

## Super-mobility' and translocality: Irregular workers and the informal farm labour market in rural Taiwan

Nous accueillons Dr Isabelle Cockel, maîtresse de conférences en études sur l'Asie de l'Est et le développement international à l'Université de Portsmouth.



**Dr Isabelle Cockel** interviendra sur "'Super-mobility' and translocality: Irregular workers and the informal farm labour market in rural Taiwan".

This research is concerned with how small-scale family farmers in Taiwan recruit migrant workers who are either absconders from their legally contracted employment or visa overstayers whose employment is not legally permitted. Building on this concept of translocality, we propose a new concept of super-mobility that defines a situation where absconding guest workers are able to frequently take up casual employment in an informal labour market and increase their physical/geographical and occupational/economic mobility. The mobility regimes' restrictions on their residency make them de facto single, living without the company of their family. As atomised human beings, they are free from the physical burden of caring for their family members, which is usually the cause of lower mobility. Because they are not governed by a legal contract, they are free from the mobility regimes' surveillance of and limitation on their physical/geographical and occupational/economic mobility and are free to move frequently to wherever employment is available. Super-mobility is resourced by co-ethnic networking with the translocal migrant community and inter-ethnic networking with Taiwanese brokers and farmers, which develops over time (Baas and Yeoh, 2019). The cost of super-mobility relates to the prices paid for receiving employment information from nodes in the network, as well as for workers' transport and accommodation. Super-mobility is by default made by the mobility regimes, but it clearly draws attention to the failure of regimes to use categorisation as a tool to regulate labour migration. Super-mobility is highly volatile and unstable, but it thrives on the vitality of translocality. However, that is also a fault, in that anyone who knows about super-mobility can easily cripple it by turning in an irregular worker to the state; the power to repatriate can terminate super-mobility.

This talk will be discussed by **Léonie Hemdat** (Ph. D student, Lise).

**Dr Isabelle Cockel** is Senior Lecturer in East Asian and International Development Studies at the University of Portsmouth. Her research focuses on labour and marriage migration in East Asia. Exploring migrant labour in the care, agriculture and fishing industries, she is particularly interested in how the state instrumentalises migration for political economic interests and how migrant workers develop grassroots activism with the help of social media for their advocacy and campaign. Her publications focus on sovereignty, citizenship, gender, activism, and irregular work in the informal labour market. Enacting upon her commitment to academic activism, she utilises academic blogs to raise public awareness of inequality and injustice embedded in labour migration. She is currently the Secretary-General of the European Association of Taiwan Studies, Research Associate of Centre of Taiwan Studies of the School of Oriental and African Studies, and a Member on the European Advisory Board of European Research Centre on Contemporary Taiwan at the University of Tübingen. She is an Associate Editor of Asia Pacific Viewpoint and on the editorial board of International Journal of Taiwan Studies and International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies.

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## Presentation

Séminaire Ephémère du Lise

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**Salle 21 (1) 13**

Accès 21, 1er étage. Au 292, rue Saint-Martin, Paris 3ème.

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