dwindle over the next few years (IPSS, 2012:2). By 2060, it could eventually drop by half, to 44.18 million.

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[2] To access the speech, please see Kantei (2017a).
[3] Based on the medium-fertility scenario – 1.35 children per women (IPSS, 2012:13) – represented in *Figure 1*.
[4] The latter would represent approximately a fivefold increase to the current rate of population decline.

FIGURE 1 (IPSS, 2012:20)

Actual and projected population of Japan:
Medium-, high-, and low-fertility (medium-mortality) projections

(Thousands)

Note: Previous projections are shown in broken lines.

(Fertility assumption)

High-variant
Medium-variant
Low-variant

Actual   Projected

Year
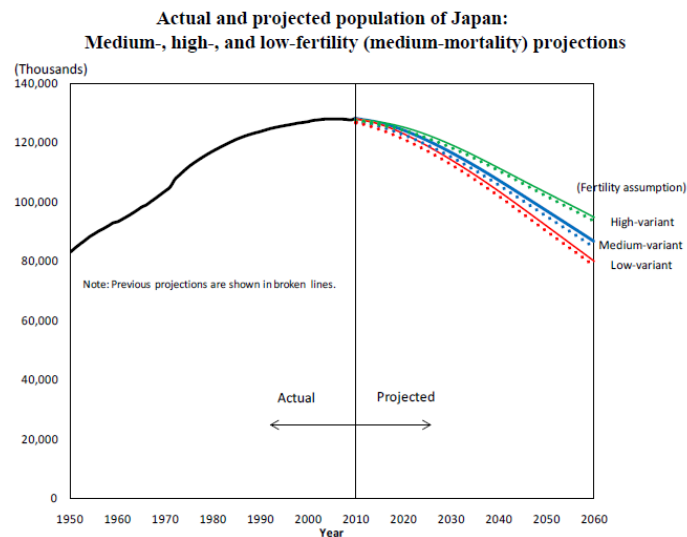
The Japanese are ageing as well. Japan's median age has notably risen since 1945, when it was 22 (Coulmas, 2007:4). At the time of writing, that figure had increased to 46.8, and it was expected to further rise, potentially reaching 54.6 by 2060 (IPSS, 2012:19). Equally important, the proportion of elderly citizens is projected to steadily grow from the current 28 % (IPSS, 2012:18), which will lead to a significant increase in dependency ratios.[5] If the forecasts presented by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research happen to be representative of future trends, roughly 40 % of Japanese citizens could be over the age of 65 by 2060. Given these trends, some go as far as to argue that the Japanese are no longer an 'ageing society' but a "super-aged society" (Arai et al., 2015). Putting things into perspective, Japan was recently considered to be the 'fastest ageing country' on Earth (The Economist, 2014a), home to "the world's most aged population" (DESA, 2015:3). Whilst it is true that other developed societies in a similar stage of the demographic transition model exhibit

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[5] When discussing ageing concerns, economists primarily speak of 'dependency ratios' to illustrate how a larger proportion of dependents could pose significant economic challenges to greying nations. It is true that this indicator might not factor in crucial information (e.g. reproductive work of the unpaid), and that it could create a problematic *productive* vs. *unproductive* dichotomy. Nevertheless, when analysed in context, dependency ratios can provide valuable insights. In Japan, both *old-age* and *total* dependency ratios have markedly increased over the last few years, primarily owing to the larger number of elders who are now part of the *'over 65 years old'* cohort in the country's population structure. They will keep growing steadily in the near future (IPSS, 2012:19).

similar patterns[6]— countries like Taiwan may outpace Japan's shrinking pace within this decade (Chandran, 2015) — it is important to highlight that no nation has arguably experienced these trends so acutely and for such a prolonged period.[7]

FIGURE 2 (IPSS, 2012:20)
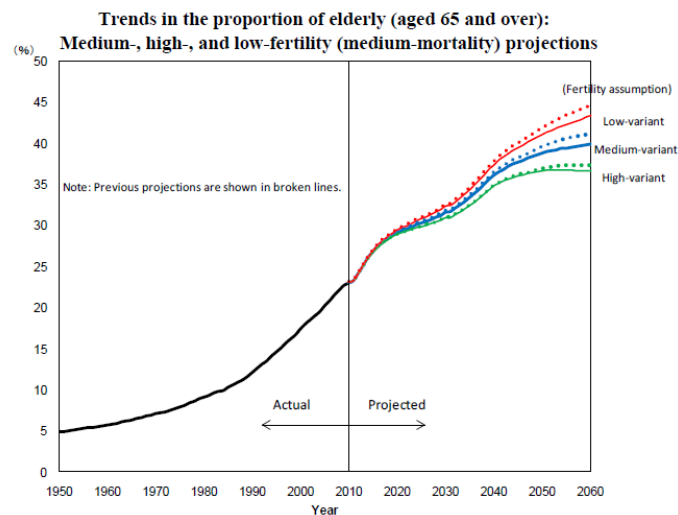
How did Japan become the front-runner of super-aged societies? As indicated previously, a series of demographic-related concerns gained political attention in the 1980s. By the 1990s, these issues were a matter of public interest (Coulmas, 2007:4). Nevertheless, the seeds of demographic change had been planted well before – more specifically, in the late 1940s –.

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[6] Most developed countries in Europe such as Italy or Germany exhibit similar patterns as far as ageing is concerned. Nonetheless, population ageing is not a phenomenon exclusive to the Global North (for instance, China or Martinique are ageing rapidly as well). See DESA (2015:29) for further details.

[7] Owing to this reason, the International Monetary Fund has recently called on Asian countries to learn from the experience of Japan - see The Japan Times (2016) for more details -. Western countries have looked at Japan for policy options too, especially regarding healthcare – see Peng and Tiessen (2015) -.

FIGURE 3, Japan's Population Development, JPS (2015)
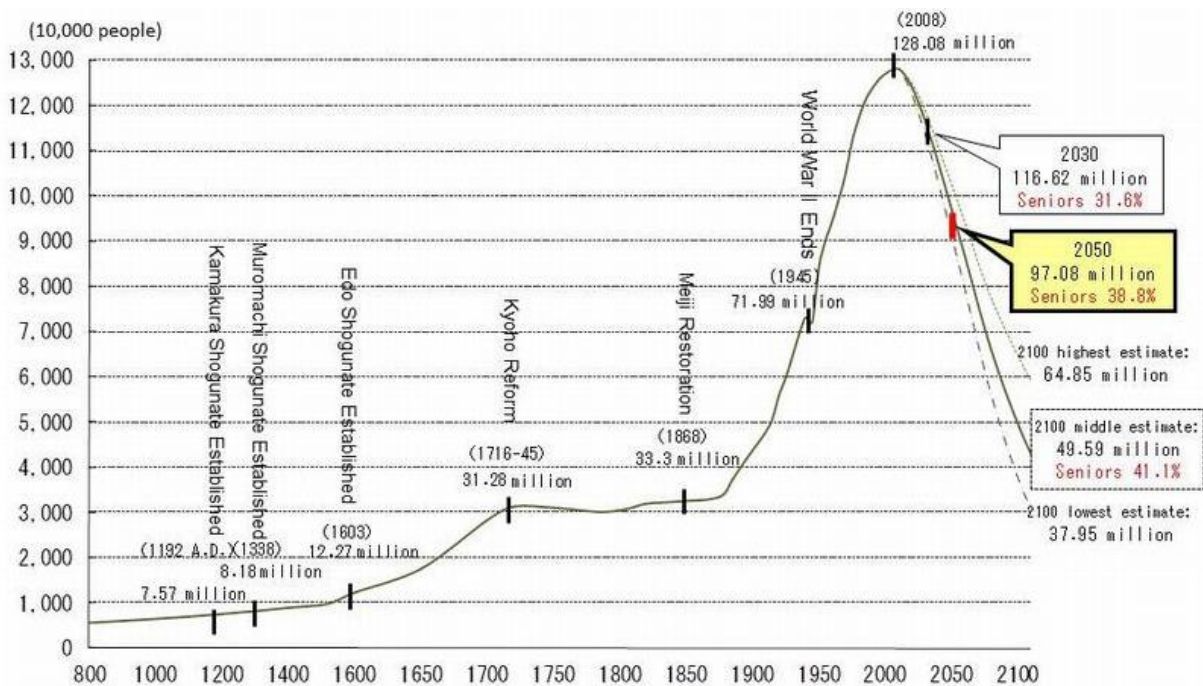
Japan's population started increasing at a significant pace in the early 1900s, and more markedly since 1920 (see *Figure 3*). This initial and sudden growth can be attributed to the clear decrease in total death rates, which corresponds to stages two and three in the demographic transition model[8] (see *Figure 4)*, and which was brought about by more nutritious diets and improvements in sanitation, among others.

While total death rates continued to decrease and life expectancy grew,[9] birth rates remained high and relatively constant throughout the first half of the 20th century (see *Figure 4*). It was the interplay – and divergence – between these two variables primarily[10] that accelerated the pace at which society was growing. The late 1940s represent a clear turning point, however: as observed in

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[8] The demographic transition model is employed as the main tool to explain these population developments. Such model "illustrates the pattern of birth and death rates over time" (Hopfenberg, 2014:1) and partially helps represent a given country's demographic evolution over the years.

[9] With the clear expectation of the Pacific War years (1941-1945), which certainly shaped the country's demographic structure as can be observed in *Figures 3 & 4.*

[10] Although not exclusively: there were other variables which need to be considered as well. Emigration – to Latin America mostly, since the 1890s until the 1970s (White, 2003) – was indeed a reality in Japan. However, the role of emigration in this case did not arguably have a major effect when shaping population dynamics when compared to the interplay between the natural factors in the demographic transition model.

Figure 4. Birth rates decreased significantly and total fertility rates plummeted after the baby-boom generation (those born in 1947-1949) (Coulmas, 2007:8). The total fertility rate, which was 4.57 in 1947, started dropping considerably (Coulmas, 2007:8), reaching 2.08 in 1960 (DESA, 2000). As Coulmas illustrates, although the total fertility rate remained constant during the 60s (with the exception of 1966), it fell again after 1970, this time to remain well below replacement levels until today. Various factors help explain the predominance of low-fertility rates since the 1970s: the current late marriage mentality (Coulmas, 2007:9), the stigma surrounding out-of-wedlock births (Kaneko, 2009:5), the difficulty to achieve satisfying work-life balance for both sexes, the exorbitant financial cost to raise children, and the opportunity cost in terms of careers (Reynolds, 2015). Despite the stereotype, however, it is necessary to indicate that the phenomenon of low births is not unique to Japan. In fact, low fertility rates tend to be quite common in other developed societies in the 4th and 5th stages of the demographic transition model (see DESA, 2013a:4). What is exceptional in this case is the severity of the collapse in fertility rates, which has arguably been one of the most acute and rapid decreases among developed countries (Blue and Espenshade, 2011). Indeed, it was primarily this relatively precipitous and abrupt decrease that propelled Japanese society into the 4th phase of the demographic transition model - completing as a result the previous stage at a remarkably fast pace-. This, coupled with the further increase in life expectancy,[11] made Japan a 'canary in the coal mine' as far as *population implosion* and *ageing* are concerned (and as many demographers would argue, drove the country into the 5th stage of the model).

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[11] Further medical advances and the admirable standard of living of the post-war era further contributed to the increase in life expectancy. See (IPPS, 2012:35) for additional details.

FIGURE 4 [12]

Japan's Demographic Transition (1865-1998)
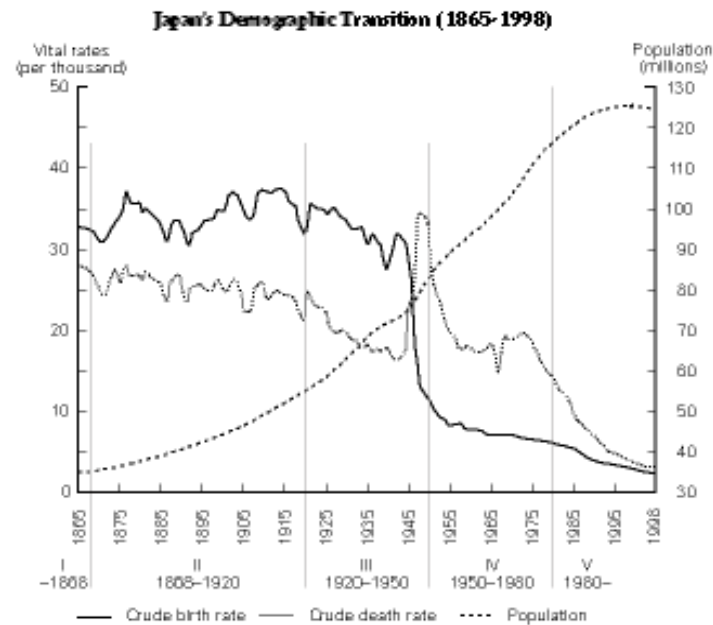
Figure 4, which has been used to explain Japan's demographic evolution throughout time, focuses on the rate of natural increase (crude death rates & birth rates). However, there is an element which was not factored into such model, and which is indeed crucial when attempting to make sense of the country's current population structure. Complementing the previous graph with insights from the *demographic balancing equation,* readers will soon notice that *net migration rates* may also shape any given country's demographic dynamics significantly over the years:

Figure 5[13]

Demographic Balancing Equation:
$$Pop_1 = Pop_0 + (\text{Natural Increase}) + (\text{Net Migration Rate})$$
$$Pop_1 = Pop_0 + (\text{Births - Deaths}) + (\text{Immigration - Emigration})$$

*Pop = Population

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[12] Figure 4. University of Kentucky, Online-learning resources. Retrieved from http://webteach.mc.uky.edu/geo160/gifs/ch3/ch03maps.html

[13] Data obtained from Oxford Reference. http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095709792

As the available data show, industrialized nations have, for the most part, relied on immigration to a greater or lesser extent, primarily to satisfy the demand for labour (Martin, 2005). At the same time, these inflows counterbalance decreases in fertility rates that core economies have experienced since the 1960s.[14] While other countries' immigration laws were revised and further eased to allow larger numbers of newcomers, Japan's economy was exceptional for the fact that it grew without utilizing foreign labour. Rather, the country promoted automation, long working hours, and mass domestic migration into the urban centres (Green and Kadoya, 2013). This explains why among OECD members, Japan has a strikingly low foreign-born population (only 1.9 % of residents are born overseas as of 2013 (DESA, 2013b)). Such data also illustrate why immigration has not shaped the country's demographic structure as significantly as in other OECD nation members.

In recent years, total fertility rates have risen somewhat in Japan, although they still remain below replacement level, at 1.5 children per woman in 2017.[15] The Japanese have also continued to beat life-expectancy records, with life expectancy as of 2016 the highest in any major country on Earth, at 83.7 years.[16] Moreover, the country's immigration policy has progressively become more open, with 2016 marking a record in the number of foreign residents[17] — although this remains a modest percentage if compared to other industrialized nations. Population outflows have also remained relatively inconsequential.[18] Looking ahead, while population projections vary, they all converge on the same idea: Japan will continue to age and its population will keep declining. Unexpected changes to the country's population structure might potentially occur, whether that be because of policy intervention or other unpredictable circumstances, but it seems highly unlikely that large scale

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[14] See DESA, (2013a:6) for further details.

[15] World Bank data. Available on http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN

[16] WHO; World's Health Organization. (2016). *World Health Statistics 2016: Monitoring Health for the SDGs*. Download available on http://www.who.int/gho/publications/world_health_statistics/2016/en/ Page number 8.

[17] The Japan Times (2017, March 17th). Record 2.38 million foreign residents living in Japan in 2016. Retrieved from http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/03/17/national/record-2-38-million-foreign-residents-living-japan-2016/

[18] For detailed statistics, please see "Persons who entered or departed Japan by nationality (2005-2013)" on http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/nenkan/back64/1431-02.htm

demographic shifts will take place. These apparently unstoppable processes will only accelerate in the next few years (see IPSS, 2012), which suggests that the economic and social dimensions of these demographic challenges are likely become even more formidable in the near future.

2. CHAPTER TWO: THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN JAPAN

Global capitalist systems, which depend on economic growth to ensure their long-term sustainability, are based on a set of demographic assumptions and constants (see Robbins and Smith, 2016:6 for more details). In fact, most macroeconomists seem to currently be "in near unanimous agreement that a growing population is an essential ingredient for a growing economy" (Matthews, 2014:1). Based on this very premise, it is rational to believe that any major changes to the demographic variable may bring about significant challenges for nation states today to remain on a steady growth path[19]. This applies to the case of Japan, among others. As we shall see, over the last few years, the population trends which are discussed in *Chapter One,* along with other factors, have exposed the limitations of our widely accepted socio-economic models. Demographic change has undoubtedly challenged dominant assumptions about core socio-economic theories and has had, as a result, clear policy implications. *Chapter Two* explores this subject in detail. It examines the consequences that these population trends have for nation states across the world today and studies the relationship between demography, economics, sociology – and ultimately, politics. Concentrating on Japan, it goes on to illustrate why these demographic pressures represent a substantial challenge (and an opportunity) for the Japanese State and lays out some of the policy measures enacted by the government with a view to mitigating the detrimental effects brought about by ageing and population decline. The objective of this section is to discuss some of the most important variables within the larger demographic framework that the *population change – immigration policy nexus* is a part of.

Discussions about ageing and population decline are often embedded into a pre-set and somewhat pessimistic framework. While there is an undeniable set of challenges associated with the demographic changes described in the previous chapter, it should be highlighted that most of these trends are not *inherently* negative. The fact that the Japanese are getting old is not necessarily

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[19] As we shall see, not only economic growth might be compromised, but also the efficient provision of healthcare or the sustainability of the pension system, among others.

unfortunate, for this is partially an example of the prosperity that they have been able to experience during the post-war era. As the data show, most Japanese citizens these days not only live longer, but healthier lives as well (Coulmas, 2007:2). Long life spans, extremely low infant mortality rates[20] and healthy lifestyles (see Lim et al. 2016:13) are just a few of the indicators that illustrate why the Japanese are known worldwide to enjoy relatively high living standards.

The majority of the demographic processes outlined earlier are organic, natural, intrinsic, and representative of a given population's evolution over time. They are also characteristic of societies that have entered the final stages of the demographic transition (see Bongaarts, 2009), and not exclusive to Japan – since as Robbins and Smith (2016:2) indicate, "we are in the middle of a (global) *baby-bust*". Rapid global declines in fertility rates[21] have contributed to the slow-down of the world's population growth rate, which is at its lowest since the early 20th century; 1.14 % per annum as of 2014. Also in 2014, 52 % of all nation states had recorded fertility rates below replacement levels (Robbins and Smith, 2016:3). This phenomenon, coupled with increases in life expectancy, has accentuated the speed of ageing in virtually every nation-state (DESA, 2015:1). As inferred from the previous data, it is progressively becoming clearer that we are entering a new demographic era that is shaped by the slow-down or cessation of population growth and the greying of societies worldwide.

Are there any reasons to be worried about this process? Apparently, there may be, since this demographic stage marks an unprecedented context for researchers and policy makers in that "our core theories of political economy were forged both within a context of assumed growing capitalist expansion (and) also within a hidden bias of assumed constant and absolute (demographic) growth" (Robbins and Smith, 2016:6). Indeed, the challenge of *unthinking growth* is already questioning dominant assumptions held thus far and posing clearly disruptive challenges to our widely accepted socio-economic models and theories. While demography is not the only cause of emerging socio-

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[20] World Bank (2015). *Infant Mortality Rates*. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.IMRT.IN
[21] "In 2014, 52 % of all nation states reported fertility rates lower than replacement level" (Robbins and Smith, 2016:2)

economic challenges, there is compelling evidence that proves that population dynamics are key factors regarding this matter. Entering the uncharted waters of ageing and population decline will thus require the reconfiguration of politics and economics and the development of compelling strategies to find a sustainable plan of action in order to maintain prosperity and security for societies across the world for the years to come. Ageing and population decline do not represent the end of political struggles – in fact, they are quite likely to intensify these even more (Robbins and Smith, 2016:3) -. In light of these changes, it is clear that the political and the demographic blend into one: "Population research is political research" (Robbins and Smith, 2016:14).[22] Discussing likely scenarios, potential solutions, desirable trade-offs – and eventually making specific policy decisions that affect all of society – is nothing but political activity. As such, a *political demography approach* to the study of the matter in hand proves to be an adequate framework so as to interpret this complex and highly multi-disciplinary phenomenon.

There is quite a remarkable diversity of opinion in Japan on which the best way to proceed might be. Some perceive these issues as a colossal challenge and are, for the most part, quite pessimistic (see, for instance: Oguro, 2014). Others – like the Prime Minister himself – prefer to see ageing and population decline as stimuli to promote innovation (Reuters, 2016). Indeed, and as many have hypothesized, demographic change may represent an incentive to implement necessary yet politically complicated measures, it could spark productivity, and for those concerned about overpopulation and environmentalism, this new demographic stage could bring some good news as well. Without reinforcing a *positive/negative* binary, this chapter briefly summarizes the main implications of such trends for the Japanese State and presents some of the policy responses that have been enacted over the last few years to address these challenges. In order to organize these insights and set the larger contextual framework for the project, the DESTEP[23] analytical framework has been

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[22] See page 32 for more details on the "political demography" theoretical framework.
[23] For further info.: http://www.intemarketing.org/marketing-information/marketing-analysis/destep-analysis

employed, which identifies factors of relevance in terms of demographic, economic, social, technological, ecological, and political realms.[24]

a) <u>Demographic:</u> Several attempts at modifying the country's population structure have been made since the early 1990s through various policy amendments (Suzuki, 2006:1). Over the last few years, PM Abe has indicated that he would wish to maintain Japan's population at a level of more than 100 million by 2060 (Yoshida, 2015a). Thus far, the state has actively tried to facilitate young couples to have more children hoping to create a more suitable environment for child-rearing and wishing that fertility rates would increase to 1.8 from the current 1.4 by 2030 (The Japan Times, 2015). Child allowances and tax deductions (Pirotto, 2016:30), government-sponsored dating events (Al Jazeera, 2016) or a series of emergency steps to address the chronic shortage in childcare facilities in certain urban areas (The Japan Times, 2017b) are part of the legislative efforts that have been mobilized to steer the country in that direction. Nevertheless, the potential efficiency of these measures has been put into question, and many have indicated that PM Abe's '*100 million citizens hope'* prospect may be somewhat too naïve (see Reynolds, 2015), especially considering that population replacement[25] is arguably not one of the main goals of the country's immigration policy either. Besides "the work" aimed at "improving the birth-rate" (MOJ, 2015a:15), other thought-provoking initiatives which seek to re-define the concept of 'old-age' have emerged as of late, both from government bodies and non-state organizations. For instance, the Japan Gerontological Association recommended using the term 'elderly' to refer to those people who are over the age of 75 in a press

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[24] All the phenomena examined herein are interconnected to a greater or lesser extent. Hence, this very fact makes it challenging to draw clear-cut boundaries amongst disciplines. Because of this reason, the author would like to acknowledge that the use of labels in this case, although inevitable, might be somewhat limiting and fail to capture the cross-sectional nature of the matter in hand.

[25] The 'Replacement Migration Report' issued by the DESA in the year 2000 certainly encouraged the debate on this subject at the time. Yet, one can argue that Japan's immigration policy does not attempt to fully replace the population the country loses. This question is discussed at length in *Chapter Five* of this work. Please, see DESA (2000) to access the report.

statement last January (Aoki, 2017). Additionally, and when discussing ageing concerns and the geographical distribution of the Japanese society, it should be noted that the government has tried to stop the seemingly endless spiral of depopulation in secondary regions[26] by advancing decentralization and trying to reinvigorate regional economies – as outlined in the "2014 Japan Revitalization Strategy" (MLIT, 2014; Kantei, 2014). Yet, the magnitude of the problem is outstanding, and municipalities are struggling significantly to stay viable these days and to provide basic services owing to the greying of their population and the escalating domestic population outflows to major urban centres. Demographic change is not affecting all of Japan in the same way, and the urban/rural divide is becoming increasingly more complex. This conundrum poses arduous questions related to the loss of cultural heritage and traditions, taxation, budgets and subsidies, population distribution dynamics, and governance.

b) <u>Economic:</u> Arguably, the most acute effects of demographic change are being felt in the realm of economics. A shrinking workforce (see *Figure 6*) poses the question of whether Japan can remain competitive and keep ensuring GDP growth in the future. Disagreement among macroeconomists regarding the economic influence of demographic change is notorious, and a number of analysts have argued that the state should concentrate primarily on raising per capita growth instead of the aggregate growth (Armstrong, 2016). Some have contended that such an effort may nonetheless prove futile, and according to Clark et al. (2008:10), the growth rate in real GDP and GDP per capita is likely to turn negative after 2020 and 2024 respectively. This, partially, is connected to weak internal consumer spending and to the failure of Japanese companies to invest domestically,[27]

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[26] Those regions outside the main urban clusters.
[27] A considerable proportion of large-scale Japanese firms are 'cash hoarders', and this is holding back the potential of the overall economy. Deflation has encouraged prudence over the past 20 years, and despite the substantial profits that Japanese corporations have reaped since 2014, these earnings are not quite trickling down. Wages have increased somewhat, but not as much as the government would have liked them to grow. Indeed, higher wages – especially for non-regulars - could have helped tackle the weak domestic demand issue and address the worrisome duality that the Japanese labour market is known for as well (Ganelli, 2013). This

which can be explained by the climate of uncertainty after two decades of deflation (Hoffman, 2017). Poor prospects of worthwhile profits are also making international financiers less inclined to risk their assets in the country as well, which may affect the overall dynamism of the economy in the long term. Experts have also warned about the decline in national savings, the compromised ability for the state to finance its already strikingly high debt (Armstrong, 2016), the heavier taxation burden that the youth may potentially have to come to terms with (Tsuya, 2014:8), and the increasing difficulty to ensure the sustainability of the welfare state (this matter is discussed with more detail in the next subsection). The bulk of conversation these days seems to centre around labour economics, and more specifically, labour gaps, which have emerged because of skill mismatches and the shrinking of the working age cohort (Martin, 2015). The nature of the labour shortage in Japan is currently severe: the labour crunch had just reached its more extreme level over the last 40 years (MacFarlane, 2017) and has affected low productivity sectors primarily - but not exclusively - (see Kodama, 2015:9 or Manpower, 2015:3, for more details). Some describe it as a "blessing in disguise" not only for women and second earners[28] but also when incentivizing the development of labour saving technologies (Min Lan Tan, 2017; Reuters, 2017). Others have highlighted the burden that a shrinking labour pool places upon other workers, and indicated that the optimal operation of a large number of businesses is compromised (Nikkei Asian Review, 2017b). Many have also stressed that the labour shortage is in fact bringing down medium term potential

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example proves that corporate taxes have not benefitted all of Japanese society in the same way. See Nohara and Miller (2016) for more details.

[28] It is worth noting that the state has encouraged the expansion of the 'marginal labour' pool – women, the elderly, and second earners - (MOJ, 2015a:15) to address the labour shortage, which will undoubtedly provide new opportunities for these collectives. Additionally, the labour crunch can grant greater bargaining power to workers and raise wages in certain occupational sectors as well as *purge* the market of unproductive jobs and raise productivity throughout the economy. Of course, it is necessary to analyse the labour market on a sector-by-sector basis not to indulge in overgeneralizations. The politics of this specific question are crucial too: it is important to examine who benefits and who is harmed by any potential changes – whether these are large scale corporations, medium and small sized companies or individual workers – and how these trends affect other macro-scale indicators: GDP growth, total factor productivity, tax revenue, wages, unemployment rates, etc.

economic growth – Japan's inability to fill these positions deprived the country of a 2 % potential GDP growth in 2015 (see Ganeli and Miake, 2015:5) –. This, in turn, is eventually holding back the success of the government's economic plan.

Since he took office in 2012[29], Liberal Democratic Party[30] leader and current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has vowed to reinvigorate and forge a *forward-looking Japan* (Kantei, 2014), and has been determined to make change happen. To face the challenges described in the previous section, the government has decided to adopt a multi-layered strategy which includes the mobilization of all available resources, deregulation, a further, more profound but controlled internationalization, a tightening and adjustment of the systems which are already in place, greater reliance on automation and technology, and a genuine desire to increase productivity, all with a view to achieving Abe's ambitious growth targets (JapanGov, 2017). Beneficial trade agreements, the proper usage of Japan's savings, and adequate investment strategies should also set the country on the right track, according to analysts. The current administration's way of dealing with economic policy, baptized as *'Abenomics'*, is composed of three arrows: monetary easing, fiscal consolidation, and structural reform. At the time of writing, *Abenomics* was still a work in progress, but the results yielded by the strategy thus far had been, if anything, somewhat mixed (The Japan Times, 2017b).

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[29] For his second term. Shinzo Abe had previously served as the Prime Minister of Japan during the period 2006 – 2007. (Kantei, 2017b)

[30] The LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) is Japan's largest political faction and it has held power "almost continuously since its formation in 1955. The party has generally worked with business interests and followed a pro-U.S. foreign policy" (Britannica, 2016a:1).

Japan's ageing population

Total population – '000s   ■ Aged 0 – 14   ■ Aged 15 – 64   ■ Aged 64 and over

Note: 2010 to 2050 figures are estimates.
Sources: Statistics Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, IPSS

REUTERS

Reuters graphic/Christine Chan   23/03/11
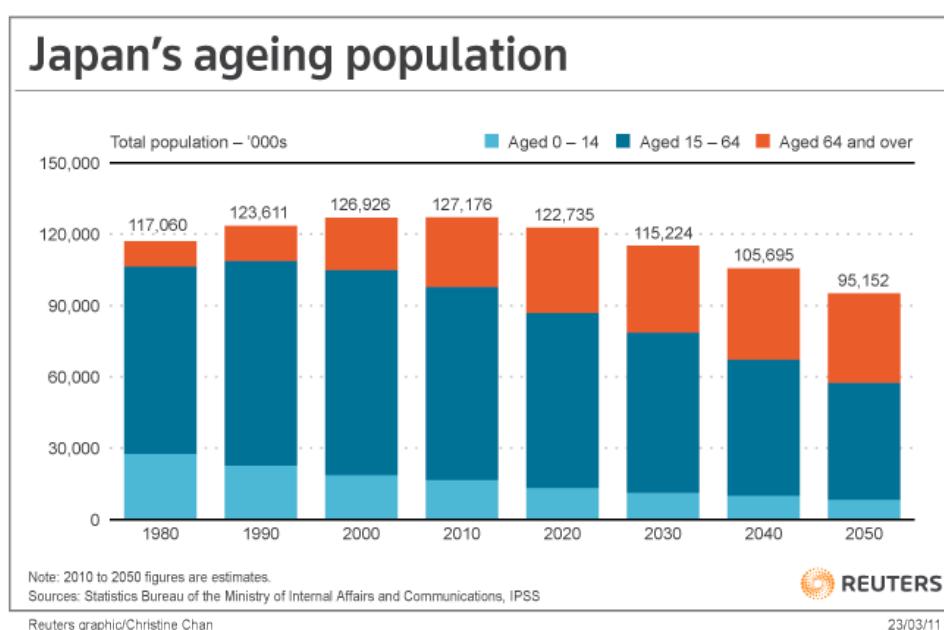
c) <u>Social:</u> Regarding social policy and public finances, a shrinking working age population – which could be translated into a smaller tax base – combined with greater need for government spending, especially in pensions and healthcare, is threatening the sustainability of the welfare state and raising concerns about Japan's ability to manage its finances and its already sizeable debt. Japan's population structure (see *Figure 6*) not only represents a dilemma in terms of overall resource re-distribution but also worsens already existing imbalances in the labour market,[32] making the provision of social protection a significant challenge and posing discomforting questions about social responsibility and burden-sharing.

Japan needs to find a proper taxation/ government spending balance to manage its demographic future, and most argue that in terms of policy, a broad-based strategy with many elements and small adjustments might work better than one or two large revisions with a view to making the system sustainable in the long term (Tsuya,

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[31] Reuters, (2011). *Japan's Ageing Population.* Retrieved from http://graphics.thomsonreuters.com/11/03/JP_POP0311_CC.gif

[32] An estimated 100,000 Japanese nationals vanish from the workplace every year in order to take care of dependents (Callahan, 2016).

2014). Given its current high debt to GDP ratio and the issue of demographics, Japan will need to make arduous choices in terms of social benefits, taxation, and intra-generational resource redistribution. It will also have to make its citizens aware of the idea that the country might progressively head towards a high investment/low return kind of social security system (Tsuya, 2014; Oguro, 2014). Further reforms to the healthcare, pension, and taxation schemes will be necessary and are currently being brought up in panels and negotiations. Greater out of pocket health care expenses (Oguro, 2014), increased coordination between the central government and municipalities (The Lancet, 2015) and a tighter control on per-capita expenditures have been suggested as potential measures to lower healthcare costs. Regarding pensions, the state has actively encouraged the elderly to remain at work if so they wish, recently postponed retirement age as well (Rodionova, 2016) and passed new bills to reform the pension system which would, among others, limit payments in case the economy slows down (The Japan Times, 2017c). Many retirees are increasingly spending their 'golden years' overseas too, like the example of Malaysia shows (see Ono, 2015). As these new trends emerge, and these reforms are introduced, it will be necessary to examine how these pressures and paradigm shifts progressively transform social and cultural norms. That being so, it is expected that these new spaces, tensions and opportunities will keep challenging social roles and assumptions, including the status of women in modern-day Japanese society.[33]

d) <u>Technological:</u> Productivity and efficiency are recurrent terms in the literature that explores the economic consequences of demographic change - for obvious reasons (see Levinson, 2017). A more effective strategy when utilizing the available resources can help

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[33] In this time of inflexion, women should not only be perceived as essential economic human resources but also as fully participating citizens in Japanese society. Over the last few years, more and more women are joining the workforce, and "Womenomics" (MOFA, 2017) policies have gained momentum – which seemed to be steps in the right direction-. Yet, gender inequality is still quite acute in Japan (see WEF, 2016). Part-time work affects women particularly (Inoue et al., 2016), gendered employment remains quite visible (Macnaughtan, 2014), and up to 70 % of women fail to return to the workplace after childbirth or take less skilled jobs instead (The Economist, 2014b).

address issues domestically (by alleviating current labour shortages or enabling Japan to concentrate on more profitable human capital intensive, value added-sectors) and also become a model to be exported overseas. Few would disagree that automation, robotics and artificial intelligence will play a central role in *Post-Fordist* economies in the years to come[34] and will, among others, help to curb the detrimental effects of ageing (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2017). This, however, is not to deny that policy-makers and analysts hold diverse opinions about how, when, and to what extent technology will change the nature of Japan's labour market. Some are more sceptical and conservative, arguing that the current administration might be "betting too big on machines", and are quick to talk at length about current innovative droughts and the risks of trusting exponential functions (see Pesek, 2017). Others have claimed that change is underway, pointed at the latest - and remarkable - breakthroughs in low productive, labour intensive sectors (such as in the case of construction, see Yasuhara 2017), and under the 'scarcity is the mother of innovation' motto, ventured that it will not be long before these innovations can be utilized in other similar sectors - such as elderly care or agriculture.

e) <u>Ecological:</u> Within the realm of population ecology, a declining, predominantly urban society could potentially reduce its overall environmental impact if it manages to diminish or keep its per capita indicators stable (e.g. ecological footprint). This, however, has not been the case in Japan. The closure of nuclear reactors in 2011 (after the Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami), which were replaced by coal and gas imports, clearly contributed to the 12 % increase in greenhouse emissions during the period 2010- 2014 (OECD, 2017b:36). Some improvements have occurred over the last few years, but there is much work to be done in this regard (see OECD, 2017b:36 for further details). Ageing and depopulation have also proved to be a catalyst for change in the agricultural sector,

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[34] For instance, roughly 30 % of jobs in the United Kingdom could be lost to automation by the early 2030s (PWC, 2017).

and it is yet to be seen how this will affect the market, the land, the livelihoods, and the politics of rural communities (Maclachan and Shimizu, 2016).

f) <u>Political:</u> Through a geopolitical lens, and as many in the government have continued to note - including former Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, "population is strength" (Hoffman, 2014).[35] The changes in the country's demographic structure and other arising pressures might, as a matter of fact, constrain the ability of the state to promote its national interests overseas (Nagy, 2016) and compel the country to reconsider its current role as a dominant player in the international arena. This - coupled with the complicated geopolitical situation of the region and the export-driven nature of the Japanese economy - seems to suggest that the state will have to develop an effective diplomacy strategy, reinvigorate its economy, and reinforce the strength of its institutions to be able to successfully navigate what seems to be an ever-increasing isolationist and tense global political situation as of late. Nevertheless, within the larger and more complex puzzle, it is safe to suggest that Japan's fate is not only limited to domestic efforts. In fact, any downturns to the global economy or other unexpected geopolitical challenges (possible conflicts with North Korea or disruptions in the South China Sea, for instance) might jeopardize the success of Abenomics and pose greater risks to Abe's vision for the future of the nation.

Domestically, an ageing population is likely to cast its influence on voting patterns. This phenomenon, in turn, could compromise the future well-being of younger generations as politics might turn out to be an obstacle for elected representatives to implement difficult yet essential forward-looking reforms (Oguro, 2014). The greatest challenge for Japan during this transitionary period will be to ensure that growth is inclusive, to guarantee a fair and just distribution of resources across generations, to avoid

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[35] Mr. Shintaro Isihara is known for his conservative views. The very fact that he advocated for more liberal immigration policies (See Hoffman, 2014) can be indicative of the concern that a sector of the Japanese government has over depopulation when discussing geopolitics, defence, and self-reliance matters.

social exclusion all along the societal spectrum, and to dodge more controlling and authoritarian nationalist narratives, which seem to have exacerbated over the last few years (Harris and Wang, 2017).

Based on the foregoing interpretation of these processes, it can be suggested that the challenges brought about by the sort of demographic change that the Japanese are experiencing are copious, complex, interrelated, and ubiquitous, and that they form a labyrinthine network of connections whose revision and adjustment is imperative to ensure the sustainability of the systems in place. As argued previously, it has been because of this large paradigm shift in the country's population dynamics that the reconfiguration of politics and economics has proved essential for the Japanese to safeguard society's current and future economic well-being, security, and cohesion. The debate surrounding demographic change is thus necessary and timely. This era of demographic inflexion is arguably opening up new spaces for discussion and cooperation. It currently demands for innovation, sound, evidence-based legislation, proactive exchange, and the application of an array of methods and perspectives from various disciplines. This thesis intends to contribute to such debate by examining the *demographic change – immigration policy development nexus* in the case of Japan.

3. CHAPTER THREE: STUDY DESIGN

Literature Review and Research Gaps

This thesis studies the *demographic change – immigration policy development* nexus from the perspective of the state in the context of Japan and assesses the role that immigration legislation plays within the larger population debate. More specifically, it explores (a) how, and to what extent, population decline and ageing may have shaped recent amendments in Japanese immigration policies and it examines (b) whether these debates might have drawn inspiration from policy examples in other national contexts.

Aside from the policy measures discussed in *Chapter Two*, a substantial number of scholars and law-makers have suggested that Japan could also benefit from the implementation of a more liberal[36] (im)migration legislation, which, in their opinion, could potentially minimize the effects of current demographic trends (see Asakawa and Sakanaka, 2007; Shinkawa, 2012; Kondo, 2002 and 2013; Roberts, 2013 for some examples). Whether (im)migrants could make a demographic/economic contribution in the case of Japan is a matter of debate, and many are sceptical that a more open immigration policy can prove beneficial in the long term, especially if the proposal were to include the acceptance of a large number of unskilled workers (see Farrel and Greenberg, 2005). Whilst the Abe cabinet has adopted a slightly more liberal position regarding migration over the last few years (2015), at the time of writing, it was safe to contend that the immigration option had not been prioritized (West, 2016).

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[36] The author acknowledges that the concept of 'liberal' is, quite often, an empty signifier. 'Liberal' in this case stands for less restrictive policies and more open categories, whether that is in terms of larger admission quotas or the more permanent character of a given (im)migrant's stay. It needs to be highlighted that, within those who would like Japan to follow this path, there are clear different points of view. Some would like to accept more foreign workers but on a temporary basis (see Yoshida, 2015b). Others would prefer a controlled number of immigrants to be given residence rights (including the unskilled) and to be accepted (The Outlook Foundation, 2015). There are more radical propositions as well (See Sakanaka, 2013). A correct usage of the lexicon is crucial to be precise, and so, a distinction needs to be made between "migration" and "immigration" policy (see 4.1. for further details).

Although the connection between demography and immigration in the context of Japan has previously been studied using various theoretical frameworks (see for instance Tai, 2009; Ogawa, 2011 or Shinkawa, 2012),[37] the political demography approach (Robbins and Smith, 2016) offers a novel lens of analysis through which to re-examine the changing immigration legislation discourse developing in Japan with an explicitly demographic frame of reference. In terms of how this policy debate is emerging, the lens of policy mobilities and related diffusion studies is a theoretical approach that has received relatively little examination in the case of Japan's immigration law (but see Hein, 2012). Little has been revealed in terms of the involvement of the East-Asian nation in the circulation of immigration policy models and ideas, and few scholars have examined how and to what extent the country might have collaborated with other national and non-state organizations in its own policy design process. This thesis was written with the goal of addressing that research gap by tracing the international policy lessons/pathways taken by Japan in terms of immigration.

Philosophical Underpinnings and Research Objectives

The knowledge produced in this research stems from a relativist ontological conception of the nature of reality, which assumes that "realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, (which are) socially and experientially based, local and specific, and dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them" (Guba, 1990:27). Given this approach, a constructivist epistemological position was adopted: the researcher took for granted that facts in the social sciences are situated, contextual, embodied, and partial (Carmichael, 2015), and that *knowledge* is the outcome of human beings "having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and with other people" (Blaikie, 2007:22). Through these interactions, this project ultimately sought to provide an in-depth understanding of the *demographic change – immigration policy development* nexus, to lay out – so as to better understand – the context that shaped such processes in Japan, and to present

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[37] Political economy or historical approaches, among others. While insightful, many of these approaches failed to capture the interdisciplinary character of the debate surrounding the (im)migration debate. At the time of writing this thesis, the author believed that a more holistic approach to the matter in hand was needed – which could be accomplished by employing the 'political demography' approach.

the reader with a series of practices, processes and patterns that describe the object of study using the following research objectives:

(a) Document the latest Japanese immigration policy developments, especially how they are contextualized in relation to population decline and ageing concerns

(b) Detail how Japan has and is interacting with other national entities and international organizations in the production of its immigration policy, be it through policy learning processes or collaborative immigration policy design

Theoretical Framework

Two main theoretical approaches guided this process of academic enquiry: the *political demography approach* (as put forward in Robbins and Smith, 2016) and the relatively new *policy mobilities paradigm* (see Baker et al. 2016).

Regarding the political demography approach, and as Robbins and Smith indicate (2016:1), our current socio-economic models were "developed in times of rapid population growth and labour surplus". Based on this assumption, one of the basic pillars of this thesis is the acknowledgement that current demographic trends (ageing, population decline, etc.) are challenging "the fundamental underpinnings of much contemporary and social theory" (Robbins and Smith, 2016:1). It is evident that the remarkable change in the demographic variable has proven to be clearly disruptive for the appropriate operation of these systems, and that their change and re-configuration, albeit difficult, might be necessary.[38] The second premise that this thesis builds upon is the fact that demographic indicators cannot and should not be understood 'in a vacuum', detached from the politics that are inherent to these trends - which deeply modify their outcomes -. In fact, a close examination of some of the most pressing matters of debate (e.g. pensions, growth prospects, etc.) reveals that the population factor has become highly influential in most legislative processes today. That is why the

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[38] See Robbins and Smith, (2016:5) for a more meticulous explanation.

discipline of demography certainly demands "an (…) explicit engagement with its own politics" (Robbins and Smith, 2016:15).[39]

Given the multidisciplinary nature of this research field, a holistic approach to the matter in hand was needed which benefitted from the insights of diverse disciplines (including geography, sociology, geopolitics, and political economy) while clearly identifying how *demographic change* is central to all these processes. Having laid out the crucial connection between *politics* & *demography,* and revealed the intricacies between these two disciplines in the case of Japan (see *DESTEP* analysis for examples, page 20), it seemed reasonable to believe that a political demography approach to the study of the matter in hand would prove to be a fitting theoretical framework.

> *Political demography* is the study of the size, composition, and distribution of population and its relation to politics. It is concerned with the political consequences of population change, especially the effects of population change on the demands made upon governments, on the performance of governments, on the distribution of political power within states, and on the distribution of national power among states. It also considers the political determinants of population change, especially the political causes of the movement of people, the relationship of various population configurations to the structure and functions of government, and public policies directed at affecting the size, composition, and distribution of populations (Weiner 1971:567).

This approach assists in analysing how policy debates are framed by their political, cultural, demographic, and historical context as well as by global demographic trends and debates, providing thus a broader perspective on the subject. Learning from previous research projects – many of which had too narrow an analytical lens (thus arguably failing to capture the multifaceted nature of the matter in hand) –this work sets out to embrace interdisciplinarity and diversity of perspective.[40]

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[39] Entering this new demographic era will require scholars to meticulously examine "the concomitant shifts" that accompany the 'baby bust' and consider "the intellectual boundaries that must be superseded to comprehend it" (Robbins and Smith, 2016:14).

[40] As Capra and Luisi (2016:11) argue, it is becoming more evident that the major problems of our time, which are systemic in nature, "cannot be understood in isolation". To face these challenges, scholars can no longer think of knowledge in terms of isolate building blocks. Assuming that the world "is a network of inseparable patterns of relationships" (2016:11), a new kind of thinking focused on relationships, patterns, and context ought to emerge. This unifying, interdisciplinary conception of science is what Capra and Luigi refer to as "systems thinking" (2016:12). Given the magnitude of our most pressing current dilemmas, a case can be made that this systemic way of thinking will be essential to advance scientific knowledge in the years to come. Geographers

With regard to the notion of policy mobilities, it is well known that human geographers have long studied how things and people move. Yet, "how policy ideas and knowledge are mobilized (still) remains a notably underdeveloped area of inquiry" (Baker et al, 2016:1). As these scholars argue, there is "scope for a deeper analysis of the ways in which people move ideas and the sociospatial implications of ideas on the move" within the discipline of geography (2016:3). Over the last few years, the policy mobilities framework has emerged as a response, "seeking to understand the ideological, institutional, and professional parameters that govern the making of the policy" and aiming to identify "the role that structuring forces play in the selection of certain policy models, and in advancing certain interests over others" (Baker et al., 2016:7). The policy mobilities conversation "draws together and builds upon three literatures": that of policy transfer in political science, the mobilities approach in sociology, and the geographical conceptualization of scale (Temenos and McCann, 2013:3). In fact, this framework is arguably a response not only to the lack of geographical inquiry into the field of 'ideas on the move' but also to the localist and territorialist traditional study of policy and politics within political science – which arguably suffered from methodological nationalism (see McCann and Ward, 2010).[41]

These limitations were evident in the case of Japan. Comparative immigration policy studies had been published in the past (see, for instance, Chung, 2014), but it is necessary to highlight that these works tended to analyse policy outcomes primarily. At the time of writing, it was safe to argue that there were few academic works in the English language academic literature that explored Japan's involvement in the global circulation of immigration policy models and ideas. That is why Baker et al.'s (2016) *policy mobilities* theoretical framework can be of value in this specific case, since it explores

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particularly are in a privileged position, for the discipline of geography, especially since the cultural turn movement in the early 1970s, has been characterized by its openness to perspectives and methods that had traditionally laid outside its boundaries.

[41] As Temenos and McCann indicate (2013:4), geographers have been critical of political science approaches "for focusing on a narrow set of institutional transfer agents operating mainly between national-state institutions, (and also) for conceptualizing them as rational actors, and for tending toward a literal notion of transfer in which policies are assumed to move fully formed from points (a) to (b)". Indeed, a case can be made that traditional diffusion studies are limited in their "conceptualization of space, scale, and social processes (Temenos and McCann, 2013:4).

the circulation of policy elements (agents, channels, ideas) across borders, the diverse methods of policy implementation across governmental and non-state institutions and places, the uneven power distribution dynamics among various stakeholders and their legislative outcomes, and the series of barriers and constraints to policy implementation.

Methodology I (Data Collection)

Given the underlying philosophies as well as the theoretical framework and the research questions, a grounded theory methodology[42] to the analysis of the working data was deemed to be an effective and suitable way to conduct this qualitative research study. Such an approach provides rich descriptions of the matter in hand by exploring in-depth information that could not be conveyed quantitatively, in searching for purpose, meaning, and context, and in helping to construct a compelling narrative which can address the initial research objectives. But prior to the analysis, the very qualitative data had to be collected, which was done through various of different methods:

(a) Gathering of various structured texts:

A series of written sources were selected. First, because of their official and comprehensive scope, the Ministry of Justice's *5th Basic Plan for Immigration Control*, and the *2015 Immigration Control Report* were used as a main source for analysis and as a cornerstone to navigate the larger issue of immigration control in Japan. Their contents largely informed the main themes that were used throughout this work, and their examination represented one of the pillars of this project. These documents, which are the official policy plans that describe the latest developments concerning Japanese immigration regulations, were released to the general public[43] in 2015 and list the main visa categories and latest developments, analyse the impact that foreigners have on Japan's economy and society, and describe fundamental philosophies on immigration

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[42] More information on grounded theory is available on page 38
[43] English language reports: http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/seisaku/

control policies. Second, a number of grey literature pieces on the issue of demographic change and immigration in Japan were reviewed in order to gain a deeper understanding of the circumstances that may have influenced the development of the law. These included press releases and other publications made available to the public mainly by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour, Health, and Welfare, and the Office of the Prime Minister. Third, a substantial number of English media reports on this subject were explored over the course of a year to complement research insights.[44] A combination of government documents (because of their official character), media reports (which give an indication of civil society interests as well as official presentation of the matters) and academic sources (offering detail, accuracy and analysis) provided rich qualitative data which helped answer both research questions.

(b) <u>Key Informant Interviews:</u>

In qualitative research, interviews are considered a "data gathering method in which there is a spoken exchange of information" (Dunn, 2001:101). Due to their knowledge and expertise, key informants – which in this case included university professors, policy writers based at think tanks, NGO members, and bureaucrats – were consulted on the issue of immigration in Japan. Ethics approval from the Wilfrid Laurier Research Ethics Board was secured prior the start of the research, and written consent was obtained from all the participants. 21 potential respondents were identified and contacted directly by the main researcher (either by e-mail or in person). Three politely refused to participate in the study, and seven did not answer the request that was sent out to them. Eventually, 11 respondents agreed to take part in the research. All but one of the participants (Mr. Ippei Torii[45] from *Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan[46]*) decided to remain anonymous. The

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[44] Four main English-language newspapers were consulted primarily. The Japan Times, The Asahi Shimbun, The Nikkei Asian Review, and The Mainichi Shimbun.
[45] http://www.tipheroes.org/ippei-torii/
[46] http://migrants.jp/

size of the sample was considered to be adequate according to Bakers and Edwards (2001:6), given the fact that these were particularly knowledgeable individuals, and taking into consideration that this data collection process was to be complemented by other additional methods. Semi-structured interviews (45 min to two hours) were conducted in English in various locations throughout Japan between November and December 2016. Guided by the highly valuable insights of these key informants, the interviews allowed the researcher to delve into essential specific points and into the wider context related to immigration policy change - which were not detailed in official documents.

(c) Participant Observation

In participant observation; "the observer participates in ongoing activities and records observations. Participant observation extends beyond naturalistic observation because the observer is a player in the action" (UC, 2013:1). Following Frankfort-Nachmaias and Nachmaias *"controlled observation"* approach (1992:206), and taking the role of observer as participant, the researcher attended the International Migration and Integration Metropolis Conference[47] in Nagoya in October 2016 and collected data without substantially altering the behaviour of those being observed (Kearns, 2001). Attendance at this meeting was used as an opportunity to assess how the country was addressing immigration issues and explore the degree to which international engagement was informing Japan's national policy debate. Seminars, workshops, and panels on these matters were attended, the topics discussed examined in detail, the list of key speakers and their career backgrounds reviewed, and other activities of interest were reported as well.

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[47] This conference is an annual forum where researchers, policy makers, representatives from communities, and settlement organizations get together to "share and exchange knowledge and experience in the field of immigration and settlement" (Metropolis, 2015:1). https://metropolis2016-nagoya.jimdo.com/

Methodology II (Data Analysis)

As indicated in the previous section, a grounded theory approach[48] to the study was employed to address the two research goals which this work focused on. Though perhaps unconventional, two theoretical approaches *(political demography and policy mobilities)* were utilised as well, which arguably made this study a *constructivist grounded theory* work instead. At this point, it is necessary to make a distinction between the two possible interpretations of the notion of *'theory'* in the context of this thesis. Acknowledging that there is no truth without bias in the social sciences, a flexible (a) 'theoretical' approach / framework of choice (*political demography and policy mobilities*) was employed to set the larger frame of reference. This openness[49] made it possible to rely upon an a-priori set of axioms while, at the same time, developing new (b) 'theories'/arguments/hypotheses that would explain the phenomena which is examined in this work. For some, this approach might seem somewhat paradoxical and manifest a departure from the traditional tenets of grounded theory.[50] Nevertheless, this technique is not original by any means: many other researchers have utilized similar procedures during the last few years (see Mitchell Jr, 2014, for instance). In light of these matters, this methodology was deemed useful[51] so as to uncover deep and new insights, to reconcile the tensions between theory, bias, and the larger conceptual framework, to 'allow' the data to 'speak for itself' as much as possible, and to provide an accurate explanation for the phenomena that were closely examined in this work.

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[48] *Grounded theory* can be defined as the inductive methodology that enables the researcher to generate theories through a set of rigorous research procedures (Grounded Theory Institute, 2008). The goal of grounded theory is to provide an explanation or theory behind the events (Sauro, 2015).

[49] The overarching theoretical framework did not impose restrictive guidelines or required that a series of steps be followed. It did set a series of basic assumptions about the topic.

[50] Many would criticize relying on larger theoretical approaches within a grounded theory work (See Mitchell Jr., 2014:1&2 for more details).

[51] Additionally, the author would like to indicate that the multiplicity of perspectives through which the *demographic change – immigration policy nexus* question could be analysed and the relative lack of previous research regarding the issue of *policy mobilities* justified the methodology utilized herein. Historical (focus on the historical component) or ethnographic (emphasis on the cultural aspect) approaches, given the subject of study, would not have, by any means, been suitable in this instance. Though presumably more fitting, phenomenological (which arguably stress perception and mostly concentrate on the perspective of the individual) or case-study based methods were not considered to be optimal either - since problems related to generalization were identified in this case.

Braun and Clarke's insights (2006:87)[52] were utilized as a referent to guide this particular circular, sequential, and labour-intensive enquiry, which contained deductive but primarily inductive reasoning. An extensive literature review was conducted to become familiarized with the question of immigration policy management – and its surrounding context – in the case of Japan. This initial approach was essential when drafting the thesis proposal and identifying the potential data sets and data collection methods. Then, the policy reports were examined in detail, and through intensive reading, a number of preliminary codes[53] were progressively generated. Data chunks were then grouped into recurrent themes (through a process of selection, organization, and categorization), which helped the researcher identify some of the core ideas[54] that would be central to the arguments put forward in this thesis. Afterwards, the series of handwritten notes taken during the Metropolis Conference were transcribed, organized, and digitized. These additional resources invited the researcher to revisit some of the initial themes and to reconsider some of the core ideas developed.

As these themes become more solid, the data deemed useful to address the research objectives was selected, summarized, incorporated into a Microsoft Word '*findings*' document and grouped under key themes. The eleven semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted, and based on the expertise of each of the interviewees, as well as the specific insights which emerged from each of the conversations, different questions were posed. Relevant insights were then incorporated into the main '*findings*' document. The same approach was followed to include valuable information that emerged from the relevant white papers, media news, and summaries of the academic articles and books that were consulted.

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[52] See page 87 for more details on Braun and Clarke's (2006:87) step by step guide, which is, essentially: (1) Becoming familiar with the data, (2) Generating initial codes (3) Searching for themes (4) reviewing themes (5) defining and naming themes (6) producing the report.

[53] Open, axial, and selective coding was applied through the process.

[54] This was a selective process: the information which was deemed redundant or irrelevant to the core issues discussed in this work was not included and thus left out. The larger theoretical approach also encouraged the researcher to disregard certain matters (e.g. the regulations concerning deportation centres in Japan)

To ensure accuracy and rigor, the researcher went back and forth continuously – which is generally referred to as *'re-reading'* –, re-visited themes, re-grouped data chunks, and constantly edited the core structure of the findings document which contained all the information. Such an approach allowed for a detailed and exhaustive - albeit time consuming - interpretation of the data.[55] No additional software was used to undertake such task, other than *Microsoft Word*, due to personal preferences. Once the process was completed, the information was reorganized and sorted into a manageable number of categories. Because of the extremely large amount of data (for instance, the total page count to the policy reports amounted to 242, and more than 120 media articles were selected), it was inevitable to go through a "condensation process".[56] As a result, the information had to be further summarized and laid out into a final 200-page document. Eventually, a series of findings emerged from this report, which were then interpreted by placing them into conversation with broader Japanese cultural, economic, historical, and socio-political context and presented herein.

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[55] Other, more efficient methods could have been utilized as well, but this approach in particular allowed the researcher to achieve a personal goal of his: to genuinely gain a deep understanding of the complex issue of immigration control in Japan.

[56] Learning to cope with 'the violence of (over)simplification' was a particularly arduous task. Through discourse primarily, but not exclusively, humans construct mental models, which can then, based on the occasion, be acted upon. Beliefs about truth and the nature of reality and people's mental representations have thus undeniable consequences (when analysed through an existentialist point of view). There are clear limits to knowledge, and when discussing immigration matters, many of these models, for a large number of people, tend to be quite 'low-resolution' representations. Reductionism itself is inevitable, but it is not devoid of problems, especially when such models are not particularly representative of reality. Given the fact that this area of research generally tends to be quite controversial and political, and that this has proven to be the case especially since the 2016 United States Presidential Election, the researcher has genuinely – and with a significant amount of effort – tried to be as accurate as possible during these processes of simplification. This explains the large amount of data which was selected as well as the time-consuming nature of the analytical methods of choice.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: JAPAN'S IMMIGRATION MODEL

Chapter Four examines Japan's immigration policy model in detail. This chapter is subdivided in two main sections. Section 4.1. *'Historical Context'* summarizes the most important developments in the history of the legislation and introduces a series of ideas and concepts that are crucial to understanding how the country's immigration model has changed over time. Section 4.2. *'The Immigration Policy-Making Process in Japan'* illustrates how the policy making process takes place.

4.1. Historical Context

Japan is often portrayed as a secluded, isolated, culturally unique island-nation in every day discourse, both overseas and within the country itself. Its society is generally presented as homogenous and somewhat exclusive. Indeed, one can argue that Japan's current shared national identity is not entirely, but to a large extent, premised on an ethnic and cultural homogeneity narrative (Peng, 2016a).[57] In that respect, many are the authors who have, over the years, built their careers writing about the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Various films, essays, and several other works have explored these notions as well, especially since the second half of the 19th century. For the purpose of this thesis, nonetheless, and as Burgess often suggests in his work, instead of labelling these myths as

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[57] During the Tokugawa Era, (1603 – 1867) Japan adopted a policy of seclusion and sealed itself off from the rest of the world almost completely for over 250 years (Britannica, 2016b). As Nozomu (1980) indicates, the so called *'convergence-divergence'* debate began during the last 30 years of the Tokugawa era. After studying Tokugawa literary works for a number of years, Nozomu noticed that there was a common theme in all of these pieces, which he identified as *Wakon-Kansai* – "meaning the goal of acquiring Chinese techniques while fostering the Japanese spirit" (1980:1). There is a general consensus amongst sociologists studying Japan (Burgess, 2004; Befu, 1987; Nozomu, 1980) that the emergence and acceptance of the notion of the "Japanese national character", which became increasingly prominent during the final years of the Tokugawa period, was the basis for Japan's proto ethnic nationalism. The idea of homogeneity then progressively started to emerge through the implementation of a series of symbols and the consolidation of very particular myths during the Meiji's late nineteenth century nation-building era, all under the new *Wakon Yosai* rationale – (Japanese spirit with Western technology). There are some disagreements within this area of research, however, and some argue that the homogeneity myth was actually consolidated during the years that followed the end of the Pacific War (see Oguma, 2002). Regardless of these debates, it is safe to contend that most academics would agree about the major role that foreign nations have played in shaping Japan's cultural identity over the centuries (please, see page 86 for more details).

illory", [58] it would be more practical "to examine how these assumptions have shaped and continue to maintain certain political discourses and public policies in modern day Japan" (Burgess, 2010:1).

An analysis of current political discourse - as well as various public attitudes polls - seem to confirm that such beliefs are widely supported across the societal and political spectrum. Under these circumstances, when discussing immigration law, Peng (2016a) corroborates that public sentiments and the national collective imaginary have had a substantial bearing on policy change. As of 2017, the Japanese government still preserves the façade that there is '*no national immigration policy'*, and the Abe Cabinet seems determined to uphold the status quo - as observed in statements such as "we will not adopt an immigration policy" (see Kodama, 2015:9). In fact, one might argue that such a principle is effectively an institutionalization of the 'homogenous people' discourse (Burgess, 2014).

This matter is not just exclusively related to ethnic group formation processes: it is also a question of semantics. The 'immigrant' signifier ('*imin',* in the Japanese language*)* has different connotations in Japan. Whilst the UN defines 'immigrants' as "those who live outside of their country of origin for a period of one year or more" (Kodama, 2015:9), Japan considers only those who enter under the assumption that they will stay in the country permanently as 'immigrants'. As of 2017, there are no visas that grant foreigners permanent residence status upon arrival. It is through this linguistic difference that the government is able to justify its current position and uphold the 'no immigration façade', which reinforces the narrative that (a) Japan is not a country of immigration (b) Japan does

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[58] The politics surrounding ethnic group formation processes are of utmost importance within this realm. Delving into this matter in profundity is not the objective of this work - yet it is useful to be aware of current trends and debates. A paradigm shifts seems to slowly be taking place in this regard - for an increasing number of Japanese citizens are starting to consider Japanese 'culture' and 'identity' to be fluid and mutable (embracing thus a more liberal conception of cultural belonging) (Sugimoto, 2009:1) -. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the "conservative/essentialist" understanding of *'Japanese-ness'* is still the dominant view amongst the Japanese (Befu, 2009:35). According to Sugimoto (2009:3), the essentialist model is based on the conception of a single, homogenous culture, shared by an egalitarian, harmonious society with minimal regional differences and small minorities. As globalization (in its various forms) keeps permeating Japanese society, it will be increasingly necessary to study how the tensions between *centripetal* forces of education and other forms of state control and *centrifugal* forces of diversity, internationalism and the market (see Clarke, 2009:56 and Sugimoto, 2009:12 for more details) will continue to shape the notion of Japanese 'culture' and 'identity' – and how these paradigms will ultimately influence the discourse about (im)migration.

not admit immigrants, but entrants. A third additional layer also suggests, untruthfully, that (c) unskilled workers are not accepted.

Nevertheless, there were 2.23 million foreign residents living in the archipelago in 2015 (Nippon, 2016), and about a million of them were earning a living in the country and actively contributing to its economy (The Japan Times, 2016a). What is more, the share of non-Japanese residents has increased substantially since the late 1980s (Ministry of Justice, 2015a). The number of foreign workers surpassed the one million threshold for the first time quite recently as well (Asahi Shimbun, 2017a). The available official statistics thus debunk the "no immigration façade", expose the contradictory and paradoxical character of both the policy and the current's government stance, and arguably introduce a complex myth/reality binary to the study of these phenomena.[59] While Japan might not have a clearly formulated, comprehensive immigration policy, statements such as "there are no immigrants in Japan" are factually untrue (when using UN terminology), and are often produced with the aim of putting forward a very specific agenda.

Having said this, it is a reality that among OECD members, Japan has a relatively low foreign-born population, primarily due to its *restrictive* immigration legislation (DESA, 2013c). For instance, unskilled foreign labour remains officially banned (Ministry of Justice, 2015e:135; Peng, 2016:16a). Although non-Japanese may work unskilled jobs due to a series of loopholes in the law (Kondo, 2013), the reticence of the state to rely on this kind of labour is evident and has arguably maintained the low numbers in foreign stock. The government's stance in terms of highly skilled foreign labour is quite the opposite though, as foreign talent has been welcome for decades. Over the last few years, Japan has continued to invite skilled labour, especially the highly skilled, and remained wary of heavily

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[59] This myth/reality binary and the differences in lexicon make it challenging to have an honest, accurate conversation regarding the issue of immigration policy change in Japan. It also poses fundamental questions: Are Japan's border control and foreigner admission policies effectively an *'immigration policy'*? Are entrants just 'entrants', 'foreign workers' (*Gaikokujin Rodosa* in Japanese), 'migrants', or 'immigrants'? Which words should English speakers choose to refer to non-Japanese newcomers? And also, what are the politics pertaining these word choices? See Debito (2014) to read about some of the possible answers to these dilemmas. To avoid any misrepresentations, the author uses the terms '(im)migration' and '(im)migrant' in this thesis whenever necessary.

relying on unskilled foreign workers. This section summarizes the development of Japan's (im)migration policy over the years (the author borrows notably from Kondo, 2015 here):

FIGURE 7 – Figures in Foreign Resident Stock - (MOJ, 2015a:4)

Chart 2 Changes in the number of foreign residents and the percentages to the total population of Japan
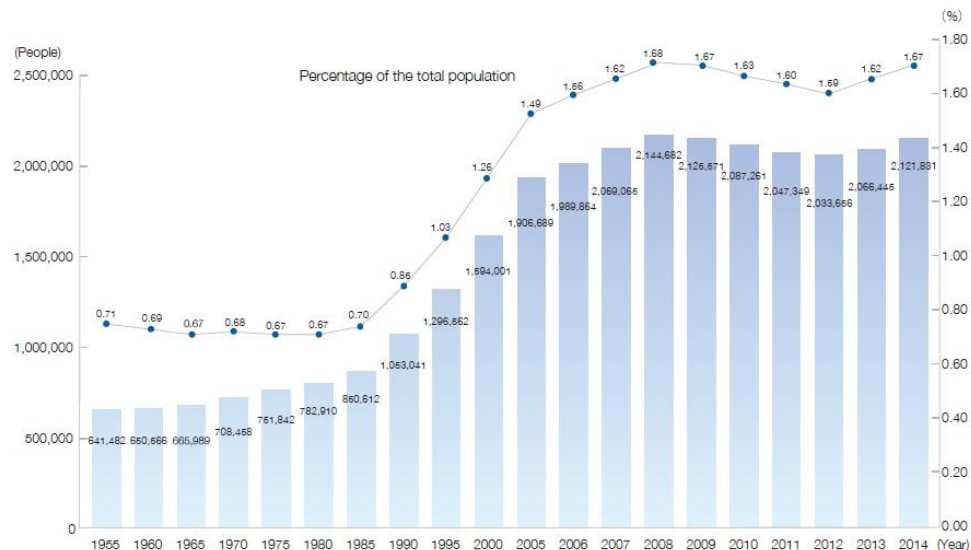
a) <u>Pre-World Word Two Era:</u> The mobility of Japanese subjects and the admission of foreigners into the country were heavily restricted during the Tokugawa days because of the *Sakoku* strategy of national seclusion (1639–1853). The Meiji Period (1868–1912) would see a more open Japan,[60] but it was not until the mid-1920s (coinciding with the start of the Showa era) that a visible number of foreigners – in this instance, colonial subjects – started settling down in Japan. Many emigrants left the archipelago during this period too, most of whom were Latin-America bound. 1945 would witness the American occupation of the nation after the country's defeat in the Pacific War, which lasted until 1952. 1.5 million former Korean colonial subjects then returned to the Korean Peninsula, while about 600,000 of them – and a number of Taiwanese as well - remained in Japan. These, and their descendants, are the so-called *Zainichi Koreans* (old-comers).

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[60] Japan's legislation was heavily influenced by the Prussian model during that time, and so was the original Citizenship Act. During the American occupation, many of these laws were changed - in line with American standards - but the Citizenship Act remained almost intact (See Hein, 2012 for more details)

b) The '52 Regime (1952-1981): Japan regained control of its sovereignty in 1952, established an Anglo-Saxon style immigration control system (Iguchi, 2012), and started implementing and enacting the rulings under its new 'Immigration Control Order' law. This so called 1952 regime was known for its overall restrictiveness and discriminatory policies (e.g. the Zainichi Koreans lost their Japanese nationality). It was during this era that Japan's economy grew substantially without the need for foreign labour. As Kondo (2015) points out, the homogenous people mentality, the overcrowded population, the domestic migration flows into emerging industrial centres and the advances in automation, among other factors, mainly explain why growth without labour migration was possible.

c) The '82 Regime (1982-1989): During the '82 Regime era, foreign citizens' rights improved and a number of refugees from South East Asian countries were welcome (Japan signed the UN Convention Related to the Status of Refugees in 1981). Nevertheless, the law remained fairly strict. The number of foreigners started growing at a modest pace from the 1980s onwards, although according to Suga (2012), the majority of foreign residents at the time were mostly Zainichi Koreans. A number of Western businessmen, marriage migrants, Indochinese refugees and sex workers moved to Japan during this period as well.

d) The '89 Regime (1989 - today): 1989 would witness a considerable paradigm shift in Japanese immigration control administration. The changes to the legislation were primarily motivated by the needs of small and medium-sized companies for unskilled labour (Iguchi, 2012), the desire to stop illegal employment (Chiba and Yamanoto, 2015) and the necessity to admit foreign talent to develop the competitiveness of the Japanese economy. As such, it was then when Japan started actively welcoming highly skilled and skilled foreign human resources. On the other hand, 'simple' labour was officially

banned.[61] Nonetheless, loopholes emerged[62] (or rather, were set up) to admit a controlled

number of unskilled foreign workers. This was a crucial development, as the

skilled/unskilled visa category dichotomy would become a considerable obstacle for the

country to successfully address labour needs in the years to come. As *Figure 7* shows, the

number of foreign residents increased substantially after the 1990s, and has continued to

grow since then. Although various changes to the policy have occurred since 1989, none

of these can be considered to be part of a greater paradigm shift (see Akashi, 2014, for

further details). Still, as of today, most politicians keep upholding the status quo and

maintaining the façade that there is 'no immigration policy' and therefore no immigrants

in Japan, but rather an entry policy and a small number of foreign residents instead.

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[61] In the wake of the regime of 1989, and as Suga (2012) indicates, there was a sector within the government that supported creating formal categories for migrant workers (which was backed by some industrialists), and that advocated for the implementation of a more liberal immigration policy towards the unskilled. Proponents of this view argued that the labour shortages at the time had to be filled, and that doing so would bring about sizeable economic benefits. Their ideas, however, did not quite gain momentum. Those who contended that admitting more unskilled labourers would create *frictions*, possibly undermine the efficiency of certain companies, pose challenges if the economy was to slow down because of the greying of the population, and worsen the duality in the labour market – among others - were successful in defending their point of view. As such, side doors were open, and a number of unskilled foreign workers were able to obtain a visa - but their numbers have remained relatively low (Tai, 2009). At the time of writing, mainly because of the 'urgency' for labour gaps to be filled as some argue, the same sort of debate is emerging.

[62] Regarding these schemes, Kondo identifies two main categories of unskilled migrant profiles: 'front door' (Japanese diaspora who can work without restrictions) and 'side door' (technical internships and traineeships, which have been widely criticized internationally). He adds a third type, which is unregulated: the so called 'back door' immigrants (the estimated 60,000 irregular workers). *(More details in Chapter Five).*

4.2. The (Im)migration Policy-Making Process in Japan

Figure 8 (The (Im)migration Policy Making Process in Japan)[63]
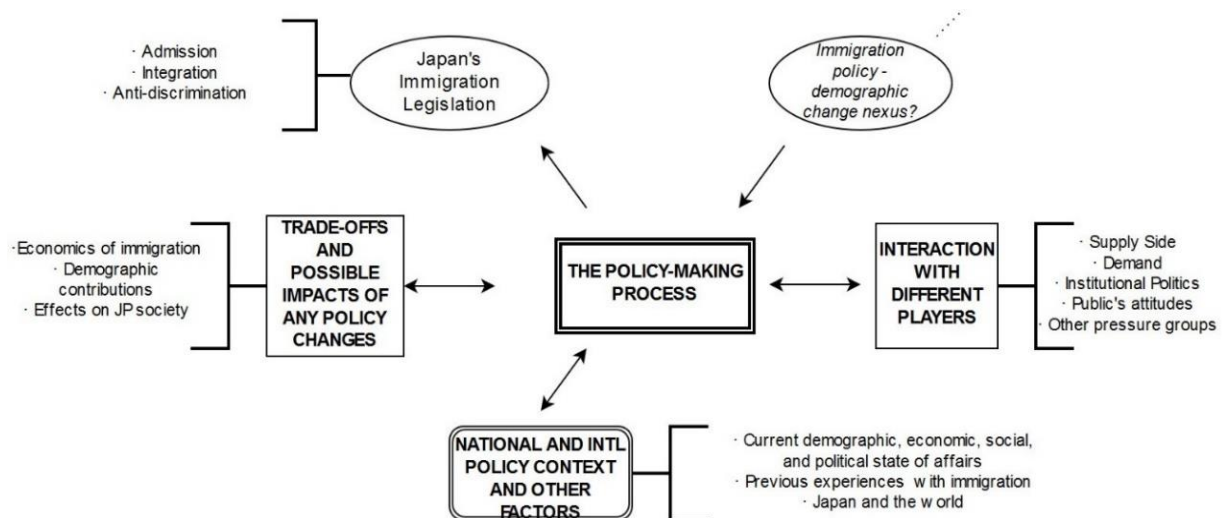
This section expands upon the previous diagram[64] by summarizing and capturing how the policy making process takes place in Japan. It sheds some light on how the political field is structured, reveals how possible trade-offs are evaluated, and illustrates how the policy context (which includes demographic change, and its consequences) has shaped the development of Japan's immigration legislation. More importantly, this section aspires to explain the underlying rationale and motivations that might have encouraged policy-makers to introduce the latest amendments to the law (which are further discussed in *Chapter Five*).

(a) National and International Policy Making Context:

Modern-day Japan is characterized by its political stability under the LDP and by an economy which is showing moderate signs of growth and displaying positive inflation rates after more than 20 years of deflation.[65] Such stability should be embedded within the difficult regional geopolitical context and the relatively new global turn to neo-nationalism (Fotopoulos, 2016). The latter issues, when coupled with additional factors - such as China's economic slowdown or weak demand in

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[63] Diagram sketched with *draw.io* The researcher designed this outline based on his understanding of the data, and informed by the 'multiple stream' and 'advocacy coalition' frameworks (See Cairney,2015).
[64] A more detailed, comprehensive diagram is available on page 97.
[65] Japan's inflation rate indicator https://tradingeconomics.com/japan/inflation-cpi

emerging markets – could pose serious challenges to a country that thrives on exports. Nationalism is increasingly stronger in Japan today as well, and despite globalizing processes, the country still considers itself to be a mostly homogenous, monocultural nation (Burgess, 2014).

In terms of Japan's engagement with immigration policy, previous and not so successful experiences (domestically and those observed in international contexts), have encouraged lawmakers to be extremely cautious when making any policy amendments. The conservative stance Japanese bureaucrats have traditionally taken regarding immigration has been reinforced by the country's relative lack of migration management experience[66] (see Sakanaka, 2012:2), the absence of a comprehensive national-level strategy to integrate newcomers[67] (see Kashiwazaki, 2013:33), and the concerns about 'safety' and terrorism, which appear as a recurrent theme in policy plans.

Lastly, and regarding Japan's ideas of nationhood and its relationship with the rest of the global community, it can be argued that the unhealed war wounds, the complicated geopolitical situation in the region,[68] the desire to present a fitting image internationally (soft-power dynamics), the difficult current global climate regarding immigration,[69] and the need to comply with international laws and treaties that Japan is a signatory to (see Hein 2012:171) have had a clear bearing on the policy-making process. It is these discussions, among others, that reinforce certain notions over others and influence the debate over immigration in a manner that helps shape Japan's notion of national identity by contrasting the projected image of the nation against *that which it is not.*[70]

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[66] Japan is a 'late-comer' if compared to traditional countries of immigration.
[67] The 'no immigration policy' stand has in turn resulted in a somewhat deficient and patched integration policy. The burden is carried mostly by municipalities (see Menju 2003 for more details).
[68] There are notable tensions between Japan, China, South Korea, and North Korea. These geopolitical matters trickle down and eventually affect individual East-Asian migrants. See Akashi (2014:191). The debates over voting rights are the ultimate embodiment of these tensions (See Kashiwazaki, 2013:40).
[69] Clear anti-globalist / neonationalist trends have emerged and been consolidated over the last few years. These dominant ideas generally have a clear anti-immigration component. Also, recent terror attacks all throughout the globe have stigmatized individual migrants even more.
[70] As in a substantial proportion of European nations (Citrin and Sides, 2008:37), many argue that immigration is not perceived to figure in the construction of Japanese national identity. In fact, Castles (1995:5) indicates that there seems to be an inclination towards a "differential exclusion model of ethnic group formation" in the country. This, of course, is not supported by all Japanese nationals. Nevertheless, statements like "Japan is one civilization, one culture, one language and one race" – which was produced by Mr. Taro Aso, former Prime

(b) <u>Interaction with Different Players:</u>

The different interpretations of the aforementioned questions as well as the diversity of opinion over the future of the country have led to clear internal disagreements both within the Cabinet office and among different Ministries. As far as the supply side is concerned, the unskilled and untapped labour pool in neighbouring Asian countries is, as of today, quite large.[71] And while the unskilled labour supply is significant, Japan is, on the other hand, failing to attract highly skilled professionals (Oishi, 2012). Regarding the demand for foreign workers, the situation is much more complex. Businesses are, as it might be expected, in favour of adopting a more liberal immigration policy (Chiba and Yakamoto, 2015; Roberts, 2013:212; Akashi, 2014). Ministries have their own agendas, and although not monolithic, it can be argued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry are much more supportive of larger immigration quotas than the Ministry of Labour, Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Justice (Chiba and Yakamoto, 2015). The Liberal Democratic Party is fractured as well, but it had remained conservative and cautious for the most part at the time of writing - in accordance with its traditionalist discourse (Akashi, 2014).[72]

Minister and current Finance Minister (he then added that Japan was "the only nation that had such characteristics" (The Japan Times, 2005:1) – corroborate how widespread the 'essentialist' understanding of 'Japanese-ness' is (the isomorphism of land=people=culture=polity – see Befu, 2009:35 -), especially in the highest echelons of power.

[71] It is rational to believe that many of these foreign nationals would be willing to work in Japan. Wage gaps are shrinking progressively though, and this is a matter that ought to be considered in policy-making circles – as it would certainly have an effect on the various pull factors (Ogawa, 2011). At the time of writing, the differences in income were still considerable. See the statistics released by the IMF (2016) for more details.

[72] There are many diverging opinions, groups, and factions within the ruling LDP. For the sake of perspective and to illustrate this diversity, a few public figures are placed within a spectrum here (from more open towards adopting a more liberal policy to more sceptical). Taro Kono is perhaps one of the more liberal voices within the current LDP formation but he is not alone; others like Shigeru Ishiba have expressed similar views (Yoshida, 2015). Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga could be placed more to the centre of the spectrum, as he has argued that Japan will most likely not review its immigration policies. He has suggested admitting unskilled foreign labour on a temporary basis nonetheless (Yoshida, 2015b). As Yoshida illustrates, PM Abe has expressed similar ideas, though he is generally more conservative and cautious, and thus he should be positioned more toward the sceptical area in our proposed continuum. Politicians like Haruko Arimura (Reynolds and Takahashi, 2015), Ayako Sone and Yasuhiro Takasone stand in the more conservative side of the discussion, as they have espoused more 'traditionalist' and sometimes controversial points of view in numerous occasions (see Debito, 2015). The Democratic Party of Japan – the opposition – intended to introduce a series of amendments while in power (2009-2012), but no major changes were adopted.

The public's attitudes toward immigration must also be considered. Japanese society is frequently assumed to be not particularly enthusiastic about the idea of admitting a large number of immigrants into the country, and thus many in the government have indicated that immigration is not a politically viable option (and arguably fear a backlash if quotas were to increase noticeably). Political elites often espouse the views of the public, thereby reinforcing their conservative, cautious stance.[73] Reliable quantitative data backs up such claims – for instance, 63 % of respondents in the Japanese General Social Survey argued against an increase in foreign residents (see Green and Kadoya, 2013:10 and Peng, 2016b:16, Burgess 2007:5 for more information). New studies, however, are calling for more research into the question of attitudes towards immigration in Japan and have sought to deconstruct dominant narratives - indicating that such antagonism might perhaps not be as acute as is generally assumed to be (see Kobayashi et al., 2014). As Rosenbluth has contended, the Japanese seem to have a socio-tropic orientation, prefer skilled migrants and, at the same time, fear a potential dilution of cultural purity as well as uphold concerns about competition for wages and jobs.[74]

There are a further series of pressure groups and influential stakeholders whose political power and advocacy exert additional pressure upon law-makers. For instance, unions, workers' organizations and grassroots movements involved in politics do not support large scale immigration (see Merviö, 2013:98 or Oishi, 1995:371 for some examples),[75] although they are clearly concerned about the well-being of migrants coming into Japan and direct their advocacy efforts towards influencing the integration realm of the policy (see Kremers, 2014). Academics are also quite critical of the treatment of foreign residents, and a few have argued for the implementation of more liberal

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[73] Such alignment - between the dominant discourse amid political elites and the attitudes espoused by the larger Japanese society - is worth mentioning in itself. It is also interesting in this case that the word "imin" – immigrant, in Japanese – is seen as a taboo and hardly used in the country, especially in policy-making circles (Debito, 2014). This is obviously connected to the 'no immigration principle' that was discussed previously and helps reinforce the façade presented by the government. As Kashiwazaki (2013) contends, the terminology used in this area is crucial as it shapes the patterns of policy response when it comes to the admission realm of the policy.

[74] https://www.waseda.jp/top/en-news/30135

[75] As indicated previously, SMJ – Solidarity With Migrants Japan - (http://migrants.jp/) is the most influential organization in this regard.

policies (Shimasawa and Oguro, 2010; Roberts, 2012). A considerable number of think tanks[76] and representatives of international organizations—such as Ganelli and Miake, (2015) who work for the International Monetary Fund—have espoused similar views as well. The media seem to take a positive stance upon migration matters in the country, and stakeholders who are involved in the immigration business can be assumed to favour larger quotas (as long as the systems designed benefit their interests).[77] The formal involvement of foreign nations in the policy-making process is practically non-existent. On the other side of the spectrum, right wing-groups, who are certainly opposed to the state admitting larger numbers of foreign residents, have proved to be actors that should not be overlooked - for they arguably have the capacity to shape discourse and the perceptions of the public (Debito, 2014; Akashi, 2014).

(c) Trade-Offs and Possible Impacts of any Policy Changes

Policy-makers typically evaluate potential trade-offs and the consequences derived from any possible changes to the legislation before moving onto drafting any bills. While the range of factors is extensive, the discussion in the following section is framed by the three main sub-groups illustrated in *Figure 8*: the economics of immigration, the possible social effects of immigrant admission in Japan and the potential demographic contributions of newcomers.

Japan is currently experiencing major labour shortages, which have been brought about by changes in the country's demographic structure, economic integration processes and skill mismatches in the labour market. Immigration can address labour needs, and the country's legislation - while concerned about the possible social effects of immigrant admission – does promote "the acceptance

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[76] The Outlook Foundation is one of such think tanks (http://www.theoutlook-foundation.org/en/). Both Toshihiro Menju (see Menju, 2012; 2014) and former Ambassador to Switzerland and former chief of the National Police, Takaji Kunimatsu (see Brasor, 2017), are leading voices in the conversation surrounding these questions. So is Hidenori Sakanaka, former director of the Tokyo Immigration Bureau, whose plan to accept 200,000 permanent residents per year caused controversy but certainly encouraged the debate in the early 2000s (Wen Kin, 2015) - More details in Asakawa and Sakanaka (2007) -.

[77] The Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) - http://www.jitco.or.jp/english/ -, which is in charge of overseeing the Technical Intern Trainee Program, could be a plausible example.

of human resources who contribute to economic growth" (MOJ, 2015a:13). There is a clear admission

hierarchy evident in the Japanese case, which is based on skills. Three main streams[78] can be identified

within the government's strategy: the highly skilled, the skilled, and the unskilled (or "simple labour").

Highly skilled foreign professionals are considered to be necessary human resources "to maintain and

develop the vitality of the Japanese economy and society" (Ministry of Justice, 2015a:13), their

acceptance is considered a priority, and their admission is proactively promoted. Because of their

remarkable skills and market value, highly skilled professionals (CEOs, academics, etc.) are expected

to contribute greatly to the country's economic growth, create new demands and employment by

virtue of their significant purchasing power and assets, and be a net gain in terms of taxation and social

spending. They are presumed to be valuable resources who should not only substantially support the

country's efforts to achieve PM Abe's ambitious growth targets but also play a crucial role when filling

specific labour gaps and spurring the productivity of the institutions and businesses that they work

for, reinvigorating Japan's competitive edge at a global scale as a result. Skilled migrants (teachers,

journalists, etc.) are welcome into the country as well, although visa requirements limit their intake in

many cases.[79] Unskilled labour migration remains officially 'banned' (Ministry of Justice, 2015b:135),

although the reality is that 70 % of the foreign workers in the country are engaged in some sort of low,

semi, or unskilled labour (Iguchi, 2012). Many economic reasons have been provided over the years

to justify this stance. Should these workers be granted permanent settlement status and family

reunification rights, many have argued that they could potentially generate a net loss in terms of social

welfare redistribution.[80] Increasing the intake of low skilled migrant workers could worsen the duality

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[78] There are many different visa categories (27). For simplification purposes, they are grouped together in this way; further details are provided in section 5.2.

[79] Arguably, the demand for such professionals is not that pressing in Japan - as most of these positions are taken by the middle class -. Nevertheless, it is true that the many visa requirements, the difficulties to have work permits extended as well as the complicated path towards permanent residency that many report is depriving the country of precious human resources at times.

[80] See Ganelli and Miake (2015:17) for quantitative evidence and Yoshida (2014) for a more detailed explanation. There is no doubt that foreign migrants would contribute to the country's economic growth and that they would facilitate the economic activities of Japanese nationals. Welfare spending needs to be considered on a different note, and it is to be highlighted that there is quite some disagreement among analysts within this area as well.

in the Japanese labour market as well (see Kodama, 2015:4).[81] At the same time a tight labour supply could incentivize investment in labour-saving technologies and automation, which would lead to greater overall economic productivity.[82] Indeed, technological developments in the unskilled sector are advancing at an extremely fast pace as of late, and it has been demonstrated that many of the unskilled jobs that are in demand now will become increasingly automated through time (Ford, 2015).[83] Current labour gaps could also translate into wage increases for domestic workers in certain sectors and promote the incorporation of 'marginal resources' (the elderly, students, women) into the labour market (see Kodama, 2015:4), which would bring about benefits that extend beyond the realm of economics (Min Lan Tan, 2017). But a stable economy is never a given, and policy-makers have learnt over the years that those permanent unskilled foreign residents whose Japanese language skills are limited could potentially become quite costly in terms of welfare transfers in the event of a recession. Admitting unskilled immigrants will allegedly not fix the weak internal consumer spending problem either,[84] and concerns about the well-being of migrants themselves (in relation to 'brain-waste' and de-skilling) have been expressed as well (Iguchi, 2012:10). Finally, there are alleged worries that more open categories would lead to the so called 'calling effect' and undermine Japan's ability to

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[81] Japan's dual labour market - the clear differences in status between regular and non-regular workers, see Aoyagi and Ganelli (2013) for further details – is probably Japan's major structural economic flaw.

[82] The author acknowledges that many disagree upon this question. For instance, in the case of care-work, the market mechanism was not enough to allocate enough human resources into the sector (Yanagida, 2012). Short-staffing in the field had undoubtedly made the provision of care even more challenging (Aoki, 2016) and not necessarily more productive. What is more, and as it was argued previously, these unfilled labour shortages were posing even greater pressures on a number of sectors throughout the economy and on individual workers themselves (Nikkei Asian Review, 2017).

[83] Change is underway, and indeed, it is unwise to plan for the future based on today's policy context. It is true that many disagree that automation will have a major impact on the Japanese labour market anytime soon. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that future projections - based on current trends - need to be factored in when discussing these matters. As one of the respondents for this work posited, large-scale immigration proposals like Sakanaka's (2007) were never considered to be a viable option, among other reasons, because they failed to recognize the importance of productivity and technological change when moving forward.

[84] For Abenomics to succeed and to set Japan on a steady growth track, among others, a robust internal demand is needed. This can be achieved through the recovery in consumer spending (The Japan Times, 2017d). Wage hikes should contribute to this end goal, but *Chapter Two* indicated how difficult this had proved to be thus far. Unskilled migrants would, most likely, work non-regular jobs and have, therefore, limited purchasing power (unlike the highly skilled) - which would not help address such conundrum.

deal with newcomers properly (in terms of admission and integration dynamics).[85] These are some of the justifications that illustrate why the unskilled in Japan are mostly being invited on a temporary basis, mostly through loopholes, and in small numbers.

Law-makers also need to weigh the possible impacts that immigration can have on the host society, and thus examine how the admission of newcomers might influence voting behaviour and also anticipate possible *frictions* (see Suga, 2012; MOJ, 2015a:18). Japan, after all, is a fairly conservative nation (Prasol, 2010)[86] where the idea of immigration and multiculturalism "remains disconnected from that of a shared national identity premised on ethnic and cultural homogeneity" (Peng, 2016a:1). This, as indicated in the previous section, shows in various polls and statistics. In traditional nation states, settlement is often seen as threatening (Castles, 1995), and PM Abe has confessed his worries about the social tensions that could arise from the introduction of different ethnic groups (Yoshida, 2015). This is not to say that all politicians/Japanese citizens feel the same way, however, or that the Japanese are intolerant or blatantly oppose any immigration. Yet, it would be unwise to deny that social conservatism is indeed a feature of modern-day Japanese society. In fact, many have expressed their worries about the possible emergence of isolated ethnic enclaves within cities, talked about the threat of cultural dilution (Ikeda and Richey, 2009:658), and hypothesized that immigrants might not successfully assimilate into society.[87] What is more, the fact

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[85] Some argue that 'unskilled migration' is difficult to manage. The experiences of other countries have taught Japan that *unskilled* temporary migrants might become permanent and this, arguably, is something that Japan wants to avoid.

[86] In his book, Prasol (2010:173) argues that the conservative attitude towards immigration is connected to the quintessential Japanese desire to ensure the "safety of the nearest living space". He goes on to indicate that modern Japanese culture has been shaped through the centuries by its isolationism, Confucianism, the lack of vast living spaces and the respect for tradition, which led to conformity to order and a large set of mannerisms and symbols to ensure social harmony. Globalization – embodied in *"the foreigner"* in this case – has challenged many of these rules and norms, and this has translated into anxiety and unease (2010:164).

[87] This is a paradox in itself. Despite the *Tabunkya Kyosei* discourse of multicultural coexistence (see Nagy, 2008), many argue that Japan still hangs on to "silent and subtle assimilation" (Hein, 2012:2). Yet, at the same time, the policy showcases an ethnocultural conception of nationhood as its ideological base and results in an ethnic, exclusionary model of citizenship (see Kashiwazaki, 2013:32 for more details). Kashiwazaki (2013:1) indicates that "the multicultural aspect of society is attributed to the presence of 'foreigners' and not to ethnic diversity among Japanese" (hence, the title of her article – 'incorporating immigrants as foreigners'). These dominant assumptions arguably make it difficult for many newcomers to 'fit in'.

that immigrants have often times been accused of driving up crime statistics might have strengthened even more the conservative stance towards immigration which is held by many Japanese politicians.[88]

The demographic contributions of immigrants in Japan have also been put into question (this is generally connected to the temporary character of their visa status). For instance, it has been confirmed that the total fertility rate of international couples is lower than that of Japanese couples (Yamauchi, 2015). The available data indicate that international marriages are on the decline as well.[89] What is more, many have argued that the social costs of admitting a sizeable number of foreign residents would outweigh the long-term benefits due to the costs of service provision in education and healthcare (Yoshida, 2014). When examining policy reports, it appears that population replacement is not seen as a feasible option to address the challenges brought about by ageing and population decline either. It is true, however, that the net growth coefficient for long term and permanent foreign residents has been positive since 2012, and that when compared to the figures for 2015, the number of foreign residents had grown by more than 150,000 in 2016 (*see Figure 9*). This growth has led many to contend that population replacement is indeed taking place. While there is a degree of truth to these claims, there are two main reasons to argue otherwise. First, and as *Figure 9* shows, the growth in foreign resident stock has not been enough to counterbalance the loss of population. Second, many of these newcomers live in Japan temporarily and currently constitute the growing *'permanently temporary'* pool of foreign residents (See MOJ, 2015c:24 to access the figures).[90] The rapid pace at which society is likely to shrink (see page 10), as well as the clear economic

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[88] This is a particularly controversial topic. Kodama indicates that the statistics provided by the National Police Agency reveal that foreigners tend to violate the law more often than the Japanese do, but argues that the figures are deeply problematic and not representative of the matter in hand (see 2015:7 for a more concise explanation). For instance, overstaying is considered a crime. It is because of these reasons that academics have been quite critical of such reports and the validity of such statistics, and have often claimed that the issue of foreign crime is "sensationalized" (Roberts, 2013:2). Besides the NPA reports, the immigration policy plans highlight the state's growing concerns about terrorism quite often, and especially the government's desire to make Japan 'the safest country in the world' (for instance, see MOJ, 2015a:12). While it is necessary to discuss border control questions and concerns about terrorism and safety when approaching the matter in hand, it is also the case that certain interpretations of these documents might reinforce the *stranger=danger* narrative.
[89] http://www.nippon.com/en/features/h00096/
[90] Entertainers, for instance, but especially technical trainees - who are not eligible for settlement.

and social costs to admitting what would be an unprecedented and extremely large number of newcomers (for Japanese standards) has led policy-makers to disregard the idea of complete population replacement, and to rather think of it as an 'unrealistic' policy option.[91] In truth, no explicit mention of population replacement is evident in the policy plans. The fact that a modest percentage of the population is partially being replaced is not necessarily a goal of the policy, but rather a side effect of the increased demand for foreign labour. The progressive transition of this patchwork policy into a more 'real' legislation is guided by the 'highly selective, cautious, progressive incrementalism' strategy that the state seems to have adopted when dealing with immigration policy.

FIGURE 9 (Population Replacement by Immigration)[92]
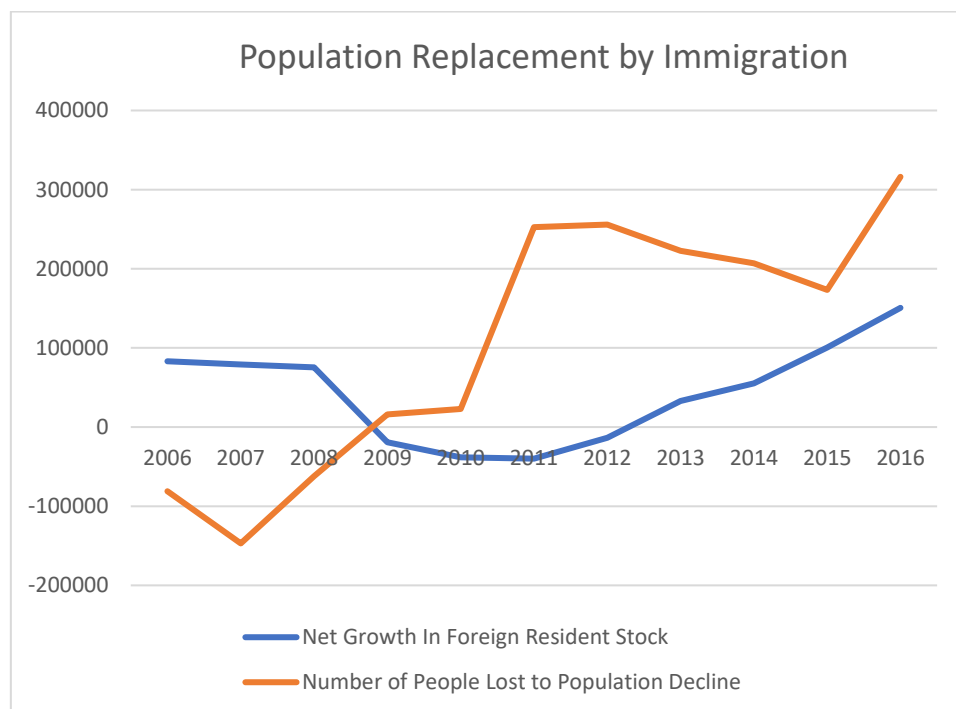
Population Replacement by Immigration

Eventually, and based on the previous factors, policy decisions are made at the Immigration Bureau, which is an organ within the Japanese Ministry of Justice. Japan, for the most part, does not share immigration policy design competencies with non-state and other foreign actors. This, however, is not a uniquely Japanese trait, for the connection between border control and the notion of national sovereignty is evident all across the globe. Yet, one can argue that a significant proportion of other developed countries - especially Western nations – develop multi-layered institutions, collaborate with international organizations and other non-state actors in terms of immigration, and rely on other states through bilateral agreements to a greater extent these days than Japan often does (Tarumoto, 2012) (See Oltman and Renson, 2017:18 for more details). Although the Ministry of Justice is frequently assumed to hold the bureaucratic sovereignty in the Japanese immigration policy-making process (Tarumoto, 2012),[93] it is important to recognize that their officials have in fact, a limited degree of agency. There is a clear series of procedures that these bureaucrats need to follow in order to introduce changes (MOJ, 2015d:78)(these are detailed in the section in *Chapter Six*), and any modifications are clearly constrained by the current façade and heavily influenced by the top down-directives that come from the Cabinet Office, which are exemplified in policy plans like the 2014 Japan's Revitalization Strategy.[94]

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[93] Tarumoto argues that the Ministry of Justice "keeps away most political influence of the parliament, other ministries, business bodies, and social groups" (2012:4).

[94] The 2014 Japan Revitalization Strategy (http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/keizaisaisei/pdf/honbunEN.pdf) summarizes the main policy changes introduced by the current government to set Japan once again on a steady growth path, and is crucial to interpreting *Abenomics* in context. Note that the need to "utilize" foreign human resources (2014:3) is indicated several times throughout the document. This report is basic to understanding the development of the immigration policy for two reasons. First, the directive of the Cabinet to utilize foreign labour has resulted in more open policies. Second, the clear focus on growth has given more power to certain ministries (e.g. METI) over decisions, which includes immigration legislation matters. As one of the respondents for this work revealed, Ministry of Justice officials have had to yield some of their control over the policy making process over the last few years. Ministry of Justice officials have traditionally been concerned about safety, management, border control, and enforcing the law in relation to any new entries, and thus have been arguably more conservative and cautious.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: MANAGING IMMIGRATION[95]

Benefiting from the insights provided in the previous chapter, and comparing the policy against the broader cultural, economic, social, and historical framework, this section aims to address the first research goal: 'to document the latest Japanese immigration policy developments, especially how they are contextualized in relation to population decline and ageing concerns.' In order to do so, the main trends and fundamental principles emerging from the study of the data are summarized and detailed in section 5.1. A more in-depth analysis is provided in 5.2., 5.3. and 5.4. regarding the integration, admission, and anti-discrimination realms of the legislation. The main objectives of these three latter subsections are to connect the main insights revealed in section 5.1. to the different visa categories and to support one of the basic claims that this thesis puts forward: the theory that Japan's strategy regarding immigration control is that of 'highly selective, cautious, progressive incrementalism'.

5.1. Management and General Remarks

Liberal Trends Within the Larger, More Restrictive Framework

As far as immigration policy management is concerned, the state is upholding the status quo and has neither deviated from the "no immigration policy" stand (see Kodama, 2015:9) nor lifted the ban on unskilled labour. Nonetheless, official discourse remains noticeably disconnected from policy realities. In fact, not only is the number of long term and permanent residents clearly on the rise; the overall number of foreign workers in Japan keeps growing steadily as well, and it surpassed the 1 million threshold for the first time in 2016 (Asahi Shimbun, 2017a).[96] Moreover, some schemes now allow certain unskilled workers to apply for renewable visas – like the 'Nursing Care' residence status

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[95] For the sake of clarity, the 'immigration law' hypernym is subdivided into three different subcategories: admission, integration, and anti-discrimination (Guigni and Passy in Rahman and Ullah, 2012:6). An additional category of border control and immigration law enforcement could also be included, but is not the focus of this work.

[96] Ironically, it is mainly unskilled temporary labour – through loopholes mainly – that is driving the rise in foreign workers in Japan despite policy discourse and legislative restrictions.

(detailed on page 72) – although the vast majority of unskilled migrants who are currently admitted into the country are in fact temporary trainees. Indeed, as indicated in the previous chapter, the 2014 Japan's Revitalization Strategy indicates the need for Japan to employ foreign human resources with a view to, among other purposes, spurring growth – and this is clearly outlined in the analysed policy plans as well (see for instance, MOJ, 2015:83). As such, bureaucrats and officials have favoured more open legislation over the last few years, but always making sure that they operate within the larger established framework that adopts the guidelines put forward by the current Cabinet formation and that they respect the current 'façade' regarding immigration control policies.

Virtually almost all of the laws passed over the last few years can be categorized as 'more liberal' (in other words, less restrictive) in nature. The ultimate objective of these measures is arguably to help achieve Abe's growth targets and to partially alleviate severe labour shortages in a number of sectors. Nevertheless, this liberalism is embedded within a larger and more restrictive framework that continues the sentiment of the 1989 regime.[97] Understanding the terminology used in political discourse in Japan concerning immigration and comprehending the façade that is presented to the public are crucial so as to be able to interpret the latest policy developments as well as the larger agenda put forward by the government.

What Kind of (Im)migrant Profile Does the Policy Target?

It should be clarified that such liberal tendencies are not monolithic across visa categories. Following and modifying the work of Nagy (2016), three main streams within the government's strategy can be identified:[98]

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[97] The latest measures do not represent a departure from the '89 regime. Its axioms remain still: these amendments perpetuate the status quo, although some would argue that change is underway.

[98] Regarding labour (im)migration. A full overview of the different visa categories is available in the next subsection.

(a) <u>Highly Skilled Professionals:</u> Investors, academics or those working at international firms– or *highly skilled professionals* in policy jargon – are targeted and welcome.[99] The requirements for these workers to become permanent residents have been eased on several occasions over the last few years.

(b) <u>Skilled Professionals and Targeted Streams:</u> Foreigners who (a) work certain – but not necessarily 'highly' – skilled jobs or (b) perform activities in areas that are 'unsuited' for Japanese people. Artists, entertainers, or English language teachers can be included within this sector. Skilled professionals can often apply for permanent residency. The relatively low demand for the occupations within this category as well as the visa requirements in certain cases (which prove to be a deterrent to higher admission quotes) explain why the numbers are somewhat low if compared to other OECD nations.[100]

(c) <u>Unskilled labour:</u> The direct admission of unskilled or 'simple' labour remains banned. Nevertheless, the available evidence shows that foreigners in Japan do work unskilled jobs. Iguchi (2012), for instance, indicated in 2012 that 70 % of the foreigners employed in the country were engaged in some sort of low, semi, or unskilled labour. Given the current increase in (im)migrant entries - which is driven primarily by the acceptance of unskilled labourers (trainees mostly) - it is rational to believe that the figures presented by Iguchi have remained stable or, much more likely, increased since then. This is quite a heterogeneous group composed mainly by the Nikkeijin, international students, trainees, and others – who enter the country through front, side, and back door streams (see page 46). A sizeable number of these workers are temporary and thus are rotated based on a circular migration system. Visa schemes in this category are often designed to confer the state control over their admission and to be flexible enough to respond to fluctuations in the labour market.[101] The

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[99] http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/newimmiact_3/en/

[100] This does not apply to all cases, but many applicants are often asked for 10 years' relevant work experience in the field. See http://www.japanvisa.com/visas/japan-skilled-labor-visa

[101] This is a very common feature of the "Asian Migration Model". See Rahman and Ullah (2012) for more details.

state has also tried not to rely heavily upon their services – although the number of entries is on the rise – and so the numbers are limited and so are the efforts to integrate them over the duration of their stay.

An '(Im)migration Policy' Per Se?

The emphasis of the latest policy developments is on the *labour* aspect of it. The latest amendments are aimed at attracting the highly skilled. They also seek to admit skilled labour and to allow a larger – yet controlled – number of unskilled workers to fill specific labour gaps, mainly through policy loopholes and on a temporary basis whenever possible. As explained on page 56, 'population replacement' is not a goal of the policy per se and has not arguably been pursued as such. The fact that Japan limits permanent residency and citizenship access to a select group of all admissions,[102] does not have any schemes similar to the US Diversity Visa Program,[103] has somewhat strict family reunification laws (if compared to other Western countries) and limits access to settlement in other non-labour migratory schemes (such as the refugee program, for instance) seems to support the previous notion.

Is it accurate to refer to the combination of these schemes as an *'immigration policy'*? Experts often refer to the legislation as a 'de-facto' immigration law, as a 'foreign-worker' accepting policy or as a 'labour migration' scheme, and tend to agree that this is, in reality, not a fully-fledged comprehensive immigration legislation. On top of that, they contend that the failure of the central government to recognize that Japan is a country that does in fact admit immigrants explains the weakness of the integration policies, which at the central level are a patchwork of measures under the *'Tabunka Kyosei'* motto.[104]

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[102] Tarumoto's model (2012:161) explains the different layers to the policy in a very accurate and informative way.
[103] https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/other-ways-get-green-card/green-card-through-diversity-immigration-visa-program/green-card-through-diversity-immigrant-visa-program
[104] *'Tabunka Kyosei'* is the Japanese version of 'multiculturalism'. More details in section 5.2.

These latest developments can perhaps be understood as the series of measures that Japan is adopting while on the path to developing a 'real' and 'comprehensive' legislation.[105] The more liberal admission schemes introduced over the last few years, the greater concerns about integration - as well as the newly enacted anti-discrimination protections - seem to confirm the idea of Japan moving towards more formal immigration and integration policies.[106] Yet, at the time of writing, it can be argued that no radical paradigm shifts have occurred as of late. Japan's rejection of larger scale, multicultural, more liberal immigration policy models symbolizes how the country honours its nationhood ordering principle[107] and embodies the will of the nation to 'not yield' to certain globalizing forces.[108] Hence, some might see this progression as the path towards a more comprehensive and formal (yet) 'Japanese style' kind of immigration law. In fact, certain liberal Western policy models (which could be perceived as a source of 'inspiration' for some) might not necessarily represent an ideal example for the country to follow. Remarkable changes may occur in the future, but it is reasonable to believe that Japan will not resemble any of its European counterparts any time soon as far as immigration policy is concerned, especially with regard to the percentage of foreign residents in its society.

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[105] Akashi made this point in 2010 (Chiba and Yamanoto, 2015) - as did Sakanaka recently (Sieg, 2016). Japan might in fact be progressively embracing a more liberal conception of nationhood and designing a more comprehensive policy which, as a latecomer, had less time and experience to work on.

[106] The case of care-work is interesting in this particular instance, and representative of how Japan's stance on foreign workers' admission procedures has shifted somewhat. This field used to be off-limits for foreigners (unless they held a different and permanent status of residence) until quite recently (the first foreign caregivers started arriving in Japan in 2008) (Yanagida, 2012). Since 2006, different visa categories (Technical Intern Trainee Program, Nursing Care Status of Residence, Bilateral Agreement Visa) have emerged which now allow foreign caregivers to make a living in Japan. Some of these schemes allow these workers to settle down in the country, although the reality is that the majority of them are temporary.

[107] The term 'nationhood regulatory principle' used here is connected to the notion of 'social conservatism' that was discussed in the previous chapter.

[108] In this case, neoliberal forces which have integrated economies internationally and that demand unskilled workers in greater numbers in the case of Japan. These debates are forcing the Japanese to rethink what 'Japanese-ness' stands for (see page 42).

(Im)migration[109] can be a partial solution to some of the problems derived from demographic change in Japan - only if it is combined with other sound social and economic policies. It can certainly be no panacea, and it will not correct several other issues that require greater attention (like, for instance, the country's pressing structural economic dilemmas). Yet human mobility is inevitable – not only due to population decline and ageing but also because of globalization, family reunification issues, economic integration processes and skill mismatches in the labour market – and it can indeed help address a series of current challenges. As such, these flows ought to be managed adequately.[110]

Nowadays, Japan is engaging with immigration debates primarily due to labour shortages.[111] Indeed, a number of influential figures are currently lobbying for reform (see page 49), including Minister Kono Taro and Prime Minister's special aide Shibayama, who has encouraged PM Abe to start a guest worker program on a number of occasions (Curran and Cislo, 2016).[112] A critical news article featured on the Nikkei Shimbun (2016a) reported on the willingness of the government to start a guest worker program in 2016, which would have brought in a large number of migrant workers following the EPA system style, cut back on the Technical Intern Trainee Program, and paved the way for settlement in certain cases.[113] While this appears remarkable, similar proposals have been put forward over the last few years (see Sieg, 2016) – and in fact, none of these were eventually adopted.[114] These

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[109] Again, it is crucial to be accurate when dealing with the terminology and bear in mind whether any groups being discussed herein have access to permanent residence. Labour rotation systems differ substantially from schemes that favour permanent residence, for instance.

[110] Readers might find this stance reminiscent of the International Organization for Migration discourse. "Migration is inevitable, necessary and desirable if well governed" (IOM, 2016:1).

[111] The response to three major underlying questions can help predict any given politician's beliefs regarding the future development of the legislation: (1) How detrimental the effects of demographic change are for Japan, and more specifically, the severity of current labour gaps? (2) How, when, and to what extent technology, automation, and artificial intelligence will change the nature of Japan's labour market? (3) How do you feel about the prospect of a 'genuinely' multicultural and multi-ethnic Japan?

[112] This would have been an interesting development, because it would have substantially challenged the 'no unskilled labour' principle and created formal migrant worker categories. Nevertheless, it is to be noted that one cannot talk about immigration but rather migration in this case. The majority of these schemes are premised upon the fact that these newcomers will be temporary and will not be granted settlement rights.

[113] Since 2006 a series of bilateral agreements were signed with several South East Asian nations to promote free trade and, as a token, Japan started admitting foreign nurses and caregivers (Otake, 2015).

[114] The current unfitting international climate surrounding immigration might have contributed to this.

propositions have led many to believe that certain policies and approaches might soon change. Nonetheless, it is fair to argue that, to this day, most experts remain sceptical that globalizing forces would drastically alter the basic philosophical and practical foundations of the policy any time in the near future.[115]

The Limits to a Patchwork Legislation

There are limits to a patchwork policy and the increasing number of foreigners coming to Japan is currently exposing its major flaws. First, the 'no immigration' principle subsequently means 'no comprehensive integration legislation'. Japan sees itself as "not a country of immigration, and therefore lacks policies and legal frameworks for the inclusion of residents who are not Japanese" (Roberts 2013:208). As such, the current integration policy at the central level is arguably a combination of ad-hoc measures (Kamiya, 2015) which is far from adequate.[116] This is posing great challenges both to municipalities, who deal with the bulk of the integration efforts and face a lack of funding, and to migrants themselves. Second, the rigidity of the policy, the sharp distinction between *skilled* and *unskilled* and the general arbitrariness of the visa categories are arguably imposing a limit on the full potential of the Japanese economy (see page 24) – as well as posing astounding challenges to specific productive sectors and companies. Finding a proper balance between temporary unskilled migrant admission numbers,[117] potential GDP growth and possible deterrents to greater productivity and automation will undoubtedly be some of the greatest challenges for legislators in the years to come. Third, the noticeably high spike in foreign workers has made the 'no immigration policy' façade crumble somewhat. The government has been able to 'slip in' a number of migrant workers through loopholes thus far, but it is reasonable to believe that it will be much harder for the state to continue to do so at this pace, given the increase in the number of entries. The media has certainly taken notice

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[115] Especially in relation to granting unskilled labour residence permits.
[116] There are indeed a series of initiatives at the central level, but the onus is mainly on the municipalities. This question dealt with in more detail in section *5.3 "Integration".*
[117] The government does not set specific quotas, but policy guidelines can certainly help regulate the intake.

of this very question, and together with a sector of civil society is now actively speaking out about the 'cracks' and exposing the contradictory nature of the legislation (see, for instance, Okunuki, 2017). Fourth, the absence of proper unskilled labour migrant schemes translates into the misuse of other visa categories. For example, economic migrants are reported to be filling out refugee applications (Yoshida, 2017a) or coming to Japan 'as students' in order to work (Osaki, 2017b). This is undermining the effectiveness of those very schemes, as they are being used for purposes other than the ones they were designed for. Illegal immigration is also on the rise (MOJ, 2015c:108), partly as a result of acute labour shortages and the presence of an ASEAN visa waiver.[118]

Japan's Immigration Management Strategy

'Highly selective, cautious, progressive incrementalism'; this is Japan's strategy regarding immigration policy change, a policy which aims not to replace the country's population loss explicitly but to facilitate greater mobility of human resources so that they contribute to economic growth while respecting the country's nationhood regulatory principle. The legislation is intended to be a tool to achieve specific economic goals, to partially alleviate particular labour shortages (e.g. caregivers and other unskilled jobs), and not a solution per se to the challenges posed by demographic change. As such it is defined by the following characteristics:

(a) Highly selective: "Multi-stream" immigration legislation (Nagy, 2016:1) with clear targeted sectors that produces an obvious skill-based hierarchy. This hierarchy determines the length of the stay and the potential access to residence. Highly skilled and skilled human resources are welcome and have the chance to apply for residence permits. The highly skilled are clearly targeted; skilled migrants and those who belong to the so called 'targeted-streams', on the other hand, have greater difficulties to obtain visas quite

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[118] Many ASEAN citizens work illegally in Japan taking advantage of the recent visa waiver program which was recently introduced to boost revenues from tourism.

often. The country's reticence to admit unskilled labour is clear and when invited, these human resources are often accepted through loopholes and mostly on a temporary basis.

(b) Cautious: Japan is learning from the alleged best and worst practices of the liberal democratic countries that it identifies with (those in Europe mainly, particularly Germany).[119] Japan's approach to this type of policy development is notably conservative through the way decisions factor in all costs (economic and social), look ahead and anticipate future changes in the labour market, honour the way the country has dealt with foreign influences for centuries (learning and adapting successful traits to the Japanese legislative landscape),[120] and respect the core axioms underlying the legislation, the current 'façade', and its own 'nationhood' regulatory principle when introducing any amendments to the law.[121]

(c) Progressive incrementalism: Changes are often subtle and progressive, and small-scale amendments often translate into further liberalization if the legislation is deemed satisfactory.[122] Over the last few years, labour shortages, the demand to reach growth targets, globalizing forces, and greater experience with regulating migration flows have been pressing the government to further reform legislation, in order to move towards a 'real, comprehensive, Japanese-style' immigration legislation. Incrementalism refers both

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[119] See Hoffman (2014) for evidence. It is necessary to talk about the "Asian Migration Model" too. This matter is discussed with more detail in *Chapter Six*.

[120] The improvement of borrowed ideas is at the very core of the Japanese creative process (Prasol, 2010:5).

[121] For instance, to further clarify this point, it would be reasonable to believe that Japan would benefit – from an economic point of view – by admitting more immigrants who belong to the so called 'skilled' and 'targeted' sectors' category. It is true that the Japanese language in this case - as well as the relatively low demand for these professionals - are clear deterrents to admission in this sense. Yet, the case can be made that, among other reasons, the country's social conservatism trait, which shapes the policy in various ways, also explains why visa requirements are often so steep. This example arguably shows how social conservatism is favoured in certain instances over (potential) greater economic gains.

[122] For instance, when the 2012 Highly Skilled Foreign Professional visa was introduced, the requirements were too high, so they had to be eased in order to be able to attract these human resources. Another quite telling example is that of "housekeepers" (MOJ, 2015d:91). At the time of writing, foreign housekeepers were working on Japanese soil for the first time in history – except for those that were already working for diplomats and the highly skilled – but only within a series of designated National Strategic Economic Zones. It is reasonable to contend that the permit for foreign housekeepers to work in Japan will most likely be expanded to the rest of the country soon. Such cautious and progressive attitude to change is representative of the larger transitionary process.

to the increase in entries and foreign residents, the liberalizing tendencies that are emerging over the last few years and the overall less restrictive legislation.

The Future of (Im)migration Policy

As argued, most of the ambitious proposals which are currently being put forward have not been adopted, despite how far policy reform (specifically regarding particular matters, like in the case of the country's integration legislation) is seen as necessary. As Nagy (2016:1) contends, "dealing with the great challenge of Japan's demographic implosion will require an immigration strategy with Japanese characteristics that has robust integration policies to maximize the human capital that comes to Japan but also minimizes interethnic and intercultural friction in a country with little ethnic and cultural diversity in mainstream society". Nagy's insights are, indeed, very telling. Any policy amendments introduced in the future need to be mindful of the social consequences that they might bring about and acknowledge the relatively strong social conservatism component which is evident in Japanese society. Indeed, the latter should, by no means be underestimated. As far as the economic realm is concerned, all decisions should be forward looking and factor in possible developments coming ahead in terms of automation, changes in the labour market, downturns in the global economy and fiscal costs associated to immigration. Perhaps the major flaw in the current legislation concerns its weak integration provisions. There is no doubt that reform is needed in this regard.

5.2. Admission

This section summarizes and analyses the different visa categories (which are grouped into four subsets according to the entry context),[123] updates the latest changes introduced to relevant policies and explains the reasons why specific new amendments might have been introduced:

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[123] At the time of writing, there were 27 different visa categories. Each of these had its own characteristics. For simplification purposes, these 27 visa categories (both labour and non-labour permits) were grouped into four main subgroups – connected to the newcomer's ability to work in the country -: (a) Foreign Human Resources

(a) Foreign Human Resources in Japan on a Work Visa

Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals

A new status of residence – along with a point system – named "Highly Skilled Professional" was introduced in May 2012 so as to "promote the acceptance of foreign human resources with advanced and specialized skills" (Ministry of Justice, 2015c:3) who "contribute to the vitalization of Japan's economy and society" (MOJ, 2015a:1). This visa scheme targets corporate sector executives, investors, university professors, scientists, lawyers, doctors, and IT specialists, among others (Green, 2014). Over the last few years, the requirements have been eased on a number of occasions and clear advancements regarding the identification and recognition of overseas qualifications for the highly skilled have been made (Ministry of Justice, 2015a).[124] The Immigration Bureau has also worked on publicity measures to promote and advertise this scheme both nationally and overseas (MOJ:2015d:100). The liberal character of these measures and amendments is indicative of the government's eagerness to attract these foreign professionals – but it also reflects the failure to reach the ideal targets that were set when this visa system was initially introduced.[125] In fact, despite all these efforts, Japan is failing to attract foreign talent.[126] Some contend that the vagueness of the policy language and lack of clarity might have contributed to this (Green, 2014). Regardless of the possible shortcomings of the legislation, it is safe to contend that the challenges for the country to attract these workers mostly lay outside the immigration policy realm. Nana Oishi (2012) identifies low income,

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in Japan on a Work Visa (b) Foreign Human Resources Whose Status is Tied to Working Unskilled Jobs in Japan (c) Foreigner Residents Who Hold Other Status of Residence and Who May Engage in any Kind of Work (d) Others

[124] Visa holders obtain preferential immigration treatment: their spouses can work too and their parents can be granted a status of residence under a series of specific circumstances. They might also be able to hire domestic workers in certain cases. When it was first enacted, the HSFP visa granted its holders a five-year period of stay, which, upon completion, facilitated the path for permanent residency. The five-year stay requirement was recently shortened to three (Business Insider, 2016), and Prime Minister Abe has repeatedly announced that he would like to provide the highly skilled with the fastest path to permanent residency by further shortening that prerequisite (Business Insider, 2016). In fact, a recent March 2017 amendment to the law now enables a number of those professionals to obtain such status after a year of residing in Japan (Nikkei Asian Review, 2016a).

[125] The Ministry of Justice, which had already set a fairly conservative target of attracting 5000 professionals of this sort by 2017, was forced to ease the visa requirements that were initially set up in various occasions to effectively accomplish its goal.

[126] In 2014, it ranked 48 out of 60 countries in terms of attractiveness (for these professionals to potentially immigrate) in the *IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook* (Kodama, 2015).

differences in workplace/corporate culture, work/life balance dynamics, gender inequality, long working hours, the language barrier and the difficulty for these professionals and their families to settle down and adapt to their new environment as the main disincentives that explain Japan's poor attractiveness as a destination.[127] It is not just immigration legislation itself that matters, but the context which surrounds it. This case demonstrates how the causes of policy success (and failure) might lie outside the immediate policy sphere (Oishi, 2012).

<u>Skilled Professionals (Technical and Professional Workers & Targeted Streams)</u>

The basic policy of the government is to proactively accept foreigners in professional and technical fields (MOJ, 2015a:13). Some of these professionals are chefs of foreign cuisine, sportsmen/sportswomen, instructors or aircraft pilots – among others – (MOJ, 2015e:11) and their jobs are deemed skilled, unsuited for Japanese, or suffer from specific shortages (Iguchi, 2012:11).[128] The number of these professionals is relatively low, mainly because few incentives are present. The Japanese language barrier, unattractive salaries, strict visa requirements at times depending on the profession, and a relatively low demand (the Japanese middle class tends to take this sort of jobs) are clear deterrents to admission. No significant policy changes have occurred in this realm over the last few years.

(b) Foreign Human Resources Whose Status is Tied to Working Unskilled Jobs in Japan

Technical Intern Trainee Program

The Technical Intern Trainee Program (TITP) was started in 1993 and is intended to be a system that enables "foreign nationals from mostly developing countries to acquire skills through on the job training while in employment, thereby contributing to effective technology transfer and human

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[127] The language barrier is a major comparative disadvantage for Japan, not only for the highly skilled.
[128] 'Entertainers' could be also included within this sub-section.

resources development as part of Japan's international contributions" (MOJ:2015c:31).[129] While a number of trainees do benefit from this system (especially those that are admitted through the governmental channel),[130] the fact is that academia, foreign governments, the media, and non-governmental organizations alike have been extremely critical of the TITP for a number of reasons.[131] This criticism is mostly directed at the abuses that a significant percentage of trainees endure while in the country.[132] What is more, it has often times been suggested that the TITP is, in essence, a cheap labour rotation system to accept temporary unskilled workers (Miki, 2005).[133] Despite this criticism, the Ministry of Justice recently decided to expand the program (revision, optimization and expansion).[134] There are several reasons that help explain why that was the case. First, the ostensibly temporary character of the TITP allows the state to easily deal with public concerns about immigration, since trainees are 'not immigrants'. As such, there is not an apparent effort to integrate them into the larger Japanese society. Also, funds that are used to cover some of the training expenses are accounted for as official development aid (Rau and Vogt, 2009). The trainees are subject to a single employer as well, so they are easy to manage geographically and can be dismissed if their services are no longer needed (Watanabe, 2010). Hence, this approach satisfies the concerns of the government regarding the potential difficulties that might emerge for unskilled foreign workers during periods of economic slow-down (Watanabe, 2010). While some argue that the TITP is 'cynical in essence' due to

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[129] Although this was not a completely new scheme; the blue-print for this system already existed in the 1960s (see Oishi, 1995). Note that 'Trainee' here refers to 'technical intern trainee'. There is a separate status of residence for 'trainees'. See MOJ, (2015c) for further details.

[130] There are two streams within this program: the privately managed and the governmental channels. The vast majority of technical trainees in Japan are part of the former.

[131] For an example of each of these realms, please see (respectively) Kondo, 2002; US Department of State, 2016; Otake, 2016; Kremers, 2014.

[132] There is evidence of countless abuses. Often times, trainees end up assuming "hidden costs" (Watanabe, 2010) such as administrative fees, and their passports are seized (2015d:36). Worse than that, 34 participants had died by 2008 (Ogawa, 2011), and deaths have only increased since then (Otake, 2016). 79.4 % of companies in 2014 were not abiding by the rules (Kodama, 2015) and 2016 saw the highest number of infringements so far. The TITP may also lead to illegal employment as trainees run away due to poor working conditions. This has led some to contend that a sizeable number of trainees endure conditions of "virtual slavery" (Debito, 2014:1).

[133] The 'no unskilled labour' principle limits the intake of these workers, so loopholes like the TITP emerged to address that need for labour.

[134] The current status of TTIP is 'revision, optimization, and expansion'. It now allows for longer stays, larger quotas, and more sectors. "Better management and screening" have also been promised. (See MOJ:2015b)

these very reasons, the system has, in fact (as with many 'temporary' migrant worker schemes), become structurally essential to the economic sectors that depend upon it. These are mostly – though not exclusively – unskilled, low productivity jobs in secondary regions: textiles, food and drinks, manufacturing, agriculture, or construction (Iguchi, 2012). All in all, the TITP system represents the flaws of a patchwork policy – in that the benefits are hard to locate: trainees arguably do not gain the skills they are supposed to, and employers often find it expensive and are unable to have their best employees stay permanently. As observed, the TITP discussion is not devoid of controversy, and there are different opinions on how Japan should move forward. Those that have stakes in TITP are likely to support the latest developments, but others have suggested reforming the system into a contract worker program (Kondo, 2015). Others have proposed abolishing it altogether (see Kremers, 2014 for further details on this matter). Given the recent incorporation of care-work into the TITP (Osaki, 2016), and the countless flaws of the system that have been exposed over the years, it is worth asking whether the apparent volition of the Ministry of Justice to crack down on abuses and to better regulate the system will prove successful, or whether these failures are likely to be repeated over again.

<u>Nurses and Caregivers Through EPAs (Bilateral Trade Agreements)</u>

Japan signed bilateral trade agreements (EPAs) with the Philippines (2006) and Indonesia (2007), which were later expanded to include Vietnam (Ohno, 2012).[135] As Yanagida (2012:9) indicates, the EPA agreements "approve the acceptance of foreign nurses and caregivers under the chapter of movement of natural persons".[136] While the demographic argument and the need for care professionals may have played a role when deciding to sign these agreements, some argue that the main rationale was mostly economic: Japanese bureaucrats may have accepted these workers in exchange for lower tariffs on certain goods (Otake, 2015). Indeed, these arguments are even more compelling when certain official white papers released by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

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[135] FTAs have also made it possible for Thai nurses and caregivers to work in Japan under similar conditions to those that come through EPAs (Savu and Shingal, 2014)

[136] Though they figure as 'unskilled' in this section, it should be highlighted that nurses are not considered unskilled, but *skilled* foreign resources. They still need to get certified in order to earn a living in Japan, though.

reveal that "approving potential nurses and care workers from Indonesia and the Philippines is not a response to the labour shortages in the health services; this training program has been agreed under the EPAs on the basis of strong requests from the two countries."[137] Regardless of the possible different motivations, foreign caregivers and nurses have been arriving in Japan since 2008 (Yanagida, 2012) and through this program, they have received training and language lessons. Potential candidates are required to pass the national qualification exam and acquire licences to be able to work in the country (Yanagida, 2012). Successful applicants receive a three-year renewable visa, but few pass the regulatory exams at the end of their period of stay.[138] This is just one of the many indicators that suggest that the scheme is not working efficiently. It again does not represent a win-win situation by any means. Indeed, health facilities and candidates alike have repeatedly expressed their disappointment with the program – primarily due to the low passing rates. The linguistic challenges that migrants often face and the economic cost of the training make matters even worse. Critics of this system have also pointed out that the EPAs resemble a labour circulation scheme, which essentially treats workers as temporary, disposable labour (Tarumoto, 2012).

Nursing Care Status of Residence

As it was previously illustrated, the changes in family roles, the greater participation of women in the labour force, and the pressures derived from an ageing society have forced Japanese lawmakers to design new schemes to admit foreign labour in order to ensure the adequate provision of care. Despite the impression that the Japanese do not employ low skilled foreign labour, caregivers have been recruited since 2008, and more visa categories are being created to attract care workers, some of whom are eligible for settlement. A relatively new scheme, which was introduced in October 2016 (Osaki, 2016), now enables foreign nationals who study nursing care in Japanese colleges and vocational schools to work in the country so long as they graduate and pass the national qualification

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[137] http://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/seisakunitsuite/bunya/koyou_roudou/koyou/gaikokujin/other22/index.html
[138] It is true, nonetheless, that the passing rate for caregivers has improved over the last few years – 36.3 % in fiscal 2013 to 50.9 % in fiscal 2013 – (Japan Times, 2015) (Dev, 2017). For nurses, it is much lower.

exam (MOJ, 2015c:6). The policy reports indicate that "there (was) demand for the acceptance of foreign workers in fields which were previously not open to acceptance, such as the field of nursing care" (MOJ, 2015b:79). Along with the EPA scheme and the TITP, this system now allows foreign caregivers to earn a living in the country. Such scheme is therefore indicative of the significant demographic pressures that the country is facing, symbolic of the more liberal forces that are currently driving Japan's immigration policy management towards change, and represents the willingness of the state to innovate and 'optimize' existing strategies. This system, for instance, passes the cost of the training onto the *caregivers to be* – as opposed to the EPA program, which many arguably consider to be 'too expensive'. The decision to implement this program can also be also perceived as a noteworthy development in Japanese immigration management, since arguably, the admission of unskilled labour through official channels had been anathema to the current stand thus far. In fact, candidates are offered renewable visas if they sign a labour contract with a nursing care facility (Osaki, 2016).[139] This is indeed a relevant feature, as the majority of unskilled workers are not generally offered these kinds of benefits.

Work Visas in National Strategic Economic Zones

National Strategic Economic Zones are currently being used as laboratories[140] to test out new (im)migration regulations. One of these schemes is the new housekeeping visa, which has, since February 2017, enabled a limited number of foreign housekeepers to temporarily work in Japan under a quite restrictive framework (Reynolds & Aquino, 2017) (MOJ:2015d:91). The main goal of this system is to get more Japanese women into the labour market by *outsourcing* their domestic tasks and to make it affordable for the middle class to hire these workers. Nevertheless, overregulation has resulted in high prices and low quotas. Further easing of these requirements is to be expected, for this

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[139] This cannot quite be considered a loophole. In this case, Japan did not have to yield to 'foreign pressures' to access foreign markets / or is attempting to make an 'international contribution' through this scheme. This, indeed, makes the Nursing Care Status of Residence somewhat unusual in this sense.
[140] These National Strategic Economic Zones are essentially special economic zones (SEZs) which are being used as 'laboratories' for testing. It can be hypothesized that the 'spatial strategy' to these programs is indicative of Japan's eagerness to design new schemes and try different options when moving forward.

can arguably be considered a pilot project.[141] Since 2017, the government started admitting

agriculture workers temporarily through this visa category as well (Nikkei Asian Review, 2016a).

<u>Temporary Emergency Measures to Accept Foreign Workers in the Construction Field</u>

A series of measures were adopted in 2014 to allow foreign unskilled professionals who had

completed their technical intern training to work in Japan for a maximum of two/three years in the

fields of construction and shipbuilding (MOJ, 2015c:97). These measures, as the policy plans indicate,

are temporary and will be terminated in 2020. Reconstruction projects in Eastern Japan (related to

the 2011 Tohoku Earthquake and Tsunami), the need for additional labour to build the infrastructure

which is required to host the 2020 Olympic Games, together with the acute shortage of manpower in

the field of shipbuilding, encouraged lawmakers to pass these revisions. Despite this being a relatively

obscure and somewhat insignificant program in terms of entries when compared to schemes like the

TITP, it can be argued that these measures accurately represent Japan's approach towards unskilled

migrant workers: their temporary character and careful policy framing. Despite the fact that unskilled

labour remains official 'banned', these program shows how the desperate need for foreign labour in

certain sectors has encouraged the development of loopholes 'by design'.

(c) Foreigner Residents Who Hold Other Status of Residence and Who May Engage in any Kind of Work

<u>Foreign Students</u>

Motivated by the benefits that highly educated human resources provide for their host

countries, and forced by international economic competition, Japan has joined the race for global

talent. This is not only self-evident when studying how Japan is actively trying to attract foreign highly

skilled professionals; foreign students are also targeted as well. As the policy plans indicate, "the

acceptance of foreign students has great significance for the future of (Japan)" (MOJ, 2015:14). Their

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[141] In line with the 'progressive incrementalism' theory. Successful policy traits are adopted, mistakes are corrected, and the schemes are scaled up if they are deemed to be successful.

admission undoubtedly enriches Japanese society and fosters cross-cultural understanding. It also strengthens ties between countries and people and introduces students to Japanese culture and the Japanese way of life (acculturation). From an economic perspective, foreign students can contribute by working part time, and it is also thought that a number of graduates would like to stay in the country after completing their studies and "lead (its) economic development" in the future (MOJ, 2015:14). It is because of these reasons that the government set the "300,000 International Student Plan by the Year 2020" in July 2008 (Chiba and Yamanoto, 2015).[142] At the time of writing, there were many campaigns to promote Japan as an education destination, and a considerable number of active support mechanisms to help employ students after graduation had been implemented.[143] While these figures seem uplifting, policymakers were experiencing a series of challenges as well. Since students can work part-time up to 28 hours a week, and because there are no formal categories for migrant workers, this had (partially) become another cheap labour loophole.[144] In fact, it is now well known that a large influx of students with 'low academic motivation' have entered Japan over the last few years (Osaki, 2017b:1). For instance, out of the 21,208 who were accepted in 2014, 60.3 % were studying in vocational colleges and only 26.4 % in universities. As Osaki indicates, a group of LDP lawmakers have recently started to examine the matter in hand more in detail. Indeed, there is an underground market in this sector which is growing, and which requires greater attention before it leads to widespread infringements and abuses.

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[142] There were 257,739 foreign students in Japan as of June 2016 (Osaki, 2017b)

[143] About 30 % of students stay in Japan after graduation, and the government would like this figure to increase to 50 % (The Japan Times, 2016b). See Kikuchi (2017) to learn how the Ministry of Justice is working in its attempt to hit such target.

[144] While the majority of students in Japan do not think of this system as a way of earning a living in the country, the evidence suggests that a number of them do. Also, not all loopholes are regarded equally by policymakers. Indeed, the government is much more permissive – and arguably *complicit* – with regard to the TITP for instance, but it is clear that bureaucrats are determined not to let the student visa category (mainly because it hurts the overall academic quality of the stock) and the refugee system become loopholes to accept unskilled labour (because of the economic cost of processing the applications and the additional rights that refugees are entitled to - which would have to be ensured if they were granted asylum -).

<u>"Nikkeijin" – Long Term Residents</u>

The Nikkeijin are the people of Japanese descent (diaspora) who emigrated overseas, especially during the Meiji Period and the years that followed the end of the Pacific War (Iguchi, 2012). Labour gaps in the late 1980s encouraged a number of Nikkei to return to Japan and take up jobs, and an amendment to the immigration law introduced in 1989[145] allowed "foreigners who are descendants of ex-immigrants from Japan"[146] to reside, study and work in the country (Iguchi, 2012). Many Nikkei decided to leave their country of origin (generally Brazil or Peru) and start a new life in Japan. The Nikkeijin population reached its peak in 2007, at about 316,000 (Takenoshita, 2015). They were not granted citizenship or permanent residency but a 'long-term' resident visa, for bureaucrats thought they would not settle down permanently. However, many decided to stay. The Nikkeijin have mostly worked in non-regular jobs in manufacturing and construction and served as substitutes for the Japanese as unskilled labour (Chiba and Yamamoto, 2015). A large number of Nikkeijin experienced difficulties while in Japan because of their poor language skills and often precarious working conditions. Their situation only worsened after the economic crisis of 2008 (see Takenoshita, 2015 for more details). Hardly any Nikkeijin[147] immigrate to Japan these days, mostly because of visa requirements. As various experts interviewed for this work indicated, the escalating economic costs associated to pensions and other welfare benefits and the difficulties that the Nikkeijin experienced when trying to integrate into society have led many in the government to believe that the law amendment to invite the Nikkeijin was not necessarily a 'failure' per se, but certainly "ill-conceived."[148] Despite this, there have been proposals over the last few years to expand the scope of young Nikkei

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[145] The greater need for foreign labour, the necessity to grant legal status to those who were working already in the country before 1989 and the notion of 'cultural compatibility' (which helps explain the ethnic component of this system) arguably explain why this amendment was introduced.

[146] First, second, and third generation and their spouses. New proposals suggest accepting fourth generation descendants too (Osaki, 2017c).

[147] Brazilian or Peruvian Nikkeijin. But the diaspora extends beyond Latin-America. In fact, Nikkei and Shin-Nikkei Filipinos/Filipinas continue to immigrate to Japan (Takayama, 2015).

[148] Whether this was because of the decision not to offer them Japanese citizenship upon arrival or the practically non-existent integration efforts coming from the central level since the moment they arrived in the country. This is not to argue that integration measures were absent: they did exist. However, these were tardy to say the least, since the core initiatives were started after 2006.

who are eligible to immigrate to Japan (Osaki, 2017c), which is clearly motivated by the need for labour. The Immigration Bureau has also recently vowed to intensify the efforts to better integrate the Nikkeijin and specifically address the issue of labour market access and the lack of job opportunities (MOJ, 2015:125).

<u>"Zainichi" – Special Permanent Residents</u>

Zainichi Koreans (a small percentage of them are Taiwanese) are ethnic Koreans whose ancestors immigrated to Japan before 1945. After Japan regained control over its sovereignty in 1952, they were deprived of their citizenship rights. Today they either hold a 'special permanent resident' visa status or have naturalized.[149] No major changes to the policy have been introduced regarding this group over the last few years.

<u>Refugees</u>

While the policy reports indicate that clear efforts have been carried out to ensure an "appropriate and prompt" recognition of refugees (MOJ, 2015a:23), the Japanese government has been heavily criticized regarding this matter. In general, Japan is a country that deeply cares about its international image, but there are arguably three major issues that have led many to question Japan's reputation over the years: whaling, the unresolved 'comfort women' matter and the country's tough stance regarding refugee admission. Indeed, there seems to be a clear reluctance to admit any asylum seekers and the data corroborate it: only 11 applicants were granted refugee status in 2014, and 6 in 2013 (MOJ:2015c:63). It is true that the Ministry of Justice issues a greater number of humanitarian relief visas and that applicants are sometimes admitted as students (Asahi Shimbun, 2017b). Nevertheless, it is a fact that Japan generally refuses to grant claimants refugee status.[150] The Japanese, on the other hand, are arguably quite generous in their donations to the United Nations

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[149] Foreign-resident statistics in Japan can be somewhat deceiving. This is a clear example. The Zainichi community has been living in Japan for generations, yet the policy identifies them as 'foreign residents'.
[150] The acceptance of asylum seekers could pave the way to permanent settlement since Japan is a <u>signatory</u> to the Convention to the Status of Refugees. Given Japan's conservative and cautious approach to accepting newcomers, this very fact helps to partially explain Japan's reticence to open that door.

High Commissioner for Refugees, which suggests that the refusal to admit their fair share of refugees might have to do with settlement issues and sociocultural matters, rather than economics.[151] Over the last five years, the number of refugee applications has seen a six-fold increase. Politicians and bureaucrats, but also non-government actors have argued that the rise in these claims is mostly due to the increase in illegitimate applications by candidates who wish to work in japan – and who take advantage of the recent policy amendment that now allows applicants legally to take a job six months in after filling out a refugee claim. Saburo Takizawa, a former UNHCR representative in Japan, offers an insightful commentary on these matters (see Yoshida, (2017a)). It seems that such arguments are logical when the countries of origin of these asylum seekers are examined.[152] That is why, among other reasons, the Ministry of Justice recently stated that this increase in applications undermined the efficiency of the system and that it was intending to decentralize its refugee application process – to fast-track rejections (Yoshida, 2017b). While Japan could undoubtedly involve to a greater extent regarding refugee admission matters (especially in relation to application barriers), it is essential to examine the data in detail not to reach misleading conclusions.[153]

<u>Family Reunification Statuses of Residence</u>

These include various different statuses of residence and visa categories, and are often overlooked when discussing the question of foreign labour (such visa holders have no restrictions regarding work in Japan). No significant developments concerning this status are highlighted.

<u>Permanent Residents</u>

No major changes regarding permanent residents have been introduced.

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[151] http://www.unhcr.org/donors.html

[152] 1929 Indonesians, 1451 Nepalis, 1412 Filipinos, 1143 Turkish, 1072 Vietnamese, 938 Sri Lankans, 650 Myanmarese, 470 Indians, 318 Cambodians and 289 Pakistanis applied for refugee status in 2016. On the other hand, although Japan might not facilitate the applications of refugees from current conflict areas like Syria, Japan, or Eritrea, out of the 69 Syrians who applied for refugee status from 2011 to 2016, 7 had been accepted as refugees and 52 had been allowed to stay for humanitarian reasons (Yoshida, 2017a).

[153] Asylum seekers generally need to obtain visas and be able to pay for plane tickets to apply for status recognition, which is certainly quite difficult. Mr. Takizawa acknowledges this problem (Yoshida, 2017a)

(d) Others

Temporary Visitors

These include those foreigners who spend a short time in Japan to participate in any sporting events, conferences, or sightseeing among others. There has been a dramatic increase in foreign tourists as of late due to cheaper airfares, visa exemptions and the publicity efforts to turn Japan into a "tourism-oriented country" (MOJ, 2015a:18). 24 million foreign tourists visited Japan in 2016 (Suruga, 2017) and the government expects to host 40 million visitors by 2020.[154]

Irregular Migrants

The policy plans identify three types of irregular migrants: visa over-stayers, those who perform activities that are not allowed under their visa status, and those who enter the country unlawfully. The Ministry of Justice estimates that there were about 60,000 irregular migrants in Japan in 2015 – a number that had slightly increased for the first time in 22 years (MOJ, 2015b, 8).

Others

Diplomats, officials, those who perform religious or cultural activities, etc. can be included within this section. New categories for wealthy foreigners have been created.

5.3. Integration

Despite policy discourse, it is safe to argue that, as of 2017, Japan still lacked a full-fledged integration policy. Integrative measures and provisions do exist, but they are mostly to be found at the local level, as municipalities (and civil society) still lead Japan's integration efforts (Menju, 2014). The central government keeps upholding the façade that 'Japan is not a country of immigration', so the country lacks, as a result, a comprehensive set of measures to integrate migrants (Roberts, 2013).

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[154] The Olympics will be held in Japan in 2020.

It is true that in 2007 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopted the Tabunka Kyosei discourse[155] (Chiba and Yamamoto, 2015:223) – and that the Ministry issued a set of recommendations for municipalities to follow. Regarding this matter, it is necessary to indicate that certain policy measures have in fact emerged from the central level.[156] Nevertheless, these initiatives are not by any means satisfactory, and are far from representing the integrative infrastructure and the legislative framework that Japan needs. For decades, local governments and other non-governmental organizations have helped immigrants settle and provided free language courses or facilitated their access to healthcare or housing. However, because of both legal and funding constraints, they have been limited in their ability to cater to those needs efficiently in many cases, especially when dealing with the pressing socio-economic disparities that clearly affect many foreign residents (Takenoshita, 2015).[157]

Over the last few years, and under the *Tabunka Kyosei* framework, the policy plans have revealed the determination of the Ministry of Justice to improve their public relations campaigns and to ensure that sound information is easily available for foreign residents (MOJ, 2015b:121). The Ministry has also vowed to continue to guarantee the smooth transition to the residency management system which was introduced in 2015 (MOJ, 2015b:124), to strengthen the cooperation between the central and the local levels (MOJ, 2015b:125), and to keep promoting measures to address the diverse difficulties that the Nikkeijin population faces in Japan, including the lack of employment (MOJ, 2015b:125).

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[155] The term *'Tabunka Kyosei'* – multicultural coexistence – first emerged in Kobe in 1995 after a powerful earthquake badly hit the city, which led its inhabitants to realize that migrants had not perfectly adapted and that they were in need of assistance (Kashiwazaki, 2013). The 'Tabunka Kyosei' Centre was created as a response to that event, and as explained, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs adopted that terminology in 2006. Japan's integration policy has gone through different phases, from the "internationalization" days (kosukaika) in the 1980s to Tabunka Kyosei in the 2000s, among others. See Flowers (2012) for a more detailed description.

[156] Most academics agree that the infrastructure is rather weak, that the central government should be more involved, and that the connections between the central and the local levels should be strengthened (see Iguchi, 2012). Nevertheless, when extending this criticism, it is important to note that there are initiatives that have emerged from the central level. These are measures that are either focused on immigrants explicitly (e.g. MHLW, 2011) or broader policies that seek to address a particular matter (like changes to the education law), which include a special provision for immigrants (Green and Kadoya, 2013:7).

[157] As Takenoshita (2014:10) argues, the lack of government effort to address socioeconomic disparity is connected to the "meagre Japanese welfare provisions for the working age population".

5.4. Anti-discrimination

Japan is playing a more active role in curbing hate speech and fighting discrimination. The Ministry of Justice conducted its first survey on discrimination issues in November 2016 with the aim of influencing policy, and its results were released to the public in March 2017. The survey indicated that a substantial proportion of foreign residents had been discriminated against while living in Japan and that the most common forms of discrimination were rent application denials, Japanese-only recruitment practices and racist taunts (see Osaki, 2017d for further details). Besides the survey, a new hate speech law was passed in May 2016, which has deterred xenophobic rallies to a certain degree (although anti-immigrant groups have found ways to circumvent the legislation) (The Japan Times, 2017). The government seems to be responding to the increase in foreign residents and to the pressure exerted by migrant-rights and human rights associations.[158] These measures can also be interpreted as a necessary step on the path towards adopting a more comprehensive immigration policy and indicate the country's determination to present a positive image to the rest of the world during the 2020 Olympic Games.

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[158] Shipper's notion of "associate activism" (2006) in this case is quite illustrative.

6. CHAPTER SIX: POLICY MOBILITIES

This chapter explores the second objective of this research, namely: 'to detail how Japan has and is interacting with other national entities and international organizations in the production of its immigration legislation, be it through policy learning processes or collaborative immigration policy design'. The chapter's goal is to build upon the material presented in the previous section, to examine the issue of policy mobilities/collaboration from a macro perspective, and to integrate these insights within the larger narrative presented in this work. A distinction is made between policy learning (information-sharing processes made possible by different forces and agents that entail no further commitment for any of the parties involved other than the mere dissemination of ideas), and policy collaboration (information-sharing with a view to contributing to a shared cooperative legislative venture in which the agents concerned hold a certain degree of responsibility over the design of the policy). The first subsection of this chapter *(6.1. Overview)* serves as an introduction; it examines the degree of agency that Japanese policy-makers possess when introducing any modifications to the immigration law and analyses the nature of the policy transfer/collaborative management processes. The second *(6.2. Policy Learning)* and third *(6.3. Collaborative Policy Design)* subsections explore these matters in detail. Baker and Baker (2016) and Temenos and McCann (2013) set the larger framework for this inquiry. Moreover, Dolowitz's and Marsh's (2000:5) model helped clarify the concepts used in this chapter.

6.1. Overview

<u>Governance Levels</u>

Before examining how Japan interacts with foreign governments and institutions, it is essential to contextualize the degree of agency that Japanese politicians and bureaucrats possess. At the national level, government officials, based on the policy context, analyse potential trade-offs and

interact with different players to reach specific decisions.[159] Once a given bill is drafted, it is examined by the Legislation Bureau and submitted to the National Diet.[160] If approved by the two Houses in the National Diet, then the bill is passed and instantiated the into law. Any further modifications respect the larger legislative framework set by the Japanese Constitution. Besides the Constitution, the commitment to preserve the façade and the status quo regarding immigration by the current administration and the country's nationhood ordering principle are important factors that limit policymakers' agency when making any changes to the law – and that set the larger domestic framework of reference as well.[161]

At the supranational level, Japan is not part of any multi-national politico-economic conglomerates - like, for instance, the European Union.[162] This, in turn, means that, unlike individual European nations, Japan has complete control over its own borders. Japan, therefore, does not share competencies with neighbouring countries in order to maintain its border sovereignty (Tarumoto, 2012).[163] This sovereignty, however, is not completely 'absolute' as the nation is a signatory to a series of international treaties (which include the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees).[164]

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[159] Let us further illustrate this point – by providing further details on how the policy making process took place in 2015. Besides the interactions with different pressure groups (discussed in *Chapter Five*), bureaucrats first convened the *Immigration Policy Discussion Panel* in 2015 to draft the policy reports that were analysed for this work. In this series of meetings, policy experts were given a platform to discuss some of their ideas. After these hearings and discussions took place, law-makers then met with other representatives from other ministries and relevant organs, a private consultative group of the Ministry of Justice and took into consideration the opinions the public as well (MOJ, 2015d:78). Eventually, the '5th Basic Plan for Immigration Control' was drafted after a series of additional meetings. This document serves as a 'plan of action' when moving forward.

[160] The National Diet is the legislative branch organ of the Government of Japan. For more details regarding how new laws are passed, please see http://www.sangiin.go.jp/eng/guide/legi/

[161] The nationhood ordering principle favours social conservatism over alleged greater economic output in certain instances.

[162] The Japanese nation is a member of the G7, G8 and the United Nations, among others. These institutions, however, have little to no power over Japan's border control decisions.

[163] Whether these are countries, international organizations or other non-state actors. Japan signed bilateral agreements though with a number of countries, though. (see EPAs, page 69)

[164] Many laws regarding the treatment of foreign residents were changed in 1981, when Japan became a signatory to the convention, so that they would fit international standards.

<u>Nature of the Policy Transfer/Cooperative Processes</u>

It is safe to argue then that within the established framework, most of the decisions that government representatives and bureaucrats make are voluntary – as opposed to coercive, conditional, or pressured by international bodies (See Dolowitz and Marsh, 2005 for further details). Because of the previously discussed factors (the need to uphold the façade, the country's nationhood ordering principle and the notion of national sovereignty and border control), Japan can be assumed to be quite reticent to work alongside other nations and international organizations in the design of its immigration policy.[165] This is particularly evident with regard to the admission domain of the legislation.[166] Collaboration with other foreign entities is thus limited and relegated to a series of symposiums and events that mostly cover integration topics, border control management and security questions. This reticence, however, does not mean that Japanese bureaucrats do not closely monitor what happens across the world in terms of immigration control management. In fact, there is substantial evidence that demonstrates that policy-makers examine both successful and unsuccessful international examples and models, identify desirable policy traits and use them as examples to design their own (im)migration schemes.

Nevertheless, it is true that, on a number of occasions, international organizations and foreign nations have pressured Japan to modify certain systems (although this cannot be categorized as 'direct imposition'). For instance, the United States has been extremely critical of the Technical Intern Trainee Program (see US Department of State, 2016), which led the Ministry of Justice to modify some of the regulations with a view to better monitoring the functioning of the program and ensuring that the rights of migrants were respected. The Ministry of Justice also introduced stricter requirements to

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[165] Although globalization has increased global trade, foreign capital flow, and led to deeply interconnected production processes (Deacon, 2007), Japan's reticence to collaborate with external groups in the design of its admission policy demonstrates how restrictions to human mobility are frequently prioritized over other forms of factor mobility. Despite the contemporary shift in governance from the national to the global in areas such as finance and trade, it is self-evident that migration control is still a primarily sovereign affair (Geiger and Pecoud, 2013).

[166] Not only Japan is wary of sharing these competencies: other nations and international organizations recognize and respect the country's sovereignty over its own borders as well.

obtain entertainer visas after 2005 (Kamiya, 2015) to contain cross-border human trafficking after it was subjected to notorious international pressure (Hein, 2012). In the late 1980s, the Philippines harshly criticized the efforts by Japanese municipalities to 'invite' foreign brides to local communities (Takahata, 2015). Sometimes these pressures are not overt but subtle, indirect, and related to soft power dynamics. For instance, a relatively large number of refugees – by Japanese standards – were admitted into the country after it hosted the G7 summits both in 1981 (when Japan ratified the Geneva Refugee Convention) and in 2016 (Asahi Shimbun, 2017b).

6.2. Policy Learning

Learning from Other Nations' Immigration Models

<u>Historical Context</u>

Contrary to the commonly held stereotype – at least in terms of immigration policy - Japan cannot be described as '*inward-looking*'. It is true that the Japanese might not actively engage with other countries and international organizations in the design of legislation, nonetheless, the available evidence suggests that policy makers closely examine other countries' systems and keep track of the latest trends regarding immigration control management.[167] Considering the question of policy mobilities, it is safe to argue that the Japanese have been actively learning from other foreign schemes since the Meiji era in the late 19th century. As indicated in *Chapter Five*, Japan's early immigration policy was heavily influenced by its Prussian counterpart, underwent a series of changes (from more liberal to more restrictive, see Hein, 2012), and was substantially modified after the American occupation of Japan in 1945. As a result of American interventionism, the 1952 Immigration Control

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[167] The 'foreign models' question tends not to be a crucial component discussed in Japanese policy reports and records – at least those available in the English language -. Nonetheless, there are various official documents that clearly indicate that such learning processes are taking place. For instance, the policy reports emphasize that "the future acceptance of foreign nationals requires understanding of the systems and circumstances of other countries" (MOJ, 2015a:15). On a different note, Watanabe (2010:20) illustrates how this relates to the Technical Intern Trainee Program. Also, in Reynolds and Aquino (2017:1), Heizo Takenaka – a former economy minister – talks about Singapore and Hong Kong as examples. To learn more about how these ideas travel through institutions, please see Roberts (2013:214).

Act is reminiscent of other Anglo-Saxon immigration control regimes (Iguchi, 2012:21). Although the legislation managed to partially retain some of its previous character and features (the policy was especially selective when compared to other Anglo-Saxon schemes (see Kondo, 2002)), the nature of the admission domain of the policy and the foreign registration laws became increasingly reminiscent of the American legislation of the time.

Since the 1952 Act was enacted, policy-makers have examined both successful and failed international examples and models (especially Western schemes), identified advantageous traits, evaluated potential economic and social trade-offs, and used these cases as an inspiration when designing their own systems. Schemes deemed 'unsuccessful' have been mostly disregarded. On the other hand, successful policy traits have been studied, translated, and integrated into the legislation - always ensuring that they adjust to the Japanese policy landscape.[168] This process of learning, translation, amalgamation, and eventual incorporation is representative of how Japan has dealt with foreign influences for most of its history.[169]

Such exchange of ideas and the study of foreign legislation has become much more evident since 1989, when the major paradigm shift in immigration policy management to date took place. The legacy of the *'89 Regime'* ('Japan does not have an *immigration policy*' & 'unskilled labour is not accepted') and the maintenance of the status quo are both a constraint and a limitation for current policy-makers that clearly decreases the potential pool of foreign policies that can be selected as desirable examples. This is particularly evident when examining the relationship between the current

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[168] The outcomes of these policies, especially in the social, economic, and political realms (e.g. whether the schemes were perceived to have benefitted host societies economically, or, whether they could have given rise to social tensions or political backlash) determines 'success' or 'failure'.

[169] Japan is a country of 'borrowers'. Over the years, whether it was new rice cultivation techniques, industrial machinery, military aircrafts or economic policy, the Japanese have learnt from diverse international examples and incorporated the best of each world, transforming these innovations to make them distinctively 'Japanese'. This is in line with what Nozomu (1980) refers to as *Wakon Kansai /* and the latter *Wakon Yosai* motto – "Japanese spirit with Western technology" (see page 41). Since the Meiji days, the imagined culture of *the West* has served as Japan's model and 'significant other' in the country's process of modern national identity construction. This connection resulted in "a strong attachment to Western theory and methodology" but also gave rise to a certain degree of "resistance and resentment towards *the West*" (Kuwayama, 2009:32).

framework — pressing labour shortages and the new schemes that have been adopted over the last few years — which have led lawmakers to explore all possible policy options, often designing new loopholes or expanding systems that are already *'flawed' by design*.

Models

Japan thinks of itself as a liberal democratic country and as such identifies with Western nations, especially European (see footnote 168). This 'politics of national identity' arguably creates a hierarchy of potential policy-models: The practices and schemes of Western and European nations tend to be the main source of inspiration (for best and also *'worst'* practices) whereas other country cases – e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong and Korea (Korea is seen as a direct competitor too)[170] – are discussed more privately and occupy a lower step in the ladder.[171] Sometimes these practices are incorporated without subjecting them to major changes (for instance, Japan copied the German Foreign Advisory Board model – see Hein, 2012:21). On different occasions, specific schemes are modified to respect the main axioms underlying the legislation so that they fit they the 'migration' focus of the policy (rather than that of permanent *immigration).*[172]

As of 2017, there is no single country which is particularly regarded as a model, although the closest example would be the case of Germany. In fact, the long history of bilateral relations and collaboration between Germany and Japan has been well documented (see Tidten, 2011 for further details).[173] Regarding immigration legislation, and besides the Foreign Advisory Board, Japan also

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[170] For instance, Korea had established its own highly skilled visa in 2010 (Korea Immigration Service, 2010), prior to Japan doing so in 2012, and some argue that the Japanese decided to take the leap forward and establish their own scheme – emulating Korea's initiative. Owing to their cultural, economic, and ethnic composition similarities, Korea is perceived both as a model to closely monitor and as a potential rival (see The Outlook Foundation, 2014).

[171] Additional factors (e.g. International Treaties: Japan is a Signatory to the Geneva Refugee Convention Treaty) make policy-makers disregard certain other schemes, like the systems in place in the Gulf States, for instance.

[172] This is exemplified in the Highly Skilled Professional Visa, which is discussed on page 68.

[173] This collaboration has often led to policy transfers. Japan's relationship with Germany (Prussia, at the time) dates back to the early Meiji days. As Flottman indicates (2012:6), Prussia "emerged as the most influential (state) in Japan's modernization". Flottman suggests that this may have occurred due to the fact that Prussia's "authoritarian and militaristic infrastructure was homologous with Japan's militaristic legacy and authoritarian political tradition" (2012:6). Indeed, there is clear evidence that many of Japan's modern laws – including the Citizenship Act – were inspired by the Prussian model (see page 44 of this work for more details). This

considered adopting the German style of foreign language education for permanent residents (Hein, 2012). It is necessary to indicate that these policy learning processes are not limited to the traits which are actually embraced: they also include the rejection of schemes that are deemed objectionable. In this particular instance, it can be argued that Germany's experiences with unskilled immigration flows have, for decades, profoundly shaped Japanese bureaucrats' feelings and wariness towards accepting a large number of unskilled foreign workers and granting them residence rights.[174] An example which illustrates this point is the way in which the Japanese political class viewed (and arguably, still views) the 'Gastarbeiter Program' that brought a considerable number of Turkish workers into Germany to fill the demand for labour in the 1960s.[175] Although the system was designed so that these labourers would not settle down permanently, a series of legislative amendments provided the incentive for many to remain in Germany. As the available evidence seems to suggest, the outcome of the 'Gastarbeiter Program' was arguably considered as an example to be avoided by Japanese bureaucrats in the 1980s.[176] The Gastarbeiter example provided several reasons, many of which were economic (see Suga 2012), to encourage policy-makers to retain the ban on simple labour when substantial policy reforms took place in 1989. Indeed, the repercussions of this decision still echo today as Japan's basic immigration stand has not really changed since then. The lessons of the 'Gastarbeiter Program' and the experiences of the West in general, as Korekawa (2015) argues, revealed the settlement

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relationship survived "the short-term enmity of the two countries during the First World War" (Tidten, 2011:75) and the events that took place during WWII – only to be further solidified since the early 1950s. To this day, such connection remains strong and has been further reinforced by a rich tradition of cultural exchange and important trade agreements.

[174] It is crucial to highlight that the experience of Germany with this program was not just the only reason that encouraged policymakers not to open the doors to unskilled labour. Economic, social factors and Japan's own history with migrants played an essential and probably more important role. Yamawaki's insights in this regard are quite telling (see the 'conclusion' section in his 2000 piece).

[175] http://www.dw.com/en/turkish-guest-workers-transformed-german-society/a-15489210

[176] Kodama (2015:1) indicates that a series of social problems emerged in association with immigrants in Germany, either because of the lack of debate and consensus about their admittance or due to the absence of a clearly formulated immigration policy (particularly, its integration domain). As explained by the experts that were interviewed for this project, a number of politicians have expressed their concerns over these matters and currently wonder whether this is the path that Japan should follow. These worries are very much in line with the statement made by an anonymous German official who was interviewed for Sapio's 2014 special on immigration. He claimed that "Germany had so many problems (with Turkish guest workers brought in during the 1960s to relieve a labour shortage). Why would Japan go that way?" (Taken from Hoffman, 2014:1).

obstacles that various host societies experienced when dealing with labour migrants and their families.[177]

Although foreign policy influences are noticeable throughout the skill continuum – and not only concerning the management of unskilled migration flows - it is perhaps in the Highly Skilled Professional Scheme where these are the most evident. In terms of its structural characteristics, the Highly Skilled Foreign Professional Visa is a hybrid model, which takes aspects from both the Canadian and American examples (Green, 2014:5). As Green points out, potential applicants need an employer prior to arriving in Japan, which is a common trait with market-based systems, like in the American example. On the other hand, eligibility is assessed through means of the point system, which is reminiscent of many skill-based schemes, such as that of Canada. As far as permanent residency is concerned, the HSFP scheme draws from the experience of countries like the United Kingdom or the United States, where successful candidates are not offered permanent residency upon arrival (unlike Canada or Australia, who often do). Although the Abe Administration has eased the necessary requirements for the highly skilled to apply for a permanent residency permit, the maintenance of the status quo and the preservation of the *'no immigration principle'* hinder the ability of the Ministry of Justice to offer such residence status up front. Other European examples were considered when designing the HSFP as well as schemes in the Asia-Pacific region (Hong Kong and Singapore primarily, due to the crucial role that foreign talent plays in these countries' economies).

How Is This Policy Learning Process Occurring?

For these models to converge and interact, ideas need to travel through time and space. The diverse channels of diffusion, the agents that take part in that dissemination and the dominant notions held by society at large, as argued previously, constitute a fluid, complex, capillary network of

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[177] Besides this example, other domestic previous experiences act as a deterrent for policymakers to lift the ban on unskilled labour. Weiner (2000:58), for instance, contends that the former colonial subjects who stayed in Japan after 1952 "served as a bureaucratic reminder of the unforeseen consequences of labour importation."

connections that allow for these processes to take place.[178] To illustrate how this policy learning processes are occurring, this work makes a distinction between *agents* (the individuals or collectives that advance ideas: e.g. the International Monetary Fund), *channels* (the physical and concrete but also intangible mechanisms/vectors that allow communication between these agents: e.g. conferences) and *ideas* themselves (the specific notions regarding immigration control). The assumption is that agents both shape and are influenced by the different paradigms, opinions, ways of doing and points of view available in the market-place for ideas, whether these are specific understandings about economics, geopolitical agendas, nation branding projects, stereotypes about certain ethnicities, etc. Given these premises, there is, therefore, an imperative need to understand the possible pre-conceptions, interests, and motivations that determine the outcome of these interactions and power struggles. This section delves into these matters with a view to identifying the main channels and mechanisms that allow these processes to work in the case of Japan.

<u>Admission</u>

As noted, Japan actively learns from other foreign schemes, and these processes ultimately have a bearing on policy outcomes. It has also been suggested that the officials in the Ministry of Justice - and particularly the politicians in the Cabinet Office - are remarkably influential as far as the design of the legislation is concerned, and that their worldview is reflected in the legislation. Yet, it would be inaccurate to think of legislative power as some sort of consistent, concrete, solid entity. Power is more fluid than we often care to admit, and despite the commonly held impression that these developments occur within restricted, closed-knit confines, the truth is that a large number of actors are involved in these processes.

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[178] This work indicated that Japan had adopted certain German practices regarding integration legislation strategies. As Hein (2012) argued, many of these practices had substantially been influenced by Canadian integration measures in the 1990s.

Within the ambiguous boundaries of the state apparatus, and despite the authority that the Cabinet and the Ministry of Justice have over the design of the legislation,[179] it is clear that other ministries, bureaucrats, and state lawyers also cast their influence upon these systems.[180] Besides these actors, the country's overseas diplomatic missions and other policy experts who are paid by the state (MOJ, 2015a:3) also take part in the mobilization of ideas.[181] All these agents, either through their own experience and deployment overseas, private reports, study tours, attendance to public meetings and conferences, policy reports and white documents, media exposure, personal connections, private visits to other officials who work for international organizations/other nations or private lectures create an intricate, collective epistemic community that concentrates much of the necessary power to alter the legislation.[182]

But perhaps what is more interesting in this case is how non-state actors influence bureaucrats in the design of the admission realm of the legislation. International organizations do not seek to interfere or actively get involved in this regard, for Japan's sovereignty over the admission domain is respected and not contested for the most part. Sometimes organizations like the OECD or the IMF would issue certain recommendations which have a slim chance of eventually reaching the upper echelons of power.[183] Diffusion channels include white papers, representative visits, and close-door/public conferences.[184] Sovereign nations generally do not engage in these developments either,

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[179]Although influenced by larger paradigms, these two bodies set the agenda and mark the path to be followed.
[180] Especially the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) over the last few years (related to growth targets). Besides the previous, The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries have favoured a more liberal immigration policy. These organizations compete for funding and influence, and they tend to have their own agenda, so power struggles are clear. This is due to the fact that there is no such thing as an 'Immigration Ministry', which demands for these ministries to collaborate. Also, it is necessary to reflect upon the fact that these entities are not monolithic behemoths but are also composed by individuals who have different opinions on how Japan should move forward.
[181] Bureaucrats collaborate with officials deployed overseas and share information concerning various issues. Please see (MOJ, 2015d:100) for evidence regarding the distribution of publicity.
[182] Here are a few examples: The ASEM meeting from 2013 included key note speakers like the former Minister of Justice and the Director of the Immigration Bureau. Please, access the document on https://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/2013_-_DG-Immigration-Final_AGENDA.pdf
[183] See (OECD, 2017b:24) or Ganelli and Miake, (2015).
[184] Although in this case, and as the researcher was confirmed, it is worth noting that no official representatives from the Japanese Government attended the 2016 Metropolis Conference in Nagoya.

especially regarding the admission aspect of the policy, and the individuals who represent these do not, for the most part, lobby for specific matters or issue recommendations. Besides international organizations and sovereign countries, there are two additional agents that are somewhat more influential when advancing their knowledge and influence (however, the power that they exert over the ultimate decisions can be considered to be rather moderate). Academia is the first of these additional agents, and it is presumably quite active in this case as diverse meetings and publications show.[185] Certain government officials – such as Kono Taro – have close ties with leading academics in the field. Also, symposiums that connect bureaucrats/politicians are sometimes organized and a number of domestic and foreign academics have been invited to the meetings which result in the production of draft policy reports (MOJ, 2015d:78).[186] Aside from academia, other non-state organisations, such as private think tanks, also set up conferences where specific issues are raised and discussed and where certain interests are defended and lobbied for.[187]

<u>Integration</u>

The line that separates active learning processes from policy collaboration is often unclear and difficult to draw. This is particularly noticeable in this aspect. However, and in contrast to the admission part of the policy – where Japan's sovereignty acts as a clear deterrent to greater active foreign involvement – most such initiatives can be placed under this category. Sometimes representatives from foreign governments (like those of Sweden or Germany) are invited to Japan, primarily to discuss integration issues and as it could be expected, talk about best practices.[188] There have also been a number of initiatives led by international organizations that have had a slight impact on the making of the policy, like the ASEAN + 1,[189] or ASEM (see MOJ, 2013:138) meetings. Most

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[185] http://iminseisaku.org/top/
[186] http://ssj.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/archives/2007/10/ssj_4730_dijgsa.html
[187] See the interesting work that the Outlook Foundation is doing in this regard. In addition to these, student think-tanks or international events like the International Metropolis conferences, although noticeably less influential, do encourage the debate on these matters.
[188] http://www.fes-japan.org/news-list/e/conference-migration-and-demographic-challenges-new-policy-approaches-in-japan-and-germany/
[189] http://www.neat.org.ph/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=238&Itemid=124

academics are particularly active concerning these matters, since they often highlight the need for Japan to adopt a comprehensive integration policy. As such, the practices of foreign national engagements are often analysed and given credit through their work (see, for instance, Iguchi 2012:21) and through the meetings they attend.[190] For their part, as indicated by one of the interviewees for this project, Japanese officials have been reported to have visited foreign bureaucrats overseas to enquire about specific integration measures.

6.3. Collaborative Policy Design

The number of collaborative projects and ventures concerning the design of legislation is relatively low. In fact, to the best of the author's knowledge, there is no official framework for collaboration in this regard.[191] This is not to argue, however, that trans-national cooperation and exchange do not exist at all.

There are some cooperative ventures regarding the management of specific schemes,[192] but there is arguably no involvement with external foreign organizations/nations that influences the making of the legislation per se (other than the necessary ties that Japan has with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration as a member of the international community).[193] It is also true that the policy reports highlight that Japan collaborates with international organizations, but to argue that these meetings heavily influence the policy making process would be inaccurate.[194] This interaction is, in fact, more like an example of *policy learning*.

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[190] http://cjr.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2015/10/JPN-Immigration-and-Foreign-Workers-Conf-2009.pdf
[191] In opposition to what the European Union or ASEAN do.
[192] Management in this case stands for 'collaboration regarding the operation of a given system'. This has nothing to do with sharing legislative competencies. For instance, the admittance of health professionals through the EPA systems can be considered to be a joint program. There is also a degree of international cooperation with regard to the Technical Intern Trainee Program. Please click the links to access JICWELS and JITCO, which are the organizations in Japan that respectively manage and oversee each of these systems.
[193] Japan does not invite foreign bodies to explicitly participate in the policy making process. As explained previously, such rejection has to do primarily with the connection between border control management and the notion of national sovereignty.
[194] Mostly in terms of security (MOJ, 2015a:21).

7. CHAPTER SEVEN: FINAL DISCUSSION

7.1. Contribution and Limitations

This thesis studied the connection between demographic change and immigration policy design in the context of Japan. It updated the latest policy developments, which the author considered a valuable exercise given the rapidly changing policy landscape. Additionally, it detailed how the Japanese interact with other nations and international organizations in the production of the legislation.

The researcher acknowledges that there are limitations which need to be discussed. Beside any 'personal bias' conversations, the researcher recognizes that his lack of Japanese language skills as well as his non-Japanese background influence the research. Yet, there is also a positive side to the matter in hand, for 'outsiders' often see things from a different perspective and question norms taken for granted. As such, outsiders can enrich debates by bringing a diversity of opinion and potentially challenging accepted paradigms. The complexity and multidisciplinary nature of the subject, the broad scope of the research questions which were posed and the overall process of reductionism may have led to overgeneralizations and to a lack of accurate representations regarding specific matters.

Despite these drawbacks, the researcher believes that this is a valuable piece of work for a number of reasons. First of all, the holistic nature of the process of enquiry undertaken in this research through the theoretical lens of political demography illustrates the complexity of the matter in hand, helps contextualize specific aspects within the larger population/immigration debate and guides a thesis which suggests that demographic change has had a clear influence on the design of the policy. Second, this work serves as an introduction to the *demographic change – immigration policy nexus* in the context of Japan, which might prove useful for those students and researchers who are not particularly familiar with the matter in hand - and whose methodology could be employed in similar research projects undertaken in other national contexts. Finally, this thesis also advances knowledge

within the emerging field of policy mobilities and explores Japan's involvement in the global circulation of immigration policy models and ideas – an area which had hardly received any attention thus far.

7.2. Conclusions

Although the phenomenon of demographic change in Japan is certainly not new, this thesis has indicated that ageing and population decline continue to pose serious concerns for the Japanese state. To address these challenges through legislative action – which are being felt especially in the realm of economics – the government seems to have adopted a multi-layered strategy. Under the 'Abenomics' plan, the Japanese are hoping that, through a series of macroeconomic measures and structural reforms, solid economic growth can once again be achieved. Indeed, relying on technological advancements, prioritizing growth and further reforming the systems in place (e.g. pensions, healthcare) seems to be the course of action that the Abe Administration has embarked on to cope with these pressures.

Within this framework, the current LDP government has favoured a greater utilization of foreign human resources. Many others have indicated that Japan would clearly benefit from the adoption of a more liberal (im)migration policy as well (advocates have different opinions on whether the policy should target actual immigrants or migrants instead). And despite the façade that Japan is 'not a country of immigration', and that the country 'does not admit unskilled foreign labour' – which politicians still try to uphold –, the number of foreign residents and foreign workers keeps growing. This thesis has hypothesized that a 'highly selective, cautious, progressive incrementalism' strategy has been adopted. The evidence suggests that the legislation has become more liberal in nature over the last few years, although it is still embedded within a larger, restrictive framework (which the current 'façade' regarding immigration control policies is representative of). The new amendments do not consider immigration explicitly to be a replacement for the loss in population, but have facilitated the mobility of foreign human resources so they can contribute to the economy - while respecting the country's nationhood regulatory principle. Japan's immigration legislation also seeks to partially

alleviate labour shortages in specific sectors, like in the case of caregiving (which is strictly related to the issue of demographic change). These sorts of amendments have led many to hypothesize that the nation might be moving towards more formal immigration and integration policies. The current regulations clearly target highly skilled foreign workers, who are generally provided with a path to settlement. Most skilled non-Japanese workers can also apply for permanent residency after having lived in Japan for a number of years, although visa restrictions limit their intake and prospects for settlement. The number of unskilled foreign workers who earn a living in Japan is on the rise too, although they are generally rotated and admitted through loopholes.

Regarding the question of policy mobilities, evidence has been provided to suggest that the Japanese have learnt from various other international examples and that they have closely examined best and worst practices in immigration control for decades, primarily from Western nations. Despite the stereotype that Japan is an isolate and secluded nation, the country is certainly not *'inward looking'* in this regard, for various agents and mechanisms (both state and non-state) have been proven to actively engage in the global circulation of policy ideas. History has shown that Japan is a nation of 'borrowers', and that the Japanese have traditionally been open to foreign influences. The available data seem to indicate that this phenomenon is not an exception as far as immigration policy is concerned. This work has also suggested that there is a degree of collaboration between Japan and other countries and international organizations, although unlike a series of Western countries, it is to be noted that the Japanese do not share immigration policy design interests with these actors (primarily because of the country's nationhood ordering principle, the need to uphold the 'no immigration façade', and the notion of national sovereignty and border control).

Appendix One: The Immigration Policy Making Process in Japan

ADMISSION
INTEGRATION
ANTI-DISCRIMINATION
MANAGEMENT, BORDER CONTROL

JAPAN'S IMMIGRATION LAW

Legal Processes

DECISIONS

Evaluations, political struggles, ideological motivations, pragmatism vs. idealism

Proposals, suggestions

DIFFERENT MOTIVATIONS TO CHANGE THE POLICY: ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ETC
In this case: (Im)migrants to counteract the detrimental effects of demographic change?

TRADE-OFFS AND POSSIBLE IMPACTS OF THE POLICY

POLICY MAKING PROCESS
Ideological Framework
· Primary Actors
· Secondary Actors
· Tertiary Actors

INTERACTION WITH DIFFERENT PLAYERS

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT AND OTHER FACTORS

ECONOMICS OF IMMIGRATION
· Contributions to GDP / enablers of economic activity
· Taxation, wealth re-distribution, welfare spending
· Labor shortages by sector, location, skills
· Automation and technology
· Possibility of fluctuations, recessions, lay offs
· Possible detrimental effects for domestic workers
· Restrictive policy and illegal immigration
· Globalization, trade, skill mismatches

DEMOGRAPHIC CONTRIBUTIONS OF (IM)MIGRANTS
· Marriage
· Fertility
· Population replacement
· Revitalization of secondary regions

POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON JAPANESE SOCIETY
· Safety and crime perceptions and statistics
· Social cohesion
· Geographical distribution of (im)migrants
· Homogeneity and ethnic/cultural dilution narratives

PERCEPTIONS OF THE STATE OF AFFAIRS
· Economic
· Demographic
· Social
· Political

JAPAN AND THE WORLD
· Geopolitics and (im)migration: (e.g. voting rights, war wounds, soft power, terrorism)
· Role of international law
· Japan's Place in the World: Interpretation of History, Belonging
· Global economic forces

PREVIOUS EXP. WITH IMMIGRATION
· History of the policy
· The Japanese language as a comparative disadvantage
· Previous domestic experiences with immigration and outcomes
· Perceptions of other countries' experiences

SUPPLY SIDE
· Potential (im)migrant stock, push factors, willingness to migrate
· Brokers and the business of immigration

DEMAND SIDE
· Groups and employers who favour (im)migration (E.g. Keidanren, SMEs, etc.)

INSTITUTIONAL POLITICS
· "Ministerial "war", different interests amongst Ministries
· Different opinions within the LDP
· Politicians discourse and ideas of belonging and nationhood

ATTITUDES OF THE PUBLIC TOWARDS IMMIGRATION
· Current available data
· Terminology and taboos
· Social conservatism, ethnocultural nationalism (larger framework)
· Perceptions of cultural dilution vs. multicultural views
· Perceptions of economic contributions or burden
· Visibility, class, percentage, nationality (of non-Japanese)
· Different demographics, social class, location of Japanese citizens and attitudes

OTHER PRESSURE GROUPS AND INFLUENTIAL PLAYERS
· Unions and workers' organizations
· Grassroots organizations involved in politics
· Academia
· Media
· Think tanks
· IOs
· Foreign contries
· Right wing associations (E.g. Nippon Kaigi, Zaitoukai)
· Other political parties (Democratic Party of Japan, Communist Party of Japan)
· Other stakeholders (JITCO, Rural Cooperatives)

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