

Abstracts

Superstar Effects and the Distribution of Income

Koyo Miyoshi (Aichi Gakuin University)

This paper reviews two strands of research that invoke the term “superstar” to account for the concentration of income at the top of the distribution and decline in the labor share. The first is the superstar model of Rosen (1981). When sellers of differing quality are imperfect substitutes and the same service can be delivered to many consumers at low additional cost, small differences in talent are amplified into large differences in market size and earnings. The long-term evolution of the music market and the staggered entry of local television stations used as a natural experiment are consistent with this mechanism. Concentration of this kind need not imply deadweight loss, though excessive entry into contests for a few positions and the diversion of talent to unproductive sectors can make it costly. The second is the superstar-firm hypothesis of Autor et al. (2020). If value added shifts toward firms with high markups and low labor shares, the aggregate labor share falls, even when the shares of individual firms remain unchanged. In US data, reallocation among surviving firms accounts for much of the decline. Kehrig and Vincent (2021) find such low labor shares to be transitory, whereas OECD firm-level data point to persistent reallocation. Panon (2022) supplies causal evidence using foreign demand shocks.

Understanding Researcher Mobility: Measurement, Patterns, and Interpretation through Data

Hiromi S. Nagane (Chiba University)

Satoko Yasuda (Kyushu University)

The mobility of scientists and researchers has attracted increasing attention from scholars and policymakers because of its potential to enhance scientific productivity, yet neither the analytical models to examine it nor the data used to measure it have been standardized. To address this gap, this paper reviews prior studies, data and methods, compares mobility in Japan with other countries, and considers Japan’s institutional and labor market context. Evidence on mobility and research performance is mixed due to differences in samples, measures, endogeneity controls, and timing. Japan’s share of internationally mobile researchers is relatively low, but comparisons depend on indicator definitions, coverage, and context. The paper further reviews data sources for capturing mobility, including publication and patent records, CVs and researcher profiles, research funding and administrative records, and longitudinal surveys, and discusses what each can and cannot capture. In Japan, the expansion of fixed-term employment, shortages of stable positions, conditions in the doctoral labor market, and limited industry demand for PhD holders shape researcher mobility and careers. Researcher mobility should therefore be assessed not simply by mobility rates, but in relation to the institutional and labor market conditions underlying different types of moves.

Managing Idiosyncratic Deals in Japanese Companies: How Do I-deals Shape Organizational Order?

Yasuhiro Hattori (Kobe University)

This study reviews the development of research on idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), with a particular focus on star employees in Japanese companies, and discusses directions for further theoretical development. While Japanese human resource (HR) management has traditionally emphasized standardized personnel systems that support fairness and cooperation, the attraction and retention of highly talented employees increasingly require individualized treatment. To understand this tension, we review i-deals research published since 2005. The literature has progressively expanded from examining outcomes for i-deal recipients (i-dealers) to investigating spillover effects on coworkers and, more recently, workplace- and organization-level contextual factors. We then reinterpret i-deals from three perspectives. First, rather than merely representing exceptions to existing systems, i-deals can serve as triggers for organizational learning that generate new HR practices. Second, i-deals can create new employee desires and contribute to their reproduction

within workplaces. Third, beyond their instrumental value, i-deals can function as practices that make visible who the organization considers worthy of recognition and thereby shape organizational values.

Rethinking the Precarity of Creative Careers: An Urban–Rural Comparative Analysis of Dream-Chasing Rock Musicians

Hayao Nomura (Akita University)

This study examines qualitative differences in the precarity of creative workers' careers through a comparative analysis of urban and regional contexts, focusing on rock musicians pursuing the dream of succeeding through music. Although previous studies have highlighted career instability as a central issue in creative labor, its regional variations remain insufficiently explored. Drawing on the concept of portfolio careers, this study analyzes how musicians experience and negotiate precarity based on interviews with rock musicians in urban and regional areas. The findings show that urban musicians benefit from abundant opportunities for musical activities and related work, enabling them to pursue careers involving diverse forms of engagement with music. However, intense competition and the need for flexibility encourage them to choose non-regular employment in order to prioritize their musical careers. In contrast, regional musicians face limited opportunities and emphasize collaborative activities beyond their home regions. They choose regular employment to secure income while sustaining musical activities mainly on weekends. These findings demonstrate that precarity in creative labor is not a uniform condition but is shaped by regional structural contexts. What is considered precarious, and which forms of precarity musicians take on, vary according to the combination of multiple activities and jobs and the regional conditions in which careers are formed.

Contemporary Japanese Architects: The Generation and Institutionalization of Evaluation Criteria, and Career Formation

Jun Matsumura (Kobe Gakuin University)

This paper examines how the criteria of success among architects are generated, institutionalized, and destabilized, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and symbolic capital and the notion of fields (*champs*). Unlike medical or legal licensed professions governed by state-mandated monopolies, architectural practice separates formal qualification (*kenchikushi*) from professional identity (architect), leaving evaluative standards to be continuously negotiated within the architectural field. The paper traces three interlocking processes: the internalization of an architectural ethos through university design education and studio critique; the function of competitions and awards as certifying devices that convert individual cultural capital into circutable symbolic capital, amplified by the mass media and international prizes such as the Pritzker Prize; and the asymmetric application of these standards between elite architects and "neighborhood architects" (*machiba no kenchikuka*), who cultivate alternative measures of success rooted in local trust and sustained client relationships. The paper further argues that late-modern risk society, as exemplified by the 2005 structural data falsification scandal and the spread of participatory design, together with technologies such as building information modeling (BIM) and generative AI, are reconfiguring evaluation criteria: originality is being supplemented, and potentially displaced, by accountability, coordination, and trust-building as newly salient forms of professional competence.