

GUEST LECTURE

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The Queer Affection for IT Industry: Trans Chinese migrants and their “labour” migration to Japan

Salle de réunion/ Interdisciplinary Unit for
Economic Sociology (LISE UMR 3320)
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The Queer Affection for IT Industry: Trans Chinese migrants and their “labour” migration to Japan

This ethnographic research unfolds trans Chinese migrants' seemingly particular affection for careers in the IT (Information and Technology) industry. By tapping into their lived experiences pre- and post-emigration, it explores their aspirations in this specific industrial sector in relation to their gender, ethnicity, and nationality, as well as their local and transnational migratory trajectories. Findings presented in this paper are drawn from extensive qualitative data that I collected between 2019 to 2023 through in-depth interviews with over 30 trans women from mainland China.

The empirical evidence sheds light on the complexity of the so-called labour migration of trans Chinese migrants. It reveals how their “affection” for the IT industry essentially reflects their perceived marginality, censorship, and suppression in the homeland, given the way they have been portrayed in both official and popular discourses as morally incompatible with and politically questionable to the Chinese nation-state. In this context, this research argues that their Sino-Japanese labour mobility to the IT industry serves less as a channel for the sake of labour migration but as an essential way for them to relocate for safety and security, as well as to exercise their agency in their queer identity quests.

