



# **DRUŽBOSLOVNE RAZPRAVE**

## **Social Science Forum**



## Navodila avtorjem

1. Prispevke za rubriki Znanstveni članki in Kratki znanstveni prispevki avtorji /avtorice pošljejo na elektronski naslov: **editorDR\_SSF@sociolosko-drustvo.si**, prispevke za rubriko Recenzije knjig pa na naslov: **anamarija.sisa@fdv.uni-lj.si**. Članki so lahko v slovenskem ali angleškem jeziku.
2. Prispevek naj ima dvojni medvrstični razmik, tip črk Times New Roman, velikost črk 12 in levo poravnavo. Strani v prispevku naj bodo zapo redno oštevilčene.
3. Uredništvo obravnava tako krajše znanstvene prispevke kot članke standardne dolžine. Krajši znanstveni prispevki naj obsegajo največ 4.000 besed (gl. tudi podrobnejše smernice spodaj). Članek naj obsega od 5.000 do 8.000 besed, vključno z opombami, seznamom literature in grafičnimi prikazi, recenzija ali prikaz knjige pa od 1.000 do 1.200 besed. Navodila, kako upoštevati grafične prikaze pri številu besed, so zapisana v točki 12.
4. Uredništvo ima pravico, da prispevkov, ki ne ustrezajo merilom knjižne slovenščine (ali angleščine, če je članek oddan v angleščini, upošteva se britanska angleščina – British English; za več napotkov glej angleško različico navodil za avtorice/avtorje), ne sprejme v recenzentski postopek.
5. Z rezultatom postopka kolegalnega recenziranja članka bo avtor/avtorica seznanjen/seznajena v dveh mesecih od oddaje članka. Neobjavljenih prispevkov uredništvo avtorjem/avtoricam ne vrača. Pregledi in recenzije knjig se ne recenzirajo.
6. Če je prispevek že bil ali pa bo v kratkem objavljen v drugi reviji, mora avtor/avtorica to izrecno navesti.
7. Na posebnem listu naj avtor/avtorica poleg naslova znanstvenega članka navede svoje ime in priimek, akademski naslov in/ali profesionalni naslov, naslov elektronske pošte in telefonsko številko. Hkrati naj predlaga uvrstitev svojega članka v eno od naslednjih treh kategorij: izvirni znanstveni članek, pregledni znanstveni članek, kratek znanstveni prispevek.
8. Prva stran besedila naj vsebuje le naslov in morebitni podnaslov članka brez oznak avtorstva.
9. Podnaslovi, ki naj obsegajo največ dve ravni, naj bodo oštevilčeni desetiško in levo poravnani. Uvod oštevilčite kot prvo poglavje.
10. Članek je treba priložiti izvleček (abstract), ki mora biti napisan v slovenščini in angleščini ter mora vsebovati naslednje informacije: namen članka, metode dela, rezultati in sklepi prispevka. Izvleček naj ne vsebuje komentarjev in priporočil. Izvleček mora biti zizan na posebni strani pred uvodom. Skupna dolžina izvlečkov v obeh jezikih ne sme presegati 250 besed. Izvlečku je treba dodati do pet ključnih besed tako v slovenščini kot v angleščini. Pred angleškim izvlečkom napišite naslov članka v angleščini, če je članek v angleščini, pa pred slovenskim izvlečkom naslov članka v slovenščini.
11. Članek, ki je napisan v slovenščini, je treba priložiti tudi povzetek (summary) v angleščini v obsegu od 600 do 800 besed. Povzetek mora vsebovati opis namena in metod dela ter povzemati analizo oziroma interpretacijo rezultatov. V povzetku ne sme biti ničesar, česar glavno besedilo (članek) ne vsebuje. Za jezikovno korektnost povzetka v angleščini poskrbi avtor/avtorica. Upošteva naj se britanska angleščina (British English – za več napotkov glej angleško različico navodil za avtorice/avtorje). Povzetek (summary) naj bo umeščen za razdelek »Zaključek« in pred razdelek »Literatura« in »Viri«.
12. Avtor/avtorica naj v besedilu označi najprimernejša mesta za grafične elemente (tabele, skice, grafikone itd.) po zgledu: [Tabela 1 približno tukaj]. V dokončni obliki naj bodo ti izdelki priloženi na koncu besedila. Naslov tabele, grafa ipd. je nad grafičnim elementom. Naslovi tabel, grafov, skic ipd. se zaključijo s piko. Avtor/avtorica naj prostor, ki ga grafični izdelek v prispevku zaseda, šteje v obseg besedila bodisi kot 250 besed (pol strani) ali 500 besed (cela stran). Uredništvo ima pravico, da grafične izdelke umesti v besedilo glede na najustrežnejši prelom strani. Vseh prikazov naj ne bo več kot osem.
13. Število in dolžina opomb naj bosta omejena le na najnujnejše. Opombe naj bodo izpisane kot sprotno opombe (footnotes) in zaporedno oštevilčene. Avtor/avtorica lahko v objavi različici članka priloži kratko zahvalo, ki bo objavljena na koncu prispevka pred opombami oziroma seznamom literature.
14. Sklic na vir v besedilu naj vsebuje priimek avtorja/avtorice in letnico izida: (Sztompka 1993). Stran, na kateri se navedek v delu nahaja, se napiše za dvopičjem: (Wallace 1988: 577). Če sta avtorja/avtorici navedena dela dva/dve, navedete oba/obe: (Adorno in Horkheimer 1990), pri večjem številu avtorjev/avtoric izpišete le prvo ime: (Stankovič in dr. 1999). Dela enega/ene avtorja/avtorice, ki so izšla istega leta, ločite z zaporednim dodajanjem malih črk (a, b, c itd.) stično ob letnici izida: (Bourdieu 1996a). Dela različnih avtorjev/avtoric, ki se vsa nanašajo na isto vsebino, naštejte po abecednem redu, med njimi je podpičje: (D'Andrade 1995; DiMaggio 1997; Zerubavel 1997).
15. V članku uporabljena dela, raziskave, raziskovalna poročila, baze podatkov, spletne strani ipd. morajo biti v abecednem seznamu navedeni na koncu prispevka v poglavjih z naslovoma Literatura (za knjige, članke ipd.) in Viri (za uporabljene baze podatkov ipd.). Pri navedbi spletne strani se v oklepaj dopiše datum dostopa. Povezave DOI navajamo na način DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5772/35098>. Vsako enoto v teh seznamih zaključuje pika. Način navedbe enot v poglavjih Literatura in Viri je naslednji:
  - Rus, Veljko (1999): Vrednote zaposlenih do dela in do družbe. Družboslovne razprave, XV (30–31): 113–133.
  - D'Andrade, Roy (1995): A Folk Model of the Mind. V D. Holland in N. Quinn (ur.): Cultural Models in Language and Thought: 112–151. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  - Lamont, Michele, in Fournier, Marcel (ur.) (1992): Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
  - Le Goff, Jacques (1999): Medieval Civilization. Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell.
  - Garton, Luis, in dr. (1997): Studying Online Social Networks. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 3 (1). Dostopno prek: [http://jcmc.huji.ac.il/vol3/issue1/\(20.5.2001\)](http://jcmc.huji.ac.il/vol3/issue1/(20.5.2001)).
  - Laurenti, Jeffery (1998): The New U. N. Assessment Scale and Analysis of the Rate Revisions Adopted by the 52nd United Nations General Assembly. Dostopno prek: <http://www.unaosa.org/newindex.asp?place=http://www.unaosa.org/programs/scale.asp> (9. 12. 2004).
  - Aratani, Lauren (2020): "Tsunami of Untruths": Trump Has Made 20,000 False or Misleading Claims. Report. The Guardian, 13. 7. 2020. Dostopno prek: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/13/donald-trump-20000-false-or-misleading-claims> (10. 10. 2020).
  - United Nations peacekeeping. Dostopno prek: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp> (28. 2. 2006).
  - Colbert, Stephen (2005): The Word – Truthiness. The Colbert Report. Comedy Central, 17. 10. 2005. Dostopno prek: <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/63ite2/the-colbert-report-the-word---truthiness> (13. 10. 2020).
  - McAuliffe, Cameron (2015): Graffiti Sessions: The Art and Justice of Sociable Cities. Graffiti Dialogues. YouTube, 15. 1. 2015. Dostopno prek: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dufgmQrNya8&list=PLAUgzWv9VlnZ2te0Tq7J5jD3b6bFyg1> (13. 10. 2020).
  - Če ima referenca več kot dva/dve avtorja/avtorici, v glavnem besedilu navedemo samo prvega/prvo avtorja/avtorico, npr. (Stankovič in dr. 1999), v razdelku Literatura in viri pa navedemo vse avtorje/avtorice, če ima delo do vključno pet (5) avtorjev/avtoric. Če ima delo več kot pet (5) avtorjev/avtoric, navedemo samo prvega/prvo, npr.:
    - Hlebec, Valentina, in dr. (2012): Medgeneracijska solidarnost v Sloveniji. Ljubljana: Založba FDV.
  - 16. Če je članek napisan na osnovi raziskave ali arhivskih podatkov, naj avtor/avtorica to eksplicitno napiše.
  - 17. Če je članek napisan v slovenščini, se pri citiranju uporablja slovenske »dvoje navednice« (ne "takšne", ne „takšne“). Pri citiranju znotraj citata se uporabijo 'enojne navednice'. Za napotke pri pisanju angleškega članka glej angleška navodila za avtorice/avtorje.
  - 18. Daljši navedki (več kot 40 besed) naj bodo postavljeni v samostojen odstavek, z zamaknjenimi robovi, v manjšem tisku in brez narekovajev.
  - 19. Avtor/avtorica je dolžan/dolžna za gradiva, ki jih uporablja v prispevku, pridobiti dovoljenje lastnika avtorskih pravic. Za tako dovoljenje se v prispevku na ustrezen način zahvali.
  - 20. Kratki znanstveni prispevki je izvirni znanstveni članek, pri katerem so nekateri elementi sheme IMRAD lahko izpuščeni. Na kratko povzema izsledke končanega izvirnega raziskovalnega dela ali dela, ki je še v teku. Sem uvrščamo tudi kratke pregledne (mini review) in predhodne objave, če imajo značaj znanstvenega prispevka. Podrobnejša navodila za pisanje kratkih znanstvenih prispevkov za Družboslovne razprave so dostopna preko povezave: <https://www.sociolosko-drustvo.si/navodila-avtorjem/>.
  - 21. Avtor/avtorica prenese materialne avtorske pravice za objavljeni prispevek na izdajatelja revije.
  - 22. Ob izidu prejme vsak/ vsaka avtor/avtorica članka izvod revije. Članki niso honorirani, prevodi in recenzije pa le po predhodnem dogovoru. Prosimo, preberite tudi: **Izjava o etiki objavljanja in zlorabah pri objavljanju**.



# **DRUŽBOSLOVNE RAZPRAVE**

## Social Science Forum



**XLII / 111 / 2026**

## Glavni urednici / Main editors

Nina Perger in Jasmina Šepetavc

## Gostujoča urednika / Guest editors

Kang Byoung Yoong and Rajesh Kumar

## Uredniški odbor / Editorial board

Milica Antić Gaber (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Tanja Oblak Črnič (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Natalija Majsova (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Roman Kuhar (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Andreja Vezovnik (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Marko Lovec (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Marina Lukšič-Hacin (Znanstveno-raziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti / Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts)

Mateja Sedmak (Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper / Science and Research Centre Koper)

Ksenija Šabec (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Izlok Šori (Mirovni inštitut / Peace Institute)

Veronika Tašner (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Branislava Vičar (Univerza v Mariboru / University of Maribor)

Tanja Vučković Juroš (Univerza v Zagrebu / University of Zagreb)

## Mednarodni uredniški odbor / International editorial board

Gal Kirm (Evropska univerza Viadrina / European University Viadrina)

Tanja Vučković Juroš (Univerza v Zagrebu / University of Zagreb)

Jasmina Petrović (Univerza v Nišu / University of Niš)

Caroline Roth-Ebner (Univerza v Celovcu / University of Klagenfurt)

Boris Ružič (Univerza na Reki / University of Rijeka)

Julija Sardelić Winikoff (Univerza Victoria, Wellington / Victoria University, Wellington)

Inna Souch (Univerza v Amsterdamu / University of Amsterdam)

Anđelina Švirčič Gotovac (Inštitut za družbene raziskave v Zagrebu / Institute for Social Research in Zagreb)

## Uredniški svet / Editorial council

Nina Bandelj (Univerza Kalifornije / University of California)

Chiara Bertone (Univerza vzhodnega Piemonta / University of East Piedmont)

Marjan Hočevar (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Jana Javornik (Univerza v Leedsu / University of Leeds)

Matic Kavčič (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Tina Kogovšek (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Miran Lavrič (Univerza v Mariboru / University of Maribor)

Blaž Lenarčič (Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper / Science and Research Centre Koper)

Vesna Leskošek (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Sabina Mihelj (Univerza v Loughborough / Loughborough University)

Brina Malnar (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Hajdeja Igljič (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Katarina Prpić (Inštitut za družbene raziskave v Zagrebu / Institute for Social Research in Zagreb)

Sabrina P. Ramet (Norveška univerza za znanost in tehnologijo / Norwegian University of Science and Technology)

Ana Tominc (Univerza kraljice Margarete v Edinburgu / Queen Margaret University Edinburgh)

Alenka Švab (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Boris Vezjak (Univerza v Mariboru / University of Maribor)

Anja Zalta (Univerza v Ljubljani / University of Ljubljana)

Judit Takacs (Madžarska akademija znanosti / Hungarian Academy of Sciences)

David Paternotte (Svobodna univerza v Bruslju / Free University of Brussels – ULB)

## Tehnični urednik / Technical editor :

Rok Smrdelj, technicalDR\_SSF@sociolosko-drustvo.si

## Urednica recenzij knjig / Review editor:

Anamarija Šiša, anamarija.sisa@fdv.uni-lj.si

## Jezikovno svetovanje / Language editors:

Nataša Hribar, Murray Bales

## Spletni urednik / Web editor:

Igor Jurekovič

## Bibliografska obdelava /

## Bibliographical classification of articles:

Janez Jug

## Oblikovanje / Design:

Tina Cotič

## Prelom / Text design and Typeset:

ENOOKI Kraft s.p.

## Tisk / Print: CICERO, Begunje, d.o.o.

## Naklada / Number of copies printed: 320

## Naslov uredništva / Editors' postal address:

Revija Družboslovne razprave / Social Science Forum Journal

Jasmina Šepetavc in Nina Perger

Fakulteta za družbene vede, Kardeljeva pl. 5, SI-1000 Ljubljana

Elektronska pošta / e-mail:

editorDR\_SSF@sociolosko-drustvo.si

Spletna stran / Internet:

<https://www.sociolosko-drustvo.si/druzboslovne-razprave/>

ISSN 0352-3608 UDK 3

## Revijo sofinancira / The Journal is sponsored by:

Javna agencija za znanstvenoraziskovalno in inovacijsko dejavnost Republike Slovenije iz naslova razpisa za sofinanciranje strokovnih in znanstvenih publikacij / The Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency's scheme for funding expert and scientific publications.

## Letna naročnina (3 številke) / Annual subscription (3 issues):

individualna naročnina / individual rate: 25 EUR; za organizacije / institutional rate: 50 EUR; za študente in brezposelne / students and unemployed discount rate: 16 EUR; cena posameznega izvoda / single issue rate: 16 EUR. Za člane Slovenskega sociološkega društva je naročnina vključena v društveno članarino. / The annual Slovenian Sociological Association membership fee includes the journal's annual subscription rate. Družboslovne razprave je mogoče naročiti na naslovu uredništva ali na spletni strani revije. / Subscription requests can be sent to the editors' postal address. Če želite prekiniti naročniško razmerje, nam to sporočite najkasneje do 15. decembra. / If you decide to cancel the subscription, please write to editors' postal address by 15th of December.

## Družboslovne razprave so abstrahirane ali indeksirane v / Družboslovne razprave is abstracted or indexed in:

CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library), COBIB.SI, CSA (Cambridge Scientific Abstracts): • CSA Worldwide Political Science Abstracts • CSA Social Services Abstracts • Sociological Abstracts (Online), EBSCOhost • Current Abstracts • Political Science Complete • SocINDEX • SocINDEX with Full Text • TOC Premier, OCLC • Scopus • Sociological Abstracts (Online) • DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) • Ulrich's Web • De Gruyter • dLib

**Uredniška politika:** Družboslovne razprave so revija, ki objavlja kolegalno recenzirane znanstvene članke in recenzije knjig. V recenzijski postopke sprejema članke v slovenščini in angleščini s področja sociologije, komunikologije, politologije in kulturologije ter tem raziskovalnim področjem bližnjih družboslovnih disciplin. Pri izboru člankov za objavo se upošteva njihova raziskovalna inovativnost ter aktualnost glede na trende v znanstveni skupnosti, v kateri je revija zasidrana. V teoretskem in metodološkem pogledu je revija pluralistično naravnana, posebno skrb pa posveča utrjevanju slovenske družboslovne terminologije.

**Editorial policy:** Social Science Forum is a peer reviewed journal which publishes papers and book reviews. Contributions are invited in fields of sociology, media studies, political science, cultural studies and other studies which are close to these fields. The published contributions should display high level of research originality and address the themes which seem relevant to the scientific communities in which the journal is grounded. Both in theoretical and methodological respects the journal stands for pluralism.

# KAZALO

## UVOD

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Drage bralke, dragi bralci / Dear readers**

Nina Perger in Jasmina Šepetavc

7

## ČLANKI

### ARTICLES

#### **DISKRIMINACIJA PREK POVEZAVE NA PODLAGI OVIRANOSTI: NEENAKA OBRAVNAVA IN STIGMATIZACIJA NEFORMALNIH DRUŽINSKIH OSKRBOVALK PRI DELU IN ZAPOSLOVANJU /**

**Discrimination by association based on disability: unequal treatment and  
stigmatization of informal family carers at work and employment**

Zdenka Šadl

15

## UVOD V TEMATSKI BLOK

### INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC BLOCK

#### **Reconfiguring the Korean Diaspora**

Kang Byoung Yoong and Rajesh Kumar

45

## ČLANKI

### ARTICLES

#### **BIOPOLITICAL DIASPORIC HUMAN FIGURES: DYSTOPIAN NARRATIVES IN THE WORKS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO AND CHANG-RAE LEE /**

**Biopolitične diasporične človeške figure: distopične naracije v delih Kazua  
Ishiguro in Changa-raeja Leeja**

Kang Byoung Yoong

49

#### **THE STORY OF KIMCHI: IDENTITY AND DIASPORA OF ZAINICHI KOREANS IN JAPAN / Zgodba o kimčiju: identita in diaspora Zainichi Korejcev na Japonskem**

Nataša Visočnik Gerželj

71

#### **DIASPORA AS HORROR IN *PENINSULA*: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE / Diaspora kot grozljivka v filmu *Peninsula*: psihoanalitična perspektiva**

EuiJin Hur

95

**SINGING BELONGING: A KOREAN DIASPORA WOMEN'S CHOIR  
AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN AUSTRIA /**  
**Prepevanje pripadnosti: zbor korejskih žensk iz diaspore kot kulturna  
praksa in gradnja skupnosti v Avstriji**

Sun Young Yun

117

**THE REALITY AND SELF-IDENTITY OF KOREAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN  
IN AMERICA IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
HISTORICAL RECORDS AND LITERARY WORKS /**

**Realnost in samoidentiteta korejskih priseljenk v Ameriki v začetku  
20. stoletja: primerjalna analiza zgodovinskih virov in literarnih del**

Boram Han & Yesul Han

145

**RECENZIJJE KNJIG**

**BOOK REVIEWS**

Judith Butler: *Who's Afraid of Gender?*

United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2024

*Anna Lavizzari*

167

Zdenko Kodelja: *Vednost o nevednosti: premišljevanja o šolstvu v času pandemije.*  
Ljubljana: Krtina, 2024.

*Mojca Šebart Kovač*

170

Zdravko Mlinar: *Družboslovno raziskovanje med profesionalizacijo in  
podružbljanjem, drugi zvezek, občanska znanost.*

Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2024.

*Tina Kogovšek*

173

Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela in Andrej Kohont (ur.): *Digitalizacija dela in življenja.*  
Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, Založba FDV, 2024.

*Blaž Lenarčič*

175



# UVOD

## INTRODUCTION







## Drage bralke, dragi bralci!

Pred vami je spomladanska številka *Družboslovnih razprav*, ki je prišla iz tiska ravno pravi čas: poletje je navsezadnje obdobje, v katerem se ritem pedagoškega dela umiri ter se ustvari prostor za branje in pisanje. Zamik v izdaji je posledica sprememb v reviji sami: po odličnih dveh mandatih, v katerih sta se ugled in kakovost revije povečala doma in mednarodno, sta se glavni urednici Tanja Oblak Črnič in Natalija Majsova poslovili ter štafeto predali nama.

Tako je na mestu najprej zahvala: priložnosti, v katerih se prevzame projekt s takšno vizijo in renomejem, ki oba omogočata kontinuiteto, so resnično redke. Privilegij te konkretne priložnosti je plod natančnega dela preteklih glavnih urednic, Natalije in Tanje, in njenega uredništva, nenazadnje pa tudi vseh prejšnjih uredništev, ki so revijo vztrajno in z veliko mero skrbi gradila skozi desetletja. Ne glede na to, kaj in v kakšni obliki se predaja – prepoznana in pripoznana revija za področje družboslovne misli – pa sama logistika predaje terja svojo ceno, predvsem v obliki časovne zamude. Tako smo že v juliju, a vendarle z novo številko v roki.

Pri pripravi te številke so sodelovale kar tri skupine urednic\_kov. Začeli sta jo nekdanji glavni urednici, končalo pa jo je novo uredništvo revije pod vodstvom Nine Perger in Jasmine Šepetavc, tehničnim urednikom Rokom Smrdeljem, urednico recenzij Anamarijo Šiša in spletnim urednikom Igorjem Jurekovičem. Potem sta tu še Kang Byoung Yoong in Rajesh Kumari, gostujoča urednika posebnega tematskega bloka, tokrat posvečenega temi korejske diaspore, ki spremlja znanstveni članek izven tematskega bloka.

Številko tako odpiramo s člankom »Diskriminacija prek povezave na podlagi oviranosti: neenaka obravnava in stigmatizacija neformalnih družinskih oskrbovalk pri delu in zaposlovanju«, ki obravnava pravno in družboslovno še vedno premalo prepoznan koncept diskriminacije prek povezave (*by association*). Avtorica pokaže, da se neenakost ne vzpostavlja zgolj neposredno, prek osebnih okoliščin posameznic\_kov, temveč tudi posredno, prek skrbstvenih razmerij, v katera so ljudje vpeti. S tem prispevek pomembno prispeva k razumevanju dela, skrbi in enakosti v času, ko se skrbstvene obveznosti vse pogostejše prelivajo v delovna razmerja, institucije pa jih še vedno pogosto obravnavajo kot zasebno, ne pa tudi kot družbeno in politično vprašanje.

Osrednji del številke predstavlja posebni tematski blok, posvečen korejski diaspori. Prispevki v njem diasporo mislijo široko: ne le kot geografsko razseljenost, temveč kot izkušnjo pripadnosti, spomina, telesnosti, skrbi, izključevanja, kulturnih praks in vsakdanjih pogajanj o identiteti. Tako se korejska diaspora v pričujočih člankih tematizira skozi raznoliko polje praks, reprezentacij in zgodovinskih

izkušenj, ki segajo od glasbe, literature in filma do hrane, migracijskih zgodovin in biopolitičnih režimov.

Številka prinaša tudi štiri recenzije knjig, od tega tri v slovenščini in eno v angleščini. Med njimi sta dve avtorski monografiji, en znanstveni zbornik in ena uredniška monografija. Anna Lavizzari predstavlja najnovejšo knjigo Judith Butler *Who's Afraid of Gender?*, v kateri avtorica analizira sodobna gibanja proti »teoriji spola« ter pokaže, kako se pojem »spola« v političnih in kulturnih bojih vzpostavlja kot simbolni nosilec širših družbenih strahov. Mojca Šebart Kovač obravnava monografijo Zdenka Kodelje *Vednost o nevednosti: premišljevanja o šolstvu v času pandemije*, ki skozi filozofsko in družboslovno refleksijo odpira vprašanja odnosa med znanostjo, politiko in izobraževanjem v času pandemije covida-19. Tina Kogovšek recenzira drugi zvezek monografije Zdravka Mlinarja *Družboslovno raziskovanje med profesionalizacijo in podružbljanjem*, posvečen konceptu občanske znanosti ter njenemu pomenu za demokratizacijo raziskovanja in družbenega razvoja. Blaž Lenarčič pa predstavlja uredniško monografijo *Digitalizacija dela in življenja*, ki sta jo uredila Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela in Andrej Kohont, ter izpostavlja njeno interdisciplinarno in kritično obravnavo digitalne preobrazbe dela, ekonomije, politike, zdravstva in vsakdanjega življenja.

Čeprav se prispevki v številki lotevajo različnih tem, metod in empiričnih polj, jih povezuje občutljivost za razmerja med institucijami in vsakdanjim življenjem, med pripadnostjo in izključevanjem, med teorijami in vsakdanjimi izkušnjami ljudi, ki jih izbrana teoretska orodja obravnavajo, v njih razbirajo to, kar se izkušnji vsakdanjosti pogosto izmika, tj. družbeno v institucionalnem, infrastrukturnem in strukturnem smislu. Tako je številka v raznovrstnosti vsebin, ki jih daje na voljo v branje, dober začetek novega obdobja naše revije.

Ob prevzemu uredniškega dela si želimo, da bi *Družboslovne razprave* ostale prostor kritične, kakovostne ter odprte družboslovne in humanistične razprave in misli, ki je zahtevna do same sebe. Revija ima dolgo zgodovino, v kateri je mogoče videti jasno linijo, ki jo želimo nadaljevati: objavljati besedila, ki niso zgolj relevantna v strogem znanstvenem smislu – tj. vzpostavljanja in nadgrajevanja teoretskih misli, aparatov in orodij, ki jih uporabljamo, ko mislimo svet, ter pridobivanja empiričnih uvidov –, temveč tudi družbeno odzivna. Vsled pogojem znanstvenega polja, ki terjajo *počasno misel*, ima družboslovje – kakor nekje frustrirano ugotavlja sociolog Pierre Bourdieu – navado, da na prizorišča družbenega prispe pozno, in to še posebej velja za svet takšne hitrosti, kot ga živimo. Vendar znanstvene revije – kakor misliva, da velja, zahvaljujoč preteklim uredništvom, tudi za *Družboslovne razprave* v preteklosti, in upava, da tudi v prihodnje – predstavljajo pomembno priložnost za to, da družboslovna misel ni *prepozna*.

Hkrati pa v uredništvo vstopamo z zavedanjem, da se zaostrejuje tudi pogoji znanstvenega dela. Pritiski k objavljanju kot ključnemu merilu znanstvenega – tako raziskovalnega kot pedagoškega dela –, mednarodna vidnost, projektno financiranje in časovne ekonomije raziskovanja pomembno oblikujejo znanosti notranje pogoje, v katerih nastaja ta specifični vidik znanstvenega dela, ki se materializira v znanstvenih besedilih in ki nikakor ni edini element znanstvenega dela, se pa kaže kot njegov najbolj pomenljiv element. Ob tem ne velja spregledati niti širšega družbenega konteksta, ki tendira k temu, da v tehtnih družboslovnih premislekih razbira manj relevantnosti in teže, kakor tem premislekom pritiče.

Prav zato se nam zdi toliko pomembneje ohranjati revijo kot prostor branja v najbolj polnem pomenu te besede – torej branja, ki vstopa v dialog z besedili, branja, ki se s strani besedila pusti nagovoriti in tudi izzvati, ter nenazadnje tudi branja, ki z veliko mero skrbnosti besedilo samo tudi izzove in izziva. Odgovornost za odnosnost tega tipa je stvar predvsem znanstvene skupnosti, zagotovo pa tudi premišljenega uredniškega dela ter dialoga med avtoricami\_ji, recenzentkami\_i in bralkami\_ci.

Novo uredništvo tako nadaljuje staro poslanstvo družboslovja, ki si prizadeva za krepitev počasne misli, vendar misli, ki zavoljo lastne počasnosti – slednjo terja skrbno ravnanje s kompleksnostjo sveta, v katerem živimo – ne bo nič manj aktualna.

*Želimo vam prijetno branje.  
Nina Perger in Jasmina Šepetavc  
glavni urednici*

## Dear readers,

Before you is the spring issue of *Social Science Forum*, which has come out in print at just the right time! Summer is, after all, a period when as the rhythm of pedagogical work slows down, space for reading and writing opens up. The delay in publishing the issue is due to changes at the journal itself. After completing two excellent terms, during which the journal's reputation and quality rose considerably both domestically and internationally, the editors-in-chief Tanja Oblak Črnič and Natalija Majsova stepped down, passing the baton on to us.

This makes it appropriate to begin with thanks: for the truly rare opportunity to take over at the helm of a project with such a vision and reputation, both of which enable continuity. It is a wonderful moment to lead a journal known for the meticulous work of Natalija and Tanja and the editorial board, not to mention all of the editorial boards that came before them, seeing the journal being steadily built with great care over the decades. And, like with any hand over of any distinguished series – a well-recognised and acknowledged journal in the area of the social sciences – the logistics involved also caused a time delay. Thus, this new issue in hand has appeared in July.

Three groups of editors helped to prepare this issue. The early work was done by the already mentioned editors-in-chief and completed by the new incoming editorial board of the journal, led by Nina Perger and Jasmina Šepetavc, with technical editor Rok Smrdelj, reviews editor Anamarija Šiša, and web editor Igor Jurekovič. Also contributing are Kang Byoung Yoong and Rajesh Kumari, guest editors of the special thematic section on the Korean diaspora, which is accompanied by a scholarly article outside the thematic section.

This issue commences with the article "Discrimination by association based on disability: unequal treatment and stigmatisation of informal family carers at work and employment", which looks at the still insufficiently recognised legal and social-scientific concept of discrimination by association. The author shows that inequality is not established only directly, through individuals' personal circumstances, but also indirectly, via the care relationships in which people are embedded. In this way, the article importantly contributes to understanding work, care and equality in an era when care responsibilities are increasingly spilling over into employment relations, while institutions often continue to view them as a private matter, not a social and political issue.

The central part of the issue is the special thematic section focused on the Korean diaspora. The contributions in this section conceive of diaspora broadly: not simply as a geographical dispersal, but as an experience of belonging, memory,

embodiment, care, exclusion, cultural practices, and everyday negotiations of identity. In the articles, the Korean diaspora is hence thematised through a diverse field of practices, representations, and historical experiences, ranging from music, literature and film to food, migration histories, and biopolitical regimes.

This issue also includes four book reviews, three in Slovene and one in English. The reviewed publications comprise two single-authored monographs, one edited volume, and one research collection. Anna Lavizzari reviews Judith Butler's *Who's Afraid of Gender?*, in which Butler examines the contemporary anti-gender mobilizations and argues that "gender" has become a symbolic object onto which broader social anxieties are projected. Mojca Šebart Kovač discusses Zdenko Kodelja's *Vednost o nevednosti: premišljevanja o šolstvu v času pandemije* (*Knowledge on ignorance: Reflections on education during the pandemic*), which offers a philosophical and sociological reflection on the relationship between science, politics, and education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tina Kogovšek reviews the second volume of Zdravko Mlinar's *Družboslovno raziskovanje med profesionalizacijo in podružbljanjem* (*Social science research between professionalisation and social engagement*), focusing on the concept of citizen science and its contribution to the democratisation of research and society. Finally, Blaž Lenarčič presents the edited volume *Digitalizacija dela in življenja* (*Digitalisation of work and life*), edited by Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela and Andrej Kohont, highlighting its interdisciplinary and critical perspective on the social implications of digitalisation.

Even though the contributions in this issue consider different topics, methods, and empirical fields, they are connected by a sensitivity to the relationships between institutions and everyday life, between belonging and exclusion, between theories and the everyday experiences of the people addressed by the selected theoretical tools, which reveal in those experiences what often eludes everydayness itself: the social in the institutional, infrastructural, and structural sense. Therefore, in the diversity of the contents available for reading, this issue represents a promising start of a new period in the life of our journal.

Our goal as we take over the editorial work is for *Social Science Forum* to remain a space of critical, high-quality, and open social-scientific and humanities discussions, while being insightful and intriguing. There is a clear line in the journal's long history that we wish to continue: publishing contributions that are not only relevant in a strict scholarly sense – for establishing and developing the theoretical ideas, apparatuses and tools available for use while thinking about the world, and in gaining empirical insights – but are also socially responsive. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu once observed with a little frustration, the conditions of scholarship demand *slow thought*, which means there is a habit of arriving *late*

to the scenes of the social, and this is especially true in a world moving as quickly as it does today. Yet scholarly journals – like *Social Science Forum* – given all the good work preparing it in the past, yet also in the future – are a valuable opportunity for social-scientific thought not to be too late.

Simultaneously, we join the editorial board knowing that the conditions of academic work are also under greater strain. Pressures to publish as a key measure of scholarly work – both research and pedagogical – international visibility, project-based funding, and the temporal economies of research all have a substantial influence on the internal conditions of science under which this aspect of scholarly work (the one materializing in texts like the journal) is produced. This is by no means the only element of scholarly work, although it appears as its most meaningful one. We must also not overlook the broader social context, which tends to attribute less relevance and weight to careful social thinking that such thinking deserves.

Precisely for this reason, we find it all the more important to preserve the journal as a space of reading in the fullest sense of the word. Namely, reading that enters into dialogue with texts, reading that allows itself to be addressed and challenged by the text and, not least, reading that, with great care, also challenges the text itself. Responsibility for this kind of relationality belongs above all to the scholarly community, albeit certainly also to thoughtful editorial work and to dialogue among authors, reviewers and readers.

The new editorial board thus aims to continue the old mission of the social sciences: to strengthen slow thought – yet thought which, despite being slow as required by careful engagement with the complexity of the world we live in, will be no less timely.

*We wish you all pleasant reading.*  
*Nina Perger and Jasmina Šepetavc*  
*Editors-in-chief*



**ČLANKI**

ARTICLES







Zdenka Šadl

# DISKRIMINACIJA PREK POVEZAVE NA PODLAGI OVIRANOSTI: NEENAKA OBRAVNAVA IN STIGMATIZACIJA NEFORMALNIH DRUŽINSKIH OSKRBOVALK PRI DELU IN ZAPOSLOVANJU

## IZVLEČEK

Članek obravnava koncept diskriminacije prek povezave (v nadalj. DP), ki je manj splošno razumljen v primerjavi z diskriminacijo na podlagi osebnih okoliščin neposrednih žrtev. Osredinja se na DP proti družinskim oskrbovalkam oseb z ovirami na področju dela in zaposlovanja ter preiskuje potenciale in omejitve tega koncepta pri doseganju večje enakosti delavk z oskrbovalnimi obveznostmi. Kljub nekaterim omejitvam in šibkostim ugotavlja potencialno močan pozitiven učinek pravnega priznanja koncepta DP na zagotavljanje enakosti oskrbovalk hendikepiranih in starejših v delovnem okolju.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** diskriminacija prek povezave, delo, zaposlovanje, zakonodaja, neformalni oskrbovalci

## Discrimination by association based on disability: unequal treatment and stigmatization of informal family carers at work and employment

## ABSTRACT

The article discusses the concept of discrimination by association (hereinafter "DA"), which is less widely understood than discrimination based on direct victims' personal circumstances. In focus is DA against family carers of people with disabilities in the field of work and employment, while the potential and

*limitations of this concept in achieving greater equality for workers with caring responsibilities is examined. Notwithstanding some limitations and weaknesses, legal recognition of the DA concept is shown to have a potentially strong positive impact on ensuring equality for carers of disabled and elderly people in the workplace.*

**KEYWORDS:** *discrimination by association, work, employment, legislation, informal carers*

## 1 Uvod

Koncept diskriminacije se največkrat uporablja za označevanje situacije, v kateri je oseba na neki način prikrajšana zaradi ene ali več varovanih osebnih okoliščin, manj znano pa je, da o diskriminaciji govorimo tudi v situacijah, ko do neenake obravnave osebe prihaja zaradi varovanja osebnih okoliščin druge osebe, s katero je neenako obravnavana oseba povezana. Takšno subtilnejšo diskriminacijo označuje koncept diskriminacije prek povezave (ang. *discrimination by association*). V članku se med področji, na katerih se DP pojavlja,<sup>1</sup> omejujemo na sfero dela v povezavi z manj ugodno obravnavo staršev otrok z ovirami (v nadalj. OzO) in drugih neformalnih družinskih oskrbovalk,<sup>2</sup> ki nudijo oskrbo osebam z ovirami/hendikepom<sup>3</sup> ali s kronično boleznijo in starejšim. V središču obravnave so starši OzO ali starši oskrbovalke (ang. *parent-carers*), ki zagotavljajo atipično, ekstenzivno oskrbo (ang. *exceptional care*) otrokom, ki so zaradi obstoja rizičnih dejavnikov za razvojne zaostanke, oviranosti ali motnje na enem ali več področjih (kot so gibanje, zaznavanje, govor, kognicija, čustvovanje, vedenje ali učenje) manj samostojni ter potrebni večje nege, skrbi in pozornosti kot otroci brez ovir. Zaposleni starši oskrbovalke v primerjavi z običajno populacijo staršev doživljajo večjo stopnjo konflikta delo – družina v obeh smereh (Stewart 2013), ta pa je eden od napovedovalcev diskriminacije

1 Delo, dostop do blaga in storitev, npr. uporaba javnih storitev na področjih izobraževanja ali zdravstva, socialnega varstva, dostop do stanovanj itd.

2 Izraz, zapisan v ženski slovnični obliki, velja za oba spola enakovredno, uporabljen je nevtralen (enako pri izrazu delavke) in zajema tudi starše otrok z ovirami, razen na mestih, kjer so ti navedeni ločeno. Raba izraza oskrbovalke sicer ni popolna – deluje izključujoče do tistih, ki nudijo oskrbo, njihova spolna identiteta pa se ne ujema s tradicionalno spolno binarnostjo –, je pa utemeljena z namenom, da odraža in poudarja dejstvo, da ženske opravijo večino neformalnega in neplačanega skrbstvenega dela v družini.

3 Termina osebe z ovirami/oviranostmi in osebe s hendikepom sta v članku uporabljena kot sinonima.

na delovnem mestu. Temeljni vir diskriminacije oskrbovalk so negativni stereotipi in stališča o njihovi zanesljivosti in kompetentnosti (prednost dajejo družini pred delom), pri DP pa so to najpogostejše stigmatizacija in predsodki, povezani z oviranostjo ali starostjo oskrbovancev, ki se prenašajo na družinske člane oz. oskrbovalke (ang. *courtesy, associated stigma*).

Na pojavnost diskriminacije oskrbovalk pomembno vplivajo tudi odsotnost ali manjša razvitost javnih politik usklajevanja plačanega dela in družinskih obveznosti ter politike na področju nediskriminacije. Varstvo pred neenako obravnavo je odvisno tako od delovnopравnih institutov, kot so npr. krajši delovni čas zaradi starševstva in pravica do odsotnosti z dela zaradi nege in varstva otrok, ter zakonodaje o usklajevanju dela in družine kot tudi od protidiskriminacijske zakonodaje, ki diskriminacijo prepoveduje. A medtem ko je evropska delovna zakonodaja dosegla velik napredek pri zakonodaji o plačanem dopustu za starše oz. na področju družinsko usmerjene politike (npr. možnost spreminjanja delovnega urnika, skrajšani delovni čas), vprašanje varstva oskrbovalk pred diskriminacijo še ni ustrezno oz. v celoti rešeno.<sup>4</sup> Kot ocenjujeta Caracciolo Di Torella in Masselot (2020: 23), se v boju proti diskriminaciji in spodbujanju enakosti EU ni izkazala za pozitivno silo. Analize iz držav članic EU kažejo, da oskrbovalke, ki so npr. vzele dopust za oskrbo, niso bile vedno zaščitene pred diskriminacijo; ta je sistemska in razširjena (Masselot 2018). V kontekstu zagotavljanja pravične obravnave oskrbovalk bi morala protidiskriminacijska politika v EU bolje zaščititi oskrbovalke, kar je še toliko pomembnejše zaradi vse večjih potreb po neformalni oskrbi zaradi demografskih sprememb.

Kot najučinkovitejši način za preprečevanje diskriminacije oskrbovalk je prepoznano sprejetje izrecne prepovedi diskriminacije te skupine (Bell in Waddington 2021: 1416). Status oskrbovalk v skladu s pravom EU namreč ni izrecno navedena in neodvisna diskriminacijska podlaga za varstvo pred diskriminacijo. Vendar obstajajo za širitev seznama varovanih podlag za diskriminacijo velike

4 Evropske države so s svojo zakonodajo o usklajevanju dela in družine zgled za ZDA, ki na tem področju močno zaostajajo, so pa slednje uspešnejše pri politikah, ki varujejo pred diskriminacijo. Te so lahko koristne za druge države, ki varstvo oskrbovalkam pogosto iščejo v delovnopравnih institutih, redkeje pa v smeri prepovedi diskriminacije. V ZDA se vprašanj dela in družine večinoma lotevajo s prostovoljnimi ugodnostmi, ki jih zagotavljajo delodajalci, v kombinaciji s protidiskriminacijsko zakonodajo (Stryker in dr. 2017). Ta pot se reflektira tudi v vzponu področja delovnega prava, znanega kot »diskriminacija zaradi družinskih obveznosti« (*family responsibilities discrimination* – FRD), in v vrtočnem naraščanju števila tožb zaradi FRD, ki so pritegnile pozornost medijev, odvetnikov in celo delodajalcev ter postale vroča tema v delovnem pravu (Williams in dr. 2012: 5).

ovire, ki jih postavljajo togi parametri prava EU o nediskriminaciji. Varstvo oskrbovalk je mogoče povezati z določbami *Direktive o splošnih okvirih enakega obravnavanja pri zaposlovanju in delu* iz leta 2000, kjer je njihovo varstvo zagotovljeno posredno – z varstvom delavk s krajšim delovnim časom in prek drugih razlogov, ključnih in izrecno navedenih pri definiranju diskriminacije (oviranost, starost, spol, spolna usmerjenost, vera).<sup>5</sup> V ospredju pričujoče analize bo oviranost kot osebna okoliščina povezane osebe in prepoved DP. Preučili bomo pomen DP in ozadje odločitve Sodišča Evropske unije (v nadalj. SEU) v zadevi *Coleman* iz leta 2008 (Zadeva C-303/06 *Coleman* 2008), ki pomeni mejnik v prizadevanju, da se protidiskriminacijsko varstvo izrecno razširi na oskrbovalke. V akademski literaturi je označena kot »ena najpomembnejših odločitev v pravu Evropske unije o enakosti« (Connor 2010: 59). Članek odpira tudi vprašanje vgrajenosti koncepta DP v nacionalne zakonodaje, tudi slovensko, ter uporabe koncepta v sodni praksi in praksi Zagovornika načela enakosti kot osrednjega nosilca protidiskriminacijskega varstva pri nas. Za namen predstavitve in razumevanja koncepta DP bodo pregledani relevantna literatura in viri, članki, dokumenti, poročila, stališča avtorjev\_ic in drugi viri podatkov.<sup>6</sup>

Diskriminacija v *sleherni obliki*, tudi DP, ovira ali prikrajša (potencialno) zaposlene za različne pravice ter jih izključi iz niza priložnosti in virov, ki jih daje zaposlitev, prinaša pa tudi negativne učinke za zdravje in psihološko blagostanje žrtev (OECD 2025), in sicer tako pri starših otrok s tipičnim razvojem (Gerich in Beham-Rabanser 2025) kot pri starših žrtvah DP in »stigme prek povezave« (Leng in dr. 2024: 2). Raziskave (npr. Crettenden in dr. 2014; Stewart 2013; za pregled raziskav, ki primerjajo delavce, ki opravljajo netipično ali tipično oskrbo, gl. Stewart in dr. 2018) potrjujejo obstoj zaposlitvene diskriminacije, medtem ko pri nas raziskav na tem področju primanjkuje.<sup>7</sup> Osvetlitev DP v kontekstu zaščitene podlage oviranosti in starosti – osebnih okoliščin, zaradi katerih je verjetnost

5 Tudi Direktiva EU o usklajevanju poklicnega in zasebnega življenja staršev in oskrbovalcev iz leta 2019 (Direktiva 2019/1158/EU) narekuje, da morajo države članice uvesti pravila, ki zagotavljajo zaščito delavk pred diskriminacijo v zvezi z uveljavljanjem pravic iz te direktive. Na področje uporabe te direktive spadajo tudi oskrbovalke oseb z ovirami.

6 Namen prispevka ni pravna razčlemba pravnih besedil in zadev, temveč osredotočenje na tiste njihove vidike, ki so relevantni za položaj in enako obravnavanje oskrbovalk v sferi dela.

7 Trenutno se v okviru projekta TAP-J5-50160 »Skrita diskriminacija družinskih oskrbovalcev pri zaposlovanju in delu« Fakultete za družbene vede UL izvaja raziskava, s katero želimo pridobiti podatke o morebitnih izkustvih z diskriminacijo pri zaposlenih starših oskrbovalkah.

potrebe po oskrbi največja (pri starosti so to majhni otroci in starejše osebe) – je torej ključna, saj prispeva k večji prepoznavnosti te škodljive in pogosto prikrite oblike diskriminacije.

Vendar pa DP, ki jo Berthelot-Raffard (2024) označuje kot edinstveno obliko dominacije na trgu dela, kljub tej edinstvenosti – lastnosti, ki običajno povečuje zanimanje – ni bila deležna pozornosti v sociologiji ali pa je zajeta zgolj posredno. Več eksplicitne tematizacije in problematizacije DP na presečišču sociologije in prava lahko prispeva k večji vidnosti neplačanega skrbstvenega dela kot prenašalca in utrjevalca diskriminatornih praks v sferi dela ter odpira vprašanja, ki niso povezana le z napredovanjem pravnega, ampak tudi družbenega urejanja – od sistemske ureditve oskrbe in varstva oseb z ovirami in odvisnih starejših, dostopa oskrbovalk do trga dela in delitve skrbstvenega dela med spoloma do organizacijskih politik ravnesja med delom in oskrbo ter vključenosti delavk z različnimi vrstami oskrbovalnih obveznosti. Teh vprašanj v članku ne naslavljamo neposredno in sistematično, temveč se bomo, izhajajoč iz pripoznavanja trenutne realnosti problematike, ki jih vsebujejo, osredinili na obravnavo povezanega vidika – potencialov koncepta DP, s katerimi se razširja varstvo oskrbovalk pred negativnimi zaposlitvenimi odločitvami delodajalcev. Pri tem izhajamo iz predpostavke, da so vključitev koncepta DP v nacionalnih zakonih, sprejetje izrecnih nacionalnih zakonodajnih določb o DP, uporaba ustaljene terminologije, izvajanje protidiskriminacijske zakonodaje oz. razvoj sodne prakse glede DP pomemben način za boj proti neenakostim zaradi oskrbe, zato ta vidik varstva ne sme ostati na robu družboslovne pozornosti. Pravno varstvo pred diskriminacijo na ravni EU in protidiskriminacijske določbe, prek katerih države preprečujejo diskriminacijo, so pomembni, saj lahko vplivajo na: pojavljanje diskriminacije v razmerjih med delodajalci in delavci; pozornost, ki jo organizacije namenjajo razsežnostim delovnega procesa ter uveljavljenim pravilom in postopkom, povezanih z diskriminacijo; možnost vlaganja tožb proti delodajalcem zaradi diskriminacije, vključno z DP. Raziskave (v Bose in dr. 2020) kažejo, da so zakoni in državne politike pomemben prvi korak k izboljšanju rezultatov na trgu dela za ženske (kot oskrbovalke), protidiskriminacijska zakonodaja na nacionalni ravni pa dejavnik, ki: preprečuje stereotipe in diskriminacijo; zagotavlja možnosti za delavke, da v primeru kršitev pravic poiščejo pravna sredstva; vodi do spremembe družbenih norm.

Razpravo pričenjamo z opredelitvijo koncepta DP ter jo v nadaljevanju razširimo in poglobimo skozi oris sodbe SEU v zadevi *Coleman* ter izbranih primerov iz sodne prakse posameznih držav. S kratkim orisom tožb, ki se navezujejo na različne vrste neformalne družinske oskrbe in pri katerih je bila DP sodno potrjena, pokažemo na konkretne manifestacije diskriminacije in predsodkov znotraj

razmerij med delodajalci in delavkami. V naslednjem razdelku identificiramo potenciale in omejitve koncepta DP z vidika doseganja večje enakosti oskrbovalk v sferi dela. Zatem predstavimo ugotovitve glede uporabe koncepta DP pri nas, zlasti v obravnavi *Zagovornika načela enakosti*. V sklepu opozorimo na pomen poznavanja koncepta DP pri delodajalcih ter nakažemo nekatere možne vidike izboljšanja delovnega in širšega družbenega okolja, ki bi omogočili večjo vključenost oskrbovalk oseb s hendikepom ter njihovo varnost pred stigmatizacijo in diskriminacijo zaradi »razlogov prek povezave«.

## 2 Kaj je diskriminacija prek povezave?

Specifiko DP napoveduje že samo poimenovanje: razlog za manj ugodno obravnavo osebe je povezava z neko drugo osebo ali skupino oseb, proti katerim ima nekdo predsodke, povezane s prepovedanimi razlogi za diskriminacijo. Posebnost in manjšo opaznost DP določajo prav pristranskosti, ki se nahajajo v jedru DP in presegajo neposredne žrtve – zajemajo tiste, ki so z njimi (tipično) tesno ali intimno povezani. Stigma do hendikepiranih ali starejših se, kot že omenjeno, razširja na osebe, ki so z njimi v (tesnem) odnosu. Kot ugotavlja Stewart (2025), starši OzO na področju duševnega zdravja doživljajo javno, asociativno, strukturno stigio in tudi ponotranjeno javno stigio na delovnem mestu, kar vpliva na njihovo udeležbo na trgu dela.

DP se nanaša na drugačen element analize diskriminacije – ne na osebo, ki je diskriminirana, ampak na *razlog* za diskriminacijo. Ne pojavi se, ko je oseba manj ugodno obravnavana samo zato, ker je določenega etničnega porekla, ženska ali moški, stara ali mlada, ker ima ovire ali kakšno drugo osebno okoliščino; nastane zaradi zaznanega odnosa ali povezave, ki ga ima z drugo osebo, ki ima varovano osebno okoliščino.<sup>8</sup> Drugače: pojavi se zaradi »razlogov prek povezave«: če A diskriminira B, ker je B povezan (npr. poročen z ali oskrbuje) D, potem do diskriminacije proti B prihaja zaradi osebnih okoliščin D, in ne B. Še natančneje, oseba diskriminira drugo osebo, če jo zaradi povezave s tretjo osebo obravnava manj ugodno kot obravnava druge, ki niso tako povezani, pri čemer bi podobno ravnanje s tretjo osebo pomenilo diskriminacijo zaradi pravno varovane podlage. Povezava z drugo osebo se nanaša tudi na oskrbovanje družinskega člana z varovano osebno okoliščino oviranosti. Če delodajalec

8 Osebnostne okoliščine so značilnosti, ki si jih oseba ne izbere, temveč se z njimi rodi ali jih pridobi in jih težko spremeni ali se jim odreče. Tudi oskrba osebe z ovirami je dejstvo, nad katerim ima oskrbovalka malo nadzora; odločitev zanjo ni povsem svobodna, temveč je pogosto posledica sistemskih pomanjkljivosti in vrzeli, ki bi jih morale zapolniti država, ustrezne institucije in zakonodaja.

delavki, ki pogosto zamuja na delo, ker mora opraviti nego hendikepirani materi ali OzO, ali zgodaj odhaja z dela, da bi osebo z ovirami odpeljala na zdravniški pregled, ne omogoči prilagoditve časa prihoda in odhoda na delovno mesto oz. ni enako prilagodljiv (ali popustljiv) kot do njenih sodelavcev – oskrbovalk oseb brez ovir v primerljivih situacijah, potem je ta delavka žrtev DP na podlagi oviranosti oskrbovane osebe, ne na podlagi svoje lastne. Oz. ni diskriminirana zato, ker ima oviranost (če bi jo imela).

Smernice za obravnavo oskrbovalk, žrtev DP zaradi varovanih razlogov oviranosti, čeprav same niso del skupine oseb z ovirami, so bile postavljene s priznanjem in prepovedjo DP z razsodbo SEU v zadevi *Coleman*. Določitev DP je pokazala jasno priznanje, da ta oblika diskriminacije v praksi obstaja, četudi je manj očitna. Sánchez-Girón Martínez (2021 v Kuzminac 2024: 22) navaja, da resničnost, ki kaže na obstoj diskriminacije, vedno kaže potrebo po uvedbi in uporabi konceptov za reševanje izzivov v praksi, ne glede na to, kako razvite so norme, ki diskriminacijo prepovedujejo. Koncept DP, kot ga je obravnavalo SEU in prvič priznalo načelo DP na podlagi oviranosti v povezavi s starši v kontekstu dela, to dobro ponazarja.<sup>9</sup> Dejstvo, da je tožba delavke, ge. Coleman, zaradi zatrevane DP na podlagi oviranosti njenega otroka trajala štiri leta in da sprva ni bila uspešna, pa je pokazalo tudi, kako težko je ugotoviti, koliko oskrbe terja otrok s težko oviranostjo in kakšne pomembne posledice ima izvajanje ekstenzivne oskrbe otroka za zaposlitev staršev.

## 2.1 »Prekleti otrok je vedno prekleto bolan«<sup>10</sup>: primer diskriminacije in nadlegovanja delavke matere otroka z ovirami

Sodba SEU v zadevi *Coleman* je najbolj nazoren primer DP, ki jo je na delovnem mestu izkusila delavka in mati otroka, v kontekstu oviranosti. Ga. Coleman je bila od leta 2001 zaposlena kot strokovna sodelavka v britanski odvetniški pisarni (v nadalj. nekdanji delodajalec). Naslednje leto je rodila sina s hudo oviranostjo, ki je potreboval specializirano oskrbo, in prevzela vlogo primarne oskrbovalke. Leta 2005 je soglašala s prenehanjem delovnega razmerja zaradi pomanjkanja dela in nehala delati pri nekdanjem delodajalcu. Istega leta je pri *Londonskem delovnem sodišču* z argumentom konstruktivne odpovedi vložila

<sup>9</sup> Koncept DP so ponekod uporabljali že dalj časa, in sicer v primerih tožb proti rasni diskriminaciji, vendar je ideja DP potrebovala veliko časa, da je dobila svoje mesto v pravu EU (Honeyball 2007). S sodbo SEU je bila DP prvič obravnavana v kontekstu, ki ne zadeva rase, kar kaže na širši pomen zadeve *Coleman*.

<sup>10</sup> Uporabljeni citat je žaljiv komentar, ki ga je bila deležna tožnica, ga. Coleman, in ga tudi navaja v svoji tožbi (Wainwright 2008).

tožbo, v kateri je zatrjevala, da je bila v odpoved prisiljena in da je bila diskriminirana na podlagi zaščitene lastnosti oviranosti. Tožbo je utemeljila s trditvijo, da so bili njeni sodelavci – starši otrok brez ovir (v nadalj. ObO) – obravnavani drugače v več primerljivih situacijah ter da je diskriminacija proti njej temeljila na njenem materinstvu in oviranosti otroka. Navedla je naslednja dejstva: po vrnitvi s porodniškega dopusta je nekdanji delodajalec zavrnil, da bi jo vrnil na njeno obstoječe delovno mesto (kot je to zahteval zakon) in da bi ji odobril prožen delovni čas, medtem ko je bil staršem ObO v podobnih okoliščinah prevzem njihovega delovnega mesta dovoljen, deležni pa so bili tudi prilagoditev pri delovnem času za namen oskrbe otroka. Ga. Coleman je postopoma postala žrtev nadlegovanja in posmeha; bila je opisana kot »lena«, ko je zaprosila za odmor ali dopust, da bi ustrezno poskrbela za otroka,<sup>11</sup> medtem ko starši ObO glede dopusta niso bili slabo obravnavani. O njej in njenem otroku so bili podani neprimerni in žaljivi komentarji; govorili so, da izrablja svojega »prekletega otroka« za spreminjanje svojih delovnih pogojev, medtem ko starši ObO, ki so prosili za dopust ali prilagoditve delovnega časa, da bi skrbeli za otroka, niso bili predmet žaljivih komentarjev. Proti njej je bil uveden disciplinski postopek, pritožba, ki jo je vložila zaradi slabega ravnanja, pa ni bila pravilno obravnavana – počutila se je prisiljeno, da jo umakne. Ker je zaradi izjemne situacije zaradi sinovega zdravja občasno prišla pozno v službo, je bila soočena z grožnjo odpustitve, če bo ponovno zamudila, medtem ko se starši ObO, ki so zamujali iz podobnih razlogov, s takšno grožnjo niso soočali (glej Sklepni predlogi generalnega pravobranilca M. Poiarsa Madura 2008; Zadeva C-303/06 Coleman 2008).

Obramba se je pri dokazovanju, da je bil osnovni element manj ugodne obravnave oviranost, sklicevala na zakon o diskriminaciji zaradi invalidnosti iz leta 1995 (ZK) in evropsko direktivo o enakosti pri zaposlovanju (v nadalj. Direktiva), nasprotna stran pa je trdila, da zakon varuje samo osebe, ki imajo ovire, in da namen Direktive ni zajeti DP. Dejstvo, da tožnica sama ni bila hendikepirana, je sprva dejansko predstavljalo pravno oviro za njen zahtevek (pravna besedila so bila namenjena predvsem varstvu hendikepiranih), zato je bil zavrnjen. Bila pa je ugotovljena neposredna škoda, ki jo je utrpela tožnica; status oskrbovalke otroka je pomenil obliko socialne prikrajšanosti, ki je vplivala na njeno sposobnost opravljanja dela. Leta 2008 je primer – z vidika še vedno veljavne Direktive – obravnavalo SEU, ki je sprejelo mnenje generalnega pravobranilca, da je treba načelo enakega obravnavanja, določeno z Direktivo, razlagati širše: poleg neposredne diskriminacije na podlagi oviranosti, ki se nanaša na osebe s

11 Sin je od začetka trpel za gluhostjo in težavami z dihanjem, vključno z napadi apneje, zaradi katerih je lahko do 60-krat na dan prenehal dihati.



to osebno okoliščino, je prepovedana tudi diskriminacija oseb, ki so povezane z drugimi osebami, ki imajo ovire. Sodišče je sprejelo poglobljeno pojasnilo, da je namen Direktive boj proti vsem oblikam diskriminacije in da se zato ne uporablja za *skupino določenih oseb*, ampak na podlagi *razlogov za diskriminacijo* (Sklepni predlogi generalnega pravobranilca M. Poiaresa Madura 2008). Če bi se njena uporaba omejila le na osebe, ki imajo ovire, bi lahko Direktiva izgubila pomemben del polnega učinka, varstvo, ki (naj) ga Direktiva zagotavlja, pa bi se lahko zmanjšalo (Zadeva C-303/06 Coleman 2008, točka 51). Ko delodajalec osebe, ki nimajo ovir, obravnava manj ugodno kakor druge v primerljivem položaju in se dokaže, da so drugače obravnavane zaradi osebe, za katero skrbijo, se s takšnim obravnavanjem krši prepoved neposredne diskriminacije iz Direktive (ibid., točka 56).

Glede na to, da v drugačno obravnavo vodi pristranskost do oseb z ovirami, ni nujno, da je oseba, ki je predmet diskriminacije, tako obravnavana zaradi *lastne* oviranosti; zadostuje, da je bila tako obravnavana zaradi *oviranosti*. Ključno je, da je oviranost uporabljena kot *razlog*, da je nekdo manj ugodno obravnavan (Sklepni predlogi generalnega pravobranilca M. Poiaresa Madura 2008, točka 23). Sodišče je odločilo, da je S. Coleman utrpela škodo na delovnem mestu, ker je imela sina s hendikepom; starše ObO je potrdilo kot primerljive osebe in ugotovilo, da jim je bila na njihovo prošnjo odobrena prilagodljivost delovnega časa. Tako je sklenilo, da so dejanja nekdanjega delodajalca diskriminatorna na podlagi oviranosti otroka delavke; na isti podlagi je potrdilo tudi obstoj nadlegovanja.

Sodba SEU je zelo izrecno priznala veljavnost trditve, da je vsaka diskriminacija, določena v Direktivi, prepovedana – ni pomembno, ali je hendikepirana (ima ovire) diskriminirana oseba sama ali pa tretja oseba, s katero je žrtev diskriminacije enačena. Z izrecnim priznanjem DP in njeno konceptualno utemeljitvijo v pravu EU je postavila daljnosežne (možne) okvire naprednega razvoja na področju uveljavljanja enakosti za oskrbovalke. Kot taka predstavlja prelomno točko za implementiranje načela enake obravnave v državah članicah. Načelo DP je uvedla v kontekstu evropske zakonodaje o enakosti in omogočila, da se pravno varstvo razširi v državah, ki DP prej niso poznale. Prepoved DP je SEU nato ponovno potrdilo tudi na podlagi »rase« ali etničnega porekla v zadevi *CHEZ*, oviranost kot razlog za varstvo pa zajema tudi *Evropsko sodišče za človekove pravice* (ESČP) (Priročnik o evropskem protidiskriminacijskem pravu 2021: 185–186).

Koncept DP je vključen v sodno prakso SEU in nacionalno sodno prakso držav članic EU. Poročilo OECD (2025: 101) navaja, da več kot polovica držav EU OECD izrecno prepoveduje DP, kar je v skladu s ključnimi sodbami SEU in ESČP. DP je s protidiskriminacijsko zakonodajo izrecno prepovedana v Belgiji, na

Hrvaškem, Finskem, v Grčiji, na Irskem, Portugalskem, v Sloveniji, Španiji in Belgiji (Chopin in Germaine 2025: 36). Številne države navajajo (Böök in dr. 2023), da prepovedujejo DP oz. jo upoštevajo v nacionalni zakonodaji in sodni praksi, kljub priznanju DP pa so nekatere nacionalne prakse glede DP še vedno omejujoče. Po ugotovitvah Walsh (2024: 11–12) je položaj po državah članicah precej neenakomeren – od tega, da ni nobenih izrecnih nacionalnih zakonodajnih določb o DP (primer Cipra), do tega, da zakon pušča odprto možnost, da je DP lahko ugotovljena v primerih neposredne in posredne diskriminacije, nadlegovanja in nezagotavljanja razumnih prilagoditev, med drugimi tudi v Sloveniji. Anglmayer (2020: 13) izpostavlja, da je zaščita pred DP skladna tudi s *Konvencijo o pravicah invalidov* (v nadalj. KPI), več nacionalnih zakonov in okvirov o enakosti pa DP ne priznava. Howard (2016: 26) opozarja, da je stališče *Evropske komisije* jasno: DP bi morala biti prepovedana iz vseh razlogov, ki jih zajema Direktiva, zato bi morale države članice – tudi če nacionalna zakonodaja proti diskriminaciji ne določa izrecno, da je DP zajeta – svoje nacionalne določbe razlagati na tak način. Sodba v zadevi *Coleman* je neposredno vplivala na nacionalno sodno prakso na tem področju, zato v tej povezavi navajamo nekaj primerov uspešnih tožb proti nekdanjemu delodajalcu zaradi DP.

Delovno sodišče v Veliki Britaniji je leta 2011 presoјalo o primeru, ko je bil odpuščen delavec, ker je moral prenehati delati nadure po določeni uri zaradi oskrbe hendikepiranega očima. Delodajalcu ni uspelo dokazati, da bi storil enako z zaposlenim, ki je prav tako moral oditi ob določeni uri zaradi večernega pouka ali npr. zato, ker je moral iti po otroka v vrtec. Sodišče je odločilo, da je prišlo do nezakonite neposredne diskriminacije in nadlegovanja oskrbovalca v skladu z zakonom o DP (Meaby&Co Solicitors 2019).

Belgijsko sodišče je leta 2013 delodajalca spoznalo za krivega neposredne DP na podlagi oviranosti: delavec je bil odpuščen takoj po tem, ko je delodajalca obvestil, da ima njegov novorojeni otrok hudo oviranost. Delodajalec je podal odpoved na neutemeljenem prepričanju, da bo otrok negativno vplival na predanost delavca in da bo slednji nagnjen k odsotnosti z dela. Sodišče je v sodbi poudarilo, da »starši otrok, ki potrebujejo posebno nego, ne morejo biti diskriminirani na podlagi domnev in pristranskosti« (Anglmayer 2020).

V tožbi iz leta 2013 v Veliki Britaniji tožnica navaja, da je bila po uspešno opravljenem poskusnem obdobju odpuščena zaradi odsotnosti z dela zaradi možne levkemije. Menedžer je ob tem pripomnil: »Če bi vedel za možno bolezen, vas ne bi, morda ne bi, zaposlil.« Sodišče je presodilo, da je delodajalec stereotipno domneval, da bo delavka zaradi oviranosti (lastne in njenega moža) nezanesljiva in premalo uspešna pri delu, ter da je komentar pomenil nadlegovanje (theHRDIRECTOR 2013).

V tožbi iz leta 2016 v Severni Irski je bilo ugotovljeno, da je bila tožnica odpuščena z delovnega mesta s krajšim delovnim časom. Za njenega otroka je v času, ko je bila sama v službi, skrbel družinski prijatelj, v mesecih pred odpustitvijo pa je menedžer od delavke zahteval, da je nekaj časa odsotna z dela v korist oskrbe njene hčerke. Sodišče je stališče vodstva, da je njeno mesto doma s hendikepirano hčerko, in ne v službi, opisalo kot »zelo napačno« in potrdilo, da je šlo za nezakonito neposredno DP (Zadeva McCorry & Ors v McKeith 2016).

Primeri kažejo, da se z DP soočata oba spola in da se DP pojavlja tako v kontekstu oskrbe otrok kot tudi drugih sorodnikov z ovirami ali zdravstvenim stanjem. Vendar so ženske – glede na dejstvo, da prevzemajo večino skrbstvenega dela, vključno s tistim, ki ga potrebujejo OzO, da lahko živijo doma, zunaj institucionalne oskrbe – tveganju diskriminacije bolj izpostavljene kot moški. Primarne skrbnice otrok so še vedno v glavnem ženske, kar še toliko bolj velja v primeru družin z OzO (Vilaseca in dr. 2023). Tudi druge raziskave (v Niedbalski 2023) kažejo, da medtem ko je v družinah z otroki brez ovir najpogostejši egalitarni model, so v družinah z OzO matere tiste, ki v največji meri prevzemajo skrb za otroka. Masselot in Votinius (2018) ugotavljata, da so matere OzO med najbolj ogroženimi skupinami zaposlenih zaradi izgube zaposlitve na podlagi negativnih stereotipov, povezanih s hendikepom. Podobno navaja Scott (2018), ki razkriva, da se matere soočajo z neprilagodljivostjo delodajalcev v zvezi z njihovimi oskrbovalnimi potrebami in diskriminatornim odpuščanjem iz očitnih razlogov pristranskosti. Dejstvo, da pri skrbi za OzO matere nosijo več skrbstvenih obveznosti kot očetje, poudarja pomen varstva pred DP za preseganje podrejenega položaja žensk na delovnem mestu in za doseganje večje enakosti med spoloma pri skrbstvenem delu.

### 3 Diskriminacija prek povezave: dosežki in izzivi na področju nediskriminacije

Koncept DP, kot je opredeljen v protidiskriminacijski zakonodaji ter privzet v (ameriški in evropski) sodni praksi,<sup>12</sup> je v primeru oskrbovalk pomemben predvsem z dveh vidikov: starše in druge oskrbovalke oseb s hendikepom obravnava kot samostojne nosilce varstva pred diskriminacijo, obenem pa prispeva k večji razvidnosti stereotipizacije in stigmatizacije tako na odnosni kot na sistemski ravni ter povezav med njima (stigma nastaja v družbi in pronica v organizacije, med

<sup>12</sup> V ZDA je z zakonom o Američanih z invalidnostjo (ADA) izrecno prepovedana diskriminacija zaradi oviranosti osebe, s katero je oseba v nekem odnosu ali zvezi, kot so otrok, zakonec ali starš. Kot nezakonito je izrecno opredeljeno stereotipiziranje na podlagi povezave z osebo, ki ima ovire (U.S. EEOC 2007: 27).

odnose delodajalci – delavci). Stereotipi niso le individualen, ampak splošen kulturni fenomen, povezan z ableizmom, starizmom in sistemskimi spolnimi stereotipi, ki odražajo globoko zakoreninjenost stereotipov v družbi ter določajo sistemsko neenako obravnavo (ranljivih) skupin in posameznikov ter razvrednotenje vloge oskrbovalk. Kot ugotavlja Kuhar (2009: 84), lahko iz DP »razberemo družbeni pritisk k nehendikepiranemu telesu«.

Koncept DP ima tudi nekatere omejitve. Po O'Brien (2012) sodba v zadevi *Coleman* ne pomeni samodejne »zelene luči« za številne zahteve domnevnih žrtev. Protidiskriminacijska zakonodaja EU zahteva, da se oseba, ki zatrjuje, da je diskriminirana, primerja z drugo osebo. Vprašanje pa je, kako pogosto uspe tožnici\_ku najti primerljive osebe (kot v zadevi *Coleman*, kjer je sodišče takšne osebe potrdilo). Takšno primerjavo je namreč težko izvesti, odgovor o (ne)primerljivosti pa ni enostaven (Varuh človekovih pravic RS 2020). Vedénje nekdanjega delodajalca v zadevi *Coleman* je bilo tudi precej eksplicitno (nesramno), okoliščine delavke matere (bolniški kartoni, narava zahtev ipd.) pa enake kot pri drugih (primerljivih) zaposlenih (O'Brien 2012). Takih primerov je verjetno malo. Po oceni Waddington (2011) sodba v zadevi *Coleman* – čeprav je zelo pozitiven razvoj v sodni praksi – verjetno ne bo privedla do večjega varstva pred diskriminacijo za večino oskrbovalk. Obstaja tudi možnost, da so oskrbovalke, ki nudijo različne vrste družinske oskrbe (tipično ali ekstenzivno), obravnavane enako, in ne na podlagi razlikovanja med značilnostmi oskrbovancev. Če bi delodajalec na enak (slab) način obravnaval delavko, ki je odsotna zaradi oskrbovanja, in delavko, ki je enako odsotna iz razloga, ki ne vključuje osebe z ovirami, ni verjetno, da bi prišlo do tožbe zaradi neposredne DP, obstaja pa možnost za uveljavitev posredne spolne diskriminacije (Waddington 2011). Omejitev določitve koncepta DP je tudi v tem, da SEU sodbe v zadevi *Coleman* ni izrecno razširilo na primere, ki ne vključujejo primarnih oskrbovalk (Waddington in Broderick 2023: 42).

SEU prav tako ni določilo izrecne prepovedi *posredne* DP, ampak se je prepoved izrecno in izključno nanašala na *neposredno* diskriminacijo in nadlegovanje. Neposredna diskriminacija nastopi, ko je oseba, nosilka varovane osebne okoliščine, obravnavana manj ugodno kot drugi, ki te okoliščine nimajo in so v primerljivem položaju. Pri DP se slabša obravnava pojavi izrecno zaradi povezave/oskrbe osebe z neko varovano osebno okoliščino, pri dokazovanju pa je potrebna primerjava z nekom, pri komer ta okoliščina ni prisotna pri povezani osebi. O posredni diskriminaciji pa govorimo, kadar navidezno nevtralna določba, merilo ali praksa nesorazmerno prizadenejo oskrbovalke v primerjavi z drugimi oz. oskrbovalke oseb z ovirami postavijo v posebej slabši položaj (pravila ali prakse ne upoštevajo specifične realnosti oskrbe oseb z ovirami), razen ko so določbe, merila in praksa objektivno upravičeni z nekim legitimnim

namenom, sredstva za doseg tega namena pa nujna in ustrezna. Direktiva ne zagotavlja varstva oz. ne prepoveduje posredne diskriminacije na podlagi povezave z osebo z ovirami ali določeno starostjo.<sup>13</sup> V sodni praksi je posredna diskriminacija v povezavi z DP – za razliko od neposredne – manj izrecno urejena in potrjena ter ostaja slabo razumljen in predvsem teoretičen konstrukt. De Gioia-Carabellese in Colhoun (2012: 253) navajata, da so sodišča glede na te določitve svoje odločitve ustrezno omejila.

Manj ugodna obravnava oskrbovalk oseb z ovirami je največkrat povezana z zahtevami po prilagodljivem delovnem času in drugih prilagoditvah dela, ki so primerljive z zahtevami v primerih drugih vrst družinske oskrbe in jih delodajalci zavračajo kot neizvedljive zaradi nevtralnih odločitev (povezanih z organizacijo dela ali produktivnostjo), in ne z zahtevami po ugodnostih zaradi oviranosti same, zato je njihova obravnava le posredno vzročno povezana z oviranostjo osebe, za katere skrbijo. Zavrnitev zahtev se kaže kot ocena posledic za organizacijo (breme, visoki stroški), in ne kot neposredno utemeljena na osebni okoliščini oviranosti kot taki. Argument oskrbovalke bi lahko bil, da je žrtev posredne DP zaradi oviranosti, namesto tega pa bi lahko zatrjevale – glede na to, da je večina med njimi žensk –, da standardne delovne ureditve, ki otežujejo izvajanje njihovih oskrbovalnih obveznosti, pomenijo posredno diskriminacijo proti njim »neposredno«, in ne »prek povezave« (Waddington in Bell 2021: 515).

Izključitev posredne diskriminacije in razumne prilagoditve lahko zmanjšuje transformativne lastnosti koncepta DP. DP izhaja ne le iz neposredne, ampak tudi iz posredne diskriminacije, ki je, kot omenjeno, pogostejša od neposredne, a težje prepoznavna in opredeljiva. Za oskrbovalke O'Brien (2012: 6) ugotavlja, da »so bolj verjetno prikrajšane zaradi določb, kriterijev ali praks, ki jih je težko uskladiti z oskrbovalnimi obveznostmi, kot zaradi neposrednih diskriminatornih politik« (o tem glej tudi Waddington 2011). Delodajalčeve (spremenjene) ureditve delovnega časa, ki veljajo za vse enako, posebej škodijo prav oskrbovalkam oseb z ovirami (Honeyball 2008: 11), zlasti samohranilkam ali drugim, ki so edine oskrbovalke (Waddington in Bell 2021: 514–515),<sup>14</sup> in lahko pomenijo posredno DP. Vprašanje, ali je bila posredna diskriminacija iz sodbe SEU namerno izključena ali latentno vključena, ostaja odprto, po De Gioia-Carabellese

13 Posredno diskriminacijo opredeljuje kot situacijo, v kateri očitno nevtralna določba, merilo ali praksa osebe z določeno oviro ali starostjo postavlja v neugoden položaj v primerjavi z drugimi zaposlenimi.

14 Iskanje primerne alternative varstva za OzO je posebej težavno, saj ti otroci poleg varstva potrebujejo tudi ustrezno oskrbo/nego (za katero mora biti oseba, ki varstvo nudi, ustrezno usposobljena).

in Colhoun (2012: 253) pa je mogoče trditi, da bi nepriznavanje posredne DP kršilo načelo enakega obravnavanja. Da bi dosegli substantivno enakost v sferi dela, bi moralo načelo DP veljati tudi za posredno diskriminacijo in razumno prilagoditev. Razširitev področja uporabe Direktive na oskrbovalke oseb z ovirami, ki zatrjujejo obstoj posredne DP, torej omogoča (še) širša razlaga, ki upošteva namene, ki jih uresničuje Direktiva, oz. njeno splošno logiko (glej tudi Walsh 2024: 69; OECD 2025: 150). Kot pravi Waddington (2011), ne z dobesedno razlago besedila Direktive, temveč z bolj ambiciozno razlago s strani sodišča.

Nadaljnje vprašanje se veže na zahteve po razumnih prilagoditvah in prožnem delovnem času, ki se v kontekstu prizadevanja po izboljšanju ravnovesja med delom in oskrbo povečujejo, kar, ponovno, odpira problematiko oskrbovalk – vprašanje, ali je odločitev SEU odprla možnosti ureditve dela v korist staršev in oskrbovalk, da bi od delodajalca zahtevali prožne ureditve dela. V zadevi *Coleman* je bilo odločeno, da razumna prilagoditev velja samo za iskalce zaposlitve in zaposlene, ki so sami hendikepirani, kar nakazuje, da oskrbovalke, ki same niso hendikepirane, zaradi svoje povezave s hendikepiranimi do nje nimajo pravice. Glede tega, ali se dolžnost delodajalca, da zagotovi razumno prilagoditev, nanaša na oskrbovalke, obstajajo nacionalne razlike (Anglmayer 2020: 46). Npr. na Irskem je bilo skladno z zadevo *Coleman* ugotovljeno, da ne obstaja pravica do razumne prilagoditve prek povezave (pregled v Waddington in Broderick 2023: 107–110). Se pa za pristop, ki omogoča prilagoditve za oskrbovalke, zavzemajo varuhi človekovih pravic in drugi kvazi sodni organi (npr. slovenski Zagovornik načela enakosti – o tem v nadalj.), z namenom omogočanja združevanja zaposlitve in oskrbe.

Hitro razvijajoče se področje zakonodaje EU na tem področju je prineslo nov napredek. Ta omogoča, da se lahko tožnik\_ca brez posebnih varovanih osebnih okoliščin, ki pa (domnevno) doživlja enake prikrajšanosti kot osebe, ki te lastnosti imajo, sklicuje tako na neposredno kot na posredno diskriminacijo na podlagi osebne okoliščine. Do razvoja prava EU je prišlo z zadevo *CHEZ* iz leta 2015,<sup>15</sup> na podlagi katere se implicitno zdi, da je posredna DP zaradi oviranosti prav tako

<sup>15</sup> V primeru, ko je podjetje *CHEZ* v Bolgariji postavilo električne števec višje v naseljih, kjer živijo predvsem Romi, kot drugod, kjer so bili postavljeni nižje in zato dostopni za prebiranje števca, je stranka, ki ni del zaščitenе skupine, je pa živela v romskem naselju, trdila, da je žrtev diskriminacije. SEU je potrdilo, da ima oseba, ki je povezana z zaščitenо skupino v smislu, da živi v istem kontekstu (povezava torej ni družinska), zaradi »nevtralnega« ukrepa, ki prizadene skupino, posledično tudi sama slabše pogoje glede dostopa do storitev in tako odločilo, da se koncept DP razširi na primere posredne diskriminacije. Čeprav v zadevi ni šlo za vprašanje zaposlovanja, temveč za opravljanje storitev, pa je zakonodaja EU, na kateri je temeljila odločitev, enaka.

zajeta v Direktivi (Waddington in Broderick 2023: 11; Howard 2018: 64–65; Waddington in Bell 2021: 515). Tudi predlogi v Zadevi *Bervidi* se sklicujejo na namen Direktive,<sup>16</sup> kar pomeni, da sta neposredna in posredna DP tesno povezani in da brez sistematičnega boja proti obema ni mogoče zagotoviti pravega varstva pred manj ugodnim obravnavanjem oskrbovalk. SEU je v zvezi s primerom nedavno izdalo sodbo (Phillips 2025) in prvič potrdilo, da posredna DP velja za delavke, ki so primarne oskrbovalke OzO. Ko delodajalci z ureditvami ali praksami (npr. urniki izmen, delovnim časom ali dostopom do pogodb o delu za nedoločen čas) oskrbovalke postavljajo v slabši položaj v primerjavi z drugimi, so lahko odgovorni za DP. Sodišče je šlo še dlje in razsodilo, da lahko oskrbovalke zahtevajo razumne prilagoditve.

Nenazadnje je tu še vprašanje uporabe koncepta DP proti oskrbovalkam v kontekstu starosti (Connor 2010). DP se v pregledani literaturi in virih najpogostejše pojavlja v kontekstu oviranosti, vendar se glede na osrednjost razmerja oz. odnosa med žrtvijo in osebo, nosilko varovane osebne okoliščine, ne veže zgolj na to osebno okoliščino, temveč tudi na druge varovane podlage, vključno s starostjo. Starost izpostavljamo glede na dejstvo, da so skrbstveni odnosi organizirani okoli starostnih skupin in da gre za osebno okoliščino, zaradi katere je verjetnost potrebe po oskrbi velika (otroci in starejše osebe); na določeno starost (starejši ljudi) se vežejo tudi stereotipi in predsodki. DP na podlagi starosti odraža starizem, ki deluje izključujoče do starejših ljudi. O starizmu govorimo tudi v primeru hkratne diskriminatorne obravnave starosti in oviranosti, saj je oviranost starejših ljudi pogosto naturalizirana in dojeta kot neizogibna posledica staranja. To lahko vodi v normalizacijo oviranosti, njeno manjšo pravno pomembnost in manjšo relevantnost varstva starejših v primerjavi z mlajšimi hendikepiranimi.

Ker Direktiva poleg oviranosti velja tudi za starost (in druge vključene osebne okoliščine), mora biti po odločitvi SEU v zadevi *Coleman* prepovedana tudi neposredna DP v teh drugih kontekstih. Glede na to, da so bile potrjene pripombe generalnega pravobranilca v tej zadevi, je jasen znak, da se mora splošno načelo prepovedi DP, ki ga je sodišče določilo, razširiti na vse oskrbovalke (Wainwright 2008) oz. vrste družinske oskrbe. Torej, starost kot varovana značilnost je vredna enake varnosti kot oviranost, ko so delavke »kaznovane« po logiki povezave oz. »bližine«. Po navedbah Walsh (2024: 69) pa morebitna uporaba zadeve *Coleman* za druge osebne okoliščine – poleg oviranosti – na področju zaposlovanja v nacionalni sodni praksi še ni bila uresničena. V primeru DP v kontekstu starosti bi morala delavka, ki je odpuščena, ker skrbi za starša ali drugega starejšega

<sup>16</sup> To je boj proti vsem oblikam diskriminacije na podlagi oviranosti in opredelitev splošnega okvira za uresničevanje načela enakega obravnavanja.

sorodnika, imeti možnost zatrjevati, da je izgubila službo zaradi varovanega razloga starosti. Strokovnjaki za posamezne države so poročali le o dveh uspešnih primerih, ki sta vključevala manj ugodno obravnavo zaradi povezave na podlagi drugih razlogov – v obliki homofobnih in rasističnih komentarjev (Walsh, *ibid.*). Vendar postaja priznanje DP v kontekstu dela še pomembnejše zaradi učinkov demografskih trendov in vse številnejšega starajočega se prebivalstva, ko se z izzivi usklajevanja zaposlitve in oskrbe starejših ljudi sooča vse več zaposlenih.

Potencialno prelomna odločitev v zvezi s pravicami oskrbovalk je tudi odločitev Odbora ZN za pravice invalidov iz leta 2022 v primeru tožbe M. S. B. proti Italiji, ko je odbor prvič preučil trditve o DP. Tožnica, ki je oskrbovala hčer s hudo oviranostjo in hendikepiranega partnerja, je izgubila službo, potem ko so ji preklicali (za namen oskrbe sprva dovoljeno) delo od doma. Glavni argument v zadevi je bil, da je pomanjkanje pravnega priznanja in podpore tožnico kot oskrbovalko in njeno družino izpostavilo tveganju negativnih in hudih posledic za zdravje, finance ter osebno in družbeno življenje. Odbor je ugotovil, da čeprav KPI ne določa pravic za neplačane družinske oskrbovalke, »pravic invalidov ni mogoče uresničiti brez varstva družinskih oskrbovalk«, zato je zaključil, da KPI »priznava pravico družinskih oskrbovalk do državne zaščite, če je to priznanje neločljivo povezano z varstvom pravic družinskih članov z invalidnostjo« (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2022). S tem je potrdil, da je neupoštevanje potrebne podpore oskrbovalkam mogoče opredeliti kot nezakonito DP na podlagi oviranosti, kar odraža ugotovitev v zadevi *Coleman* (Eurocarers 2023; Clements 2022). V skladu s KPI je mogoče – čeprav KPI in odbor tega nista izrecno navedla – uveljaviti tudi varstvo pred nadlegovanjem zaradi povezave in pravico do razumne prilagoditve zaradi povezave z osebo z ovirami (Waddington in Broderick 2018: 73).

Stališča in ugotovitve o nezakoniti diskriminaciji staršev in oskrbovalk v zadevi *Coleman* krepi, kot smo že omenili, tudi *Direktiva o usklajevanju poklicnega in zasebnega življenja staršev in oskrbovalcev* iz leta 2019. Določbe o diskriminaciji iz te direktive se po Bell in Waddington (2021) pomembno prepletajo z zaščiteni podlago oviranosti iz Direktive (o enakosti pri zaposlovanju) in izražajo pristop DP, ki ga najdemo v zadevi *Coleman*. Varstvo pred diskriminacijo (odpustitvijo) in pravica delavk do oskrbovalskega dopusta, ki ju je uveljavila direktiva o usklajevanju, je trenutno edini element zaposlitvenega prava, ki neposredno naslavlja oskrbovalke. Kljub pravici do varstva pred DP v kontekstu oviranosti in dejstvu, da so zajete druge za njih pomembne varovane lastnosti (spol, status delavke s krajšim delovnim časom),<sup>17</sup> imajo oskrbovalke po protidiskriminacijskem pravu EU omejeno

<sup>17</sup> Oskrbovalke pogosto delajo s krajšim delovnim časom, toda njihova slabša obravnavo se lahko šteje kot utemeljena na (nedoločenih) objektivnih razlogih. Diskriminacija, kot



pravno zaščito. Za vzpostavitev bolj pravične in skrbne družbe je torej nujno polno prepoznavanje neformalnih oskrbovalk kot socialno prikrajšane skupine.

#### **4 Slovenija: koncept diskriminacije prek povezave v zakonih in praksi ter preiskovanje konkretnih primerov diskriminacije**

V Sloveniji je zaščita pred diskriminacijo formalnopravno ustrezna, saj je zagotovljena s priznanjem družinskega statusa zaposlenega in široko opredelitvijo diskriminacije v *Zakonu o varstvu pred diskriminacijo* (ZvarD) kot vsake neenake obravnave na podlagi osebne okoliščine, pri kateri varstva ne pogojuje s tem, da mora imeti (domnevna) žrtev, ki uveljavlja varstvo, sama to varovano osebno okoliščino. Zakon v 5. členu 1. alineje 2. odstavka določa, da je enako obravnavanje zagotovljeno osebi, ki je dejansko ali pravno povezana z osebo z neko osebno okoliščino; in čeprav izrecno ne opredeli, da je zaščiten tudi oseba, ki sama ni nosilka osebne okoliščine, s takšno formulacijo priznava in vključuje DP, kot ga je opredelila in uveljavila sodba SEU v zadevi *Coleman*. Torej skladno s pravom EU. Zakon vključuje tudi prepoved neposredne in posredne diskriminacije (6. člen), pri tem pa ne omenja samega koncepta DP oz. izrecno ne ureja neposredne in posredne DP. Čeprav izrecno ne uporablja na ravni EU uveljavljenega koncepta in ne ureja omenjenih oblik DP, pa je dejstvo, da je ZvarD treba razlagati skladno z namenom prava EU, da se zagotavlja učinkovito varstvo pred diskriminacijo. Neuporaba koncepta DP v zakonu, ki sicer ne pomeni odsotnosti vsebine in varstva, ki ju ta izraz predstavlja oz. zagotavlja, pa ni nujno brez vseh posledic. Nasprotno, lahko spodbuja nejasnosti, prepušča veliko razlagalnega prostora v praksi oz. sodišču ali *Zagovorniku načela enakosti* (v nadalj. Zagovornik), prav tako ne deluje ravno spodbudno za strateško uveljavljanje pravic za tiste, ki niso prepoznani kot tipični nosilci tveganja za diskriminacijo – kot tipične žrtve so splošno prepoznane osebe, ki so neenako

---

smo že obravnavali, prizadene ženske in moške, ker pa se diskriminacija zaradi spola pogosto pojavlja v posredni obliki, ženske – zaradi večje obremenitve z oskrbo – bolj verjetno utrpijo škodo. Trditve o posredni diskriminaciji pa se lahko izkažejo za šibke, z argumentom o objektivni upravičenosti delodajalčevih ukrepov. V primeru enako slabe obravnave žensk in moških je morebitna trditev o posredni diskriminaciji lahko odprta samo za ženske oskrbovalke, saj je pri slednjih večja verjetnost, da bodo, upoštevaje dolgotrajno zakonodajno prepoved posredne spolne diskriminacije, uspešne z zahtevkom zaradi diskriminacije, povezane z njihovim statusom oskrbovalke; tak položaj je posledica pomanjkanja izrecne zaščite oskrbovalk pred diskriminacijo v pravu EU (Waddington 2011).

obravnavane na podlagi njihovih lastnih osebnih okoliščin, in redkeje osebe, katerih diskriminacija izhaja iz njihovega položaja v mreži odnosov in tesnih medosebnih vezi. Manko specifičnega izraza lahko z vidika neformalne oskrbe oz. obravnave oskrbovalk pomeni zmanjšanje učinkovitejšega zagotavljanja njihove enakosti pri delu in zaposlovanju. Nacionalna zakonodaja, ki omogoča razlago skladno z bistveno vsebino sodbe v zadevi *Coleman*, a izpušča izrecno poimenovanje DP, ne prispeva nujno k boljšemu varstvu staršev in oskrbovalk, njihovi obravnavi kot samostojnih nosilcev varstva pred diskriminacijo in njihovi večji družbeni prepoznavnosti (ter prepoznavnosti same DP). Morda tudi žrtve DP same ne prepoznajo dejstva, da to so. Za vzpostavitev bolj učinkovitega varstva bi bilo zakon smiselno dopolniti z ustaljenim terminološkim izrazom.

Kot ugotavlja Vučko (2025: 22), bi sodišče tudi določbe člena 6(3) *Zakona o delovnih razmerjih* lahko razlagalo tako, da zajemajo DP, kot to zahteva SEU v zadevi *Coleman*, saj zakon ne določa, da mora imeti žrtev osebno lastnost, na podlagi katere naj bi prišlo do diskriminacije. Ta zakon lahko zajema – tako avtorica – tudi posredno diskriminacijo (ibid.: 23).

Kljub priznanju DP in njeni zakonski prepovedi, ki delavcem omogoča, da vložijo tožbo na podlagi oviranosti povezanih oseb ali oskrbovancev, pa v praksi koncept ni zaživel. Iskalnik po sodni praksi pod geslom »diskriminacija preko povezave« ne ponudi zadetkov. Pri nas doslej praktično ni sodne prakse, ki bi se posebej nanašala na DP (Vučko 2025: 22), jo razlagala in tako vzpostavila načela za primere s tega področja.

Vprašanja različnih oblik diskriminacije, vključno z DP, pa v svojih primerih obravnava Zagovornik. Domnevne žrtve DP na področju dela se pri uveljavljanju pravic oz. iskanju pravne zaščite po pomoč lahko obrnejo na Zagovornika.<sup>18</sup> V primeru delavke in matere OzO, ki ni mogla uveljavljati pravice do dodatnih dni dopusta in se je obrnila nanj, je Zagovornik predlagal vložitev pritožbe, v kateri stranka »lahko zatrjuje, da mora delodajalec pri odmeri dopusta upoštevati prepoved diskriminacije preko povezave zaradi invalidnosti in tudi zdravstvenega stanja skladno s 6. členom ZDR-1 ter 4., 5. in 6. člena ZvarD« (Zagovornik načela enakosti RS 2020: 63–64). Obstoj DP je priznal tudi v primeru delavke in matere otroka s »posebnimi potrebami«, ki je želela delati le dnevne izmene,

18 Zagovornik (Zagovornik načela enakosti RS, n. d.) na svojih spletnih straneh navaja hipotetični primer DP, do katere prihaja v iskanju zaposlitve: »Posameznik se je v postopku kandidiranja za delovno mesto izkazal kot najboljši kandidat. Naknadno je delodajalec izvedel, da ima kandidat hudo invalidnega otroka z zapletenimi negovalnimi dogovori, ki bi lahko povzročili dolgotrajne odsotnosti na delovnem mestu, zaradi česar je bila njegova prošnja za zaposlitev zavrnjena.«

da bi lahko skrbela za svojega otroka. S sodelavkami je imela dogovor, ki je omogočal prilagoditev delovnega časa njenim oskrbovalnim obveznostim, ko pa jo je vodstvo razporedilo na drug oddelek, so bili dogovori in prilagoditve prepovedani. Zagovornik je v obravnavi poudaril osebni okoliščini starševstva v povezavi s pravico do primerne prilagoditve (po zgoraj omenjeni KPI) in oviranosti v povezavi z DP ter stranko spodbudil k prijavi diskriminacije. V postopku ugotavljanja diskriminacije, ki je sledila prijavi, je bila med žrtvijo in kršiteljem dosežena poravnava (Zagovornik načela enakosti RS 2022: 48). Zagovornik je delodajalcu pojasnil potrebo po prilagoditvi delovnega časa oskrbovalke in s posredovanjem dosegel ugodnejšo razporeditev delovnega časa za delavko.

Zagovornik poleg pomoči domnevnim žrtvam nudi tudi informacije delodajalcem o diskriminaciji za boljše razumevanje le-te, vključno z DP. V publikaciji (Lobnik 2023) seznanja delodajalce, da »velja zaščita pred diskriminacijo tudi za ljudi, ki so zgolj pravno ali dejansko povezani (npr. družinska vez) z nekom, z neko osebno okoliščino in je sami očitno nimajo, pa je bila ta okoliščina razlog za tako obravnavo«. Navaja hipotetični primer: »Če se delavki, ki ima otroka z invalidnostjo, ne omogoči prilagoditev časa prihoda na delovno mesto tako, da lahko sina vozi v šolo za otroke s posebnimi potrebami, je lahko žrtev diskriminacije zaradi invalidnosti preko povezave« (ibid.: 25). Prav tako je izpostavljena prepoved DP v kontekstu nadlegovanja (ibid.: 129). Medtem ko Zagovornik delodajalcem nudi informacije o prepoznavanju različnih oblik diskriminacije, vključno z DP, preliminarne analiza podatkov, pridobljenih z intervjuji v raziskavi o zaznani diskriminaciji pri starših OzO (glej op. 8), potrjuje, da so te oblike prisotne v organizacijskem okolju. Čeprav raziskava kaže mešane rezultate – pri čemer imajo nekateri starši možnost prilagoditev in podporo na delovnem mestu, drugi pa ne –, ostajajo izkušnje zaznane diskriminacije še vedno jasno prisotne. Diskriminacija se kaže v različnih oblikah, kot so nadlegovanje (npr. neprimerne pripombe zaradi odsotnosti z dela zaradi oskrbe otroka), implicitno kaznovanje, povezano z usklajevanjem dela in družine (omejevanje prožnih ureditev dela), premestitev na bolj naporno delovno mesto, kršitev pravic glede dopusta, neodobritev nagrad in povišanja plače, diskreditiranje starševske vloge in celo grožnja z odpustitvijo (celotna analiza raziskovalnih podatkov bo objavljena na drugem mestu). Ugotovljene diskriminatorne prakse je v pravno-sociološkem smislu mogoče razumeti kot potencialno relevantne za koncept DP, saj pomenijo manj ugodno obravnavo oskrbovalk zaradi njihove povezave z otrokom z ovirami oz. skrbstvene vloge.

## 5 Sklep

DP v kontekstu oviranosti in drugih osebnih okoliščin omejuje vstop staršev in oskrbovalk na trg dela, njihovo delovno kariero in možnosti ter ima škodljive posledice za njihovo dobro počutje in zdravje. Kljub temu da je enako škodljiva kot katera koli druga oblika diskriminacije, je malo znana, o njej se pogosto ne govori. Sodna praksa na tem področju je skromna, zato se ljudje morda ne zavedajo, da so pred to vrsto diskriminacije pravno zaščiteni. DP oskrbovalke postavlja v podrejen in ponižujoč položaj, običajno skozi (ne)prikrite predsodke do hendikepiranih, s katerimi so povezane. Problem je tudi asociativna starostna diskriminacija, kjer so lahko oskrbovalke prikrajšane za prožne delovne ureditve, ki jih zaradi nenehnega demografskega staranja in vse večjih potreb po neformalni oskrbi nujno potrebujejo za oskrbo starejših.

Poznavanje DP, njene (ne)vklučenosti v organizacijske politike in zakonodajo, načinov zaščite pred njo ter pravic s področja usklajevanja dela in oskrbe (npr. pravica staršev OzO do skrajšanega delovnega časa in primerne prilagoditve) je pomembno, saj to tvori osnovo za zaznavanje DP, identifikacijo lastnih izkušenj kot kršitve zakona in ukrepanje zoper DP. V tem kontekstu so ključne raziskave, saj odkrivajo skrito diskriminacijo družinskih oskrbovalk pri zaposlovanju in delu. Lastna raziskava, s katero smo pridobili vpogled v izkušnje z diskriminacijo neposredno s strani zaposlenih staršev OzO kaže, da so izkušnje zaznane diskriminacije jasno prisotne.

Tudi delodajalci morajo biti seznanjeni, da imajo starši in oskrbovalke brez varovanih lastnosti iz nabora varovanih podlag iz evropske direktive o enakosti pri zaposlovanju pravico zahtevati varstvo pred neenako obravnavo, saj se lahko ne zavedajo, da so njihove zaposlitvene odločitve in ravnanja nezakoniti. Da bi se izognili tveganjem, povezanim s tožbami, zdravjem in blagostanjem oskrbovalk ter z izgubo usposobljene in lojalne delovne sile, morajo oblikovati in izvajati ustrezne delovne ureditve ter poskrbeti, da so oskrbovalke varne pred diskriminacijo, kar med drugim pomeni: vključitev DP v politike in usposabljanje kadrovskega osebja za prepoznavanje možnosti pojavljanja DP pri zaposlovanju in na delovnem mestu ter za njeno odpravljanje. Poleg družini (z otroki z ovirami) prijaznih delovnih mest je ključna tudi pozitivna delovna kultura, v kakršni se oskrbovalke hendikepiranih (in starejših) počutijo vključene in varne pred stigmatizacijo zaradi »razlogov prek povezave«. Zagotavljanje formalnih politik in zadostne prilagodljivosti, s katerimi bi delodajalci omogočili združevanje dela in oskrbe za oskrbovalke, je vezano tudi na obstoj politik aktivnega zaposlovanja v kontekstu skrbi za OzO in takšnih politik socialnega varstva, prek katerih država spodbuja in olajšuje zaposlovanje, socialne prejemke pa namenja

tistim, ki ne morejo delati. Države bi morale zagotavljati podporne storitve, npr. subvencionirana mesta za varstvo OzO, finančno podporo, svetovanje, prilagojeno individualnim okoliščinam, in druge oblike oz. možnosti podpore. S tem bi prispevale k razbremenitvi družine v smislu neformalne oskrbe ter posledično k manjši stopnji konflikta med delom in oskrbo kot napovedovalca diskriminacije oskrbovalk. Poleg tega bi morale izpolnjevati mednarodnopravne obveznosti ter zagotavljati ustrezne zakonodajne in sodne ukrepe za uresničevanje pravic delavk.

DP v kontekstu oviranosti in starosti ni povezana le z osebnimi predsodki in stereotipi, ampak ima strukturno ozadje v starizmu in ableizmu ter je v tem smislu tudi sistemska diskriminacija. Da bi se uspešno spopadali s stereotipi, predsodki in diskriminacijo v zvezi z oviranostjo in starostjo (pri starejših), je treba izpodbijati negativno naracijo o starejših in oviranosti, spodbujati ozaveščanje in izobraževanje, izboljševati zakonodajo in razvijati politike, ki spodbujajo pravice starejših in hendikepiranih ter enakost in vključenost.

Zakonodaja o nediskriminaciji sama po sebi ne bo korenito spremenila globokih strukturnih ovir, neenakosti in stigme, s katerimi se soočajo družinske oskrbovalke, kakor tudi ne jamči vedno dejanske nediskriminacije. Vendar sta razvoj pravne razsežnosti nediskriminacije za doseganje enake obravnave oskrbovalk in posredovanje s protidiskriminacijskimi predpisi, ko do DP pride, pomembna, zlasti ob ustreznih vladnih politikah in ukrepih. Ti morajo biti usmerjeni ne le v storitve oskrbe za hendikepirane in starejše, temveč tudi v podporo njihovih družin in oskrbovalk, da jim lahko te nato nudijo pomoč pri doseganju avtonomije in varovanju dostojanstva, kot je to utemeljeno v zadevi *Coleman*.

## SUMMARY

Discrimination by association (DA) refers to the unequal treatment of an individual with a connection to another person against whom a prejudice(s) exists based on prohibited grounds for discrimination. The fact that this concept is rooted in prejudice and stigma extending beyond immediate victims explains DA's distinct nature and why it is less visible than other forms of discrimination. The connection to another person also encompasses caring for a family member with disabilities or of a certain age, which makes it more likely they need care. Parents and caregivers face unequal treatment in the workplace due to their caregiving obligations along with stigmatising of those they care for. The article focuses on the prohibition of DA that applies to employees who are parents of children with disabilities, and employees who are children of parents with disabilities. To present and understand the concept of DA, relevant literature,

documents, reports, and other data sources were reviewed. Importantly, this concept is now found in case law of the CJEU (Coleman case) and EU member states, while successful lawsuits against former employers on the grounds of DA have emerged in individual state jurisdictions. The significance of DA lies in its treatment of employed parents and caregivers as independent beneficiaries of protection against discrimination and its contribution to drawing attention to the stigmatisation they encounter based on their connection with a person with disabilities or an elderly person. Still, the concept has certain limitations, such as the requirement for a person in a comparable situation, the exclusion of cases not involving primary caregivers, and the exclusion of indirect discrimination and reasonable accommodations. However, recent developments in EU law have advanced this field. In the 2015 CHEZ case, the CJEU extended the concept of reasonable accommodation to indirect discrimination, while in the 2025 Bervidi case it confirmed protection against indirect DA based on disability and recognised the possibility of reasonable accommodation for caregivers. At the same time, although the concept of DA is most frequently addressed in the context of disability, its prohibition should also extend to caregivers of elderly parents; the Coleman approach yet to be applied to age in national case law. In Slovenia, protection against DA has been guaranteed since 2016 by the Protection Against Discrimination Act. Formally, the law is adequate, despite not explicitly using the concept of DA. To date, virtually no case law in Slovenia has specifically addressed or interpreted DA, and thus there are no established principles for cases in this area. Nonetheless, the issue of DA was addressed by the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, the central authority for anti-discrimination protection. In an illustrative case involving a mother with a child with disabilities, it recommended filing a complaint or reporting the discrimination and, through its intervention, secured a more favourable work schedule. Given the scarcity of case law in this area in the European context, care workers may simply be unaware that they are legally protected against it. Knowledge of DA, its inclusion/exclusion in organisational policies, and the means of protection and rights concerning the reconciliation of work and care is important because it forms the basis for recognising DA, identifying one's own experiences as breaches of the law, and taking action against it. On the other hand, employers are also not fully aware of the impact of DA and therefore need to be encouraged to incorporate employees' needs with respect to caring for their children or elderly parents into their family-friendly policies and to handle requests for accommodations with sensitivity. Greater awareness of DA also helps avoid lawsuits. In addition, a positive work culture is essential to make caregivers of people with disabilities and the elderly feel included and safe from being stigmatised. In any

case, in the context of disability and ageing DA is not only linked to individual prejudices, but also reflects structural ableism and ageism, constituting systemic discrimination. Addressing it requires challenging negative discourses, raising awareness, strengthening legislation, and promoting inclusive policies for people with disabilities and older adults.

## Literatura

- Bell, Mark, in Lisa Waddington (2021): *Similar, Yet Different: The Work-life Balance Directive and the Expanding Frontiers of EU Non-Discrimination Law*. *Common Market Law Review*, 58 (5): 1401–1432.
- Berthelot-Raffard, Agnès (2024): *From the Coleman Case to Disability Justice: An Examination of Discrimination by Association*. V G. Ciciurkaite in R. Lewis Brown (ur.): *Disability and the Changing Contexts of Family and Personal Relationships*: 27–42. Leeds: Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Bose, Bijetri, in dr. (2020): *Protecting Adults with Caregiving Responsibilities from Workplace Discrimination: Analysis of National Legislation*. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82 (3): 953–964.
- Burr, Vivien, in Colley, Helen (2019): “I just felt as though I had to drop something”: The Implications of care for female working elder carers’ working lives. *Ageing and Society*, 40 (11): 2333–2351.
- Caracciolo Di Torella, Eugenia, in Annick Masselot (2020): *Caring Responsibilities in European Law and Policy: Who Cares?* Abingdon: Routledge.
- Clements, Luke (2022): *A Landmark UN Carers Decision*. Dostopno prek: <https://www.lukeclements.co.uk/a-landmark-un-carers-decision/> (1. 8. 2025).
- Connor, Tim (2010): *Discrimination by Association: A Step in the Right Direction: Case C-303/06 Coleman v. Attridge Law and Steve Law Judgment of the ECJ 17 July 2008*. *Journal of Social Welfare & Family Law*, 32 (1): 59–69.
- de Gioia-Carabellese, Pierre, in Colhoun, Robert J. (2012): *Associative Discrimination in Britain and in the European Union: A still too Elastic Concept?* *E-Journal of International and Comparative Labour Studies*, 1 (3–4): 248–261.
- Honeyball, Simon (2007): *Discrimination by Association*. 4 Web JCLI. Dostopno prek: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/12826134.pdf> (23. 7. 2024).
- Howard, Erica (2018): *EU Anti-discrimination Law: Has the CJEU Stopped Moving Forward?* *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, 18 (2–3): 60–81.
- Kuhar, Roman (2009): *Na križiščih diskriminacije: večplastna in intersekcijska diskriminacija*. Ljubljana: Mirovni inštitut.
- Kuzminac, Mina S. (2024): *Analysis of Indirect and Associative Discrimination in Employment from the European Union law perspective*. *Strani pravní život*, 68 (1): 15–37.

- Leng, Ling Li, in dr. (2024): Perceived Discrimination among Caregivers of Children with Disabilities in China: Unraveling the Effects of Social Determinants. *Social Science & Medicine*, 351 (1): 116991.
- Masselot, Annick (2018): Family Leave: Enforcement of the Protection against dismissal and unfavourable Treatment. Brussels: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Mohr, Sören, in dr. (2022): Discrimination Experiences of Employees with Care Duties in the Context of Pregnancy, Parental Leave and Family Caregiving. Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes). Dostopno prek: [https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/forschungsprojekte/EN/Studie\\_DiskrErf\\_fuersorgender\\_Erwerbstaetiger\\_en.html](https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/forschungsprojekte/EN/Studie_DiskrErf_fuersorgender_Erwerbstaetiger_en.html) (5. 7. 2025).
- Niedbalski, Jakub (2023): (Extra) ordinary Parenting: Parents of Children with Disabilities in the Context of Disability Stigma and Pride. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 27 (3): 648–670.
- O'Brien, Charlotte (2012): Confronting the Care Penalty: The Case for Extending Reasonable Adjustment Rights along the Disability/Care Continuum. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 34 (1): 5–30.
- Phillips, Fisher (2025): New EU Ruling Expands Protections for Parents of Disabled Children in Italy and Beyond: Employer Obligations Explained September 19, 2025. Dostopno prek: <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/new-eu-ruling-expands-protections-for-1391417/> (27. 9. 2025).
- Scott, Ellen K. (2018): Mother-Ready Jobs: Employment that Works for Mothers of Children with Disabilities. *Journal of Family Issues*, 39 (9): 2659–2684.
- Stewart, Lisa M. (2013): Family Care Responsibilities and Employment. *Journal of Family Issues*, 34 (1): 113–138.
- Stewart, Lisa M., in dr. (2018): The Continuum of Dependent Family Care: A Theoretical Explanation and Model. *Community, Work & Family*, 21 (5): 599–619.
- Stewart, Lisa M., in dr. (2025): Navigating Stigma and Discrimination at Work While Parenting a Child with a Mental Health Disability. V: *Disability and the Family: Challenges, Resources, and Resilience*: 97–113. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Stryker, Robin, in dr. (2017): Family Responsibilities Discrimination. HR Work-Family Discourse and Organizational Mediation of US Civil Rights Law, LIEPP Working Paper. September 2017, n°70.
- Vilaseca, R., in dr. (2023): Mothers' and Fathers' Parenting and Other Family Context Variables Linked to Developmental Outcomes in Young Children with Intellectual Disability: A Two-wave Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 35 (3): 387–416.
- Waddington, Lisa B. (2011): Carers, Gender, and Employment Discrimination – What Does EU Law offer Europe's Carers? V M.-A. Moreau (ur.): *Before and After the Economic Crisis: What Implications for the "European Social Model"?*: 101–128. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.



- Waddington, Lisa, in Bell, Mark (2021): The Right to Request Flexible Working Arrangements under the Work-life Balance Directive—A Comparative Perspective. *European Labour Law Journal*, 12 (4): 508–528.
- Williams, Joan C., in dr. (2012): Protecting Family Caregivers from Employment Discrimination Washington, DC: AARP Public Policy Institute. Dostopno prek: <http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/info-08-2012/insight-protecting-family-caregivers-from-employment-discrimination-AARP-ppi-health.html> (10. 10. 2022).

## Viri

- Anglmayer, Irmgard (2020): Implementation of the Employment Equality Directive in light of the UN CRPD Ex-Post Evaluation Unit PE 654.206 – December 2020 EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service.
- Böök, Birte, in dr. (2023): Comparative Analysis of Gender Equality Law in Europe 2022. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Chopin, Isabelle, in Germaine, Catharina (2025): A Comparative Analysis of Non-discrimination Law in Europe 2024. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Direktiva 2019/1158/EU. Direktiva Evropskega parlamenta in Sveta z dne 20. junija 2019 o usklajevanju poklicnega in zasebnega življenja staršev in oskrbovalcev ter razveljavitvi Direktive Sveta 2010/18/EU. Uradni list EU, št. L 188.
- Eurocarers (2023). A Landmark UN Carers Decision, 30. januar 2023. Dostopno prek: <https://eurocarers.org/a-landmark-un-carers-decision/> (27. 9. 2025).
- Kogovšek Šalamon, Neža (2021): Country report Non-discrimination Transposition and implementation at national level of Council Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78 Slovenia. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Lobnik, Miha (2023): Zagotavljanje enakih možnosti in preprečevanje diskriminacije pri delu in zaposlovanju: priročnik za delodajalce. Ljubljana: Zagovornik načela enakosti.
- Meaby&Co Solicitors (2019): The Dangers of Discrimination by Association. <https://www.meaby.co.uk/the-dangers-of-discrimination-by-association/> (21. 7. 2024).
- OECD (2025): Combatting Discrimination in the European Union: Policy Approaches and Gaps. Paris: OECD Publishing. Dostopno prek: <https://doi.org/10.1787/29c-2c36a-en> (15. 9. 2025).
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] (2022): Italy: Lack of financial and social support to family of people with disabilities amounted to human rights violation, UN Committee finds. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Dostopno prek: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/10/italy-lack-financial-and-social-support-family-people-disabilities-amounted> (21. 7. 2024).

- Priročnik o evropskem protidiskriminacijskem pravu: izdaja iz leta 2018 (2021): Urad za publikacije Evropske unije. Luxembourg: Urad za publikacije Evropske unije.
- Sklepni predlogi generalnega pravobranilca M. Poiaresa Madura v zadevi Coleman z dne 31. januarja 2008. Dostopno prek: [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:62006CC0303](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:62006CC0303) (30. 9. 2025).
- theHRDIRECTOR (2013): Disability Discrimination by Association, 17. april 2013. Dostopno prek: <https://www.thehrdirector.com/legal-updates/legal-updates-2013/disability-discrimination-by-association/> (27. 9. 2025).
- U.S. EEOC (2007): Enforcement Guidance: Unlawful disparate treatment of Workers with caregiving Responsibilities (Notice No. 915.002). Dostopno prek: <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/caregiving.html> (8. 4. 2023).
- Varuh človekovih pravic RS (2020): Letno poročilo za 2020. Dostopno prek: <https://www.varuh-rs.si/letno-porocilo-2020/2-vsebina-dela-in-pregled-obravnavanih-zadev/b-obravnavana-vsebinska-podrocja/210-enakost-pred-zakonom-in-prepoved-diskriminacije/> (14. 9. 2025).
- Vučko, Katarina (2025): Country Report: Non-discrimination Transposition and Implementation at National Level of Council Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78 Slovenia. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Waddington, Lisa, in Broderick, Andrea (2018): Combatting Disability Discrimination and Realising Equality. European Commission.
- Waddington, Lisa, in Broderick, Andrea (2023): Court Practices regarding Disability Discrimination, including Reasonable Accommodation, at EU and Member State Level, and in Light of the UN CRPD. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Wainwright, Martin (2008): Carer brings Hope to Millions with Landmark Win on Employment Rights. The Guardian, 18. Julij 2008. Dostopno prek: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2008/jul/18/socialcare.law> (17. 9. 2025).
- Walsh, Judy (2024): Discrimination by Association and Discrimination by Assumption under Directives 2000/43 and 2000/78. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Zadeva C-303/06 Coleman (2008): Sodba c-303/06 z dne 17. julija 2008, S. Coleman proti Attridge Law in Steve Law. Dostopno prek: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SL/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A62006CJ0303> (5. 5. 2022).
- Zadeva C-38/24 [Bervidi](i) G.L. SODBA SODIŠČA (prvi senat) z dne 11. septembra 2025. Dostopno prek: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SL/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:62024CJ0038> (30. 9. 2025).
- Zagovornik načela enakosti RS (2020): Redno letno poročilo za leto 2019. <https://zagovornik.si/izdelki-zagovornika/letno-porocilo/> (30. 6. 2023).
- Zagovornik načela enakosti RS (2022): Redno letno poročilo za leto 2021 – drugi del. Dostopno prek: <https://zagovornik.si/izdelki-zagovornika/letno-porocilo/> (30. 6. 2023).

Zakon o varstvu pred diskriminacijo. Dostopno prek: <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7273> (20. 5. 2022).

**Podatki o avtorici**

doc. dr. **Zdenka Šadl**

Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za družbene vede

Kardeljeva ploščad 5, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija

E-mail: [zdenka.sadl@fdv.uni-lj.si](mailto:zdenka.sadl@fdv.uni-lj.si)





## **UVOD V TEMATSKI BLOK**

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMATIC BLOCK





## Reconfiguring the Korean Diaspora

The Korean diaspora should not just be understood as a demographic category that encompasses Koreans and their descendants who live outside of the Korean Peninsula. It is a historical and socio-cultural field shaped by the biggest ruptures in modern Korean history: colonial rule, war and division, labour migration, forced displacement, marriage migration, educational and professional mobility, and the global circulation of Korean culture. Zainichi Koreans in Japan, early Korean immigrants in Hawai'i and North America, as well as Korean migrants in Europe have formed different configurations of Korean diasporic life. Their experiences show how Koreanness and belonging are maintained, transformed and contested through language, food, family, labour, gender, memory, and cultural practice.

In this special issue, *Reconfiguring Korean Diaspora: Socio Cultural, Historical and Literary Perspectives*, the Korean diaspora is approached as a plural and dynamic formation. Rather than treating diaspora as a fixed ethnic category, the contributions examine it as a set of lived practices, cultural memories, social relations, narrative forms, and symbolic negotiations. Bringing together literary analysis, film studies, ethnographic research, historical inquiry, gender studies, food studies, and the sociology of cultural practice, the issue seeks to contribute to Korean Studies and wider debates in diaspora studies and cultural sociology.

The five articles in the issue shed light on different dimensions of the Korean diaspora. They show the Korean diaspora is not limited to questions of migration and settlement, but may be interpreted and reconfigured via literary, cinematic, food cultural, musical, and historical approaches. In this way, diaspora emerges as a process of unstable belonging, cultural continuity, memory, care, and identity negotiation.

Kang Byoung Yoong's article "Biopolitical Diasporic Human Figures: Dystopian Narratives in the Works of Kazuo Ishiguro and Chang-rae Lee" opens the issue by linking diaspora to biopolitics and a dystopian narrative. Through Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* and Lee's *On Such a Full Sea*, it is argued that biopolitical power produces certain forms of life, sensibility and relationality. The biopolitical diasporic human figure is presented as a mode of existence marked by unstable protection and managed vulnerability.

Nataša Visočnik Gerželj's "The Story of Kimchi: Identity and Diaspora of Zainichi Koreans in Japan" moves from conceptual framing to everyday cultural practice. Focusing on kimchi and Zainichi Koreans, it considers how food has become a medium of identity negotiation, memory, and resistance to assimilation.

Kimchi appears as both a popularised food in Japanese society and a cultural anchor of Koreanness.

In Hur EuiJin's "Diaspora as Horror in *Peninsula*: A Psychoanalytic Perspective", the discussion expands to cinema. Interpreting Yeon Sang ho's *Peninsula* through Lacanian extimacy, it is argued that horror arises from the transformation of familiar spaces, names, and social relations. Diaspora is used as a cinematic figure of displacement, failed return, and symbolic exclusion.

Sun Young Yun's "Singing Belonging: A Korean Diaspora Women's Choir as a Cultural Practice and Community-Building in Austria" looks at the Korean diaspora in Europe via the Vienna Korean Women's Choir. Founded in 2007 by first-generation Korean migrant women in Austria, the choir is analysed as a gendered space of cultural memory, community care, and meaningful ageing. Singing has become a practice in which migrant women sustain their belonging and reposition themselves as active cultural agents.

Finally, in "The Reality and Self-Identity of Korean Women Immigrants to America in the Early 20th Century: A Comparative Analysis of Historical Records and Literary Works" Boram Han and Yesul Han return to the issue of the Korean diaspora's historical formation. By examining historical records, oral narratives of 'picture brides', and Eugenia Kim's *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, the authors challenge the marginalisation of women in accounts of early Korean migration to Hawai'i and the United States, revealing them to be historical subjects who exercised their agency through migration, education, family decisions, and establishing a community.

Altogether, the articles reimagine the Korean diaspora as a phenomenon of movement, memory, vulnerability, cultural creativity, and social practice. They invite us to think of diaspora not simply as a matter of origin and destination, but as an ongoing process in which individuals and communities make claims to their identity, belonging, care, visibility, and dignity. In this sense, the Korean diaspora is one of the key sites where the meanings of Korea, Koreanness, and global modernity are continually produced, negotiated and contested.

This work was supported by the Seed Programme for Korean Studies of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service at the Academy of Korean Studies as part of project AKS-2022-INC-2250001. The project participants sincerely thank the editors in chief, the editorial board, the reviewers, and the technical editor for their careful reading, constructive comments, and generous support. The editorial board of the journal is also grateful to all the contributors for their patience, intellectual engagement, and commitment during the review and revision process.

Kang Byoung Yoong and Rajesh Kumar  
Guest editors





**ČLANKI**

ARTICLES





Kang Byoung Yoong

## **BIOPOLITICAL DIASPORIC HUMAN FIGURES: DYSTOPIAN NARRATIVES IN THE WORKS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO AND CHANG-RAE LEE**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The article examines how dystopian narratives shaped by biopolitics produce specific human figures and modes of existence rather than merely depicting passive victims of repression. Focusing on *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *On Such a Full Sea* by Chang rae Lee, the way biopolitical power operates through the normalisation and management of life instead of overt violence or exclusion is analysed. Drawing on Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, attention is then shifted from power itself to the forming of sensibilities, relational practices, and everyday life under biopolitical conditions. Following comparative analysis, the concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure is proposed; namely, a form of life that persists without stable protection while remaining fully embedded in regimes of management and normalised vulnerability.*

**KEYWORDS:** biopolitics, dystopian literature, diaspora, human figures, contemporary fiction

### **Biopolitične diasporične človeške figure: distopične naracije v delih Kazua Ishigura in Changa-raeja Leeja**

#### **IZVLEČEK**

*Članek obravnava, kako distopične naracije, oblikovane z biopolitiko, ne prikazujejo zgolj pasivnih žrtev represije, temveč proizvajajo specifične človeške figure in načine bivanja. S poudarkom na romanih *Ne zapusti me nikdar* Kazua Ishigura in *On Such a Full Sea* Changa-raeja Leeja analizira,*

*kako biopolitična oblast deluje prek normalizacije in upravljanja življenja, ne pa prek odkritega nasilja ali izključevanja. Ob opiranju na Michela Foucaulta in Giorgia Agambena študija premakne pozornost z oblasti same na oblikovanje senzibilnosti, relacijskih praks in vsakdanjega življenja v biopolitičnih pogojih. S primerjalno analizo predlaga koncept biopolitične diasporične človeške figure, oblike življenja, ki vztraja brez stabilne zaščite, hkrati pa ostaja povsem vpeta v režime upravljanja in normalizirane ranljivosti.*

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** biopolitika, distopična književnost, diaspora, človeške figure, sodobna proza

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The present study examines the ways in which biopolitics in dystopian narratives do not just envision humans as passive objects of oppression, but actively produces specific human figures and modes of life. In dystopian fiction since the 2000s, the management and distribution of human life by the state, institutional systems, and technological power have functioned as central narrative forces. Accordingly, figures such as clones, migrant labourers, and inhabitants of isolated/segregated communities have repeatedly appeared as both objects of biopolitical governance and as its structural outcomes.

Nevertheless, existing scholarship has largely focused on conceptualising biopolitics as an apparatus of repression or a mechanism of dehumanisation. While these studies provide detailed accounts of how biopolitical power disciplines, regulates and excludes human beings, analysis of the human figures formed in such conditions remains relatively limited. Major studies in this field analyse biopolitics primarily in terms of control, exclusion, and state power, yet less sustained attention is evident concerning how humans develop forms of perception, relational practices and lived sensibilities within biopolitically structured environments. In this regard, the studies by Cheon (2022), Park (2018) and Rhie (2018) are key points of reference in the literature.

More specifically, existing discussions tend to only partly address how transformations in mobility and settlement reshape everyday experiences of life, and how biopolitical conditions reorganise the ways in which individuals understand themselves and relate to others. The human figure thus often remains analytically

<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by the Seed Programme for Korean Studies of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service at the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2022-INC-2250001).

subordinate to the examination of power itself instead of being treated as a central object of inquiry.

Against this backdrop, this article is guided by the question of which kinds of human figures are produced by biopolitics in dystopian narratives. The term “human figure” is employed here not as a fixed typology, nor within a binary opposition between victim and resistant subject, but as a comprehensive concept encompassing modes of self-awareness, affective orientations, and relational forms shaped within biopolitical conditions. From this perspective, biopolitics is understood not simply as an external force that controls or marginalises human beings, and is viewed as an ontological condition which delineates the possibilities and limits of human life itself.

By adopting this approach, instead of repositioning dystopian narratives not just as genres that expose the consequences or injustices of biopolitical regimes, in this article they are regarded as literary sites in which new human figures are imagined, negotiated and articulated from within biopolitical life.

## 1.2 Corpus and Scope of the Study

The primary texts analysed below are *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *On Such a Full Sea* by Chang rae Lee. Both novels are dystopian narratives written in English and offer clear representations of how biopolitics organises human life. Simultaneously, they employ distinct narrative strategies and construct different human figures, demonstrating that biopolitics does not operate in a singular or uniform manner.

Ishiguro’s fiction is characterised by restrained first-person narration and retrospective reflection via which institutional orders are internalised as ordinary conditions of life. The described narrative stance is particularly effective in tracing how individuals come to recognise and inhabit governing structures without any overt confrontation. *Never Let Me Go* recounts the lives of human clones raised for organ donation within an educational institution that initially appears protective. As the narrative unfolds, predetermined life trajectories are gradually revealed and accepted as natural phases of existence. The novel hence places in the foreground the forming of individual sensibilities shaped within a system of life management rather than moments of explicit resistance.

Lee’s fiction, by contrast, stresses collective perspectives, communal norms and structural inequality. *On Such a Full Sea* depicts a stratified society organised around labour and spatial division, narrated through a collective “we” that frames perception and judgement. Although the central figure, Fan, moves beyond the boundaries of her community, this movement does not amount to liberation. Instead, her life continues to be shaped by overlapping conditions

of insufficient protection and ongoing management, both within and beyond communal borders.

The rationale for comparing these two works arises from the different levels on which they articulate biopolitical governance. While *Never Let Me Go* focuses on the internalisation of biopolitical norms on the level of individual sensibility, *On Such a Full Sea* reveals the differential management of life through collective narration and spatial organisation. Together, they provide a comparative framework for analysing biopolitics not as a power that simply excludes/eliminates, but as a condition which normalises unprotected life as a viable and enduring mode of existence.

### 1.3 Methodology

Rather than summarising or restating existing discussions, in the article they are reorganised around a problem-oriented framework in order to be able to answer the central question of how biopolitics constructs specific human figures. To that end, concepts and analyses proposed in the literature are examined individually and employed selectively in line with the study's analytical objectives.

The theories of biopolitics developed by Michel Foucault (1978, 2003) and Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005) are not treated as interpretive frameworks that precede or predetermine the reading of the literary texts. Those authors' theories are instead utilised in a limited and instrumental manner as conceptual tools for clarifying and articulating phenomena that emerge in close textual analysis.

In this sense, theory functions not as an explanatory grid imposed upon the texts; rather, it acts more as a secondary device that refines and systematises insights derived from the narratives themselves. This methodological stance allows the analysis to remain grounded in the literary texture of the works, while avoiding reducing the texts to illustrative examples of pre-established theoretical models.

Further, all the concepts and terms newly introduced in this article are explicitly identified as notions proposed in the present study so as to prevent confusion with the terminology used in earlier research. The article thereby seeks not only push the current lines of argument, but to develop an independent analytical framework based on its own problem-setting and interpretive perspective.

## 2 Theoretical Background: Biopolitics and Dystopia

### 2.1 Formation of the Concept of Biopolitics

The concept of biopolitics was formulated to explain a historical transformation in the way power governs human life in modernity. Michel Foucault argues that whereas pre-modern sovereign power was defined by the right to take

life or let live, modern power increasingly operates through the preservation, management and optimisation of life itself (Foucault 1976). Power thus ceases to function primarily via exceptional violence or juridical prohibition and instead intervenes in life as a continuous process.

Biopolitics governs by organising the conditions in which life is sustained. Rather than directly depriving individuals of life, it structures life courses and available choices in advance. Domains like birth, health, labour, education and ageing become objects of statistical management and normative evaluation through which life is treated simultaneously as something to be protected and as a calculable resource.

Within this framework, individuals are not merely coerced from the outside. They are formed as subjects who internalise norms of normality and desirability, aligning their conduct with institutional objectives. The effectiveness of biopolitics therefore lies less in overt coercion than in the production of compliant modes of self-understanding.

The described process is closely linked to disciplinary power, which operates by shaping bodies and behaviours via repetition, surveillance and training (Foucault 1977). Using such mechanisms, biopolitics conditions how individuals perceive and normalise particular forms of life. Biopolitics is accordingly understood here not as an external apparatus of repression and rather as a political condition that produces specific human figures and sensibilities of life. In this perspective, dystopian narratives function as literary spaces in which the formative effects of biopolitics on human life become narratively legible.

## 2.2 The Expansion and Limits of Biopolitics

Extending Foucault's insights, Giorgio Agamben forcefully places the violent and exclusionary dimensions of biopolitics in the spotlight. In *Homo Sacer*, Agamben (1998) identifies the core of modern politics in the distinction between protected life and abandoned life, arguing that biopolitics produces a bare life through inclusion by exclusion within the juridical order, most visibly in the state of exception.

This framework has been widely applied to dystopian narratives in which figures such as clones produced for organ donation or populations confined by infection control and social stratification are often interpreted as lives situated outside legal protection and rendered expendable. Seen in this manner, clones in *Never Let Me Go* and the residents of B Mor in *On Such a Full Sea* have been read as paradigmatic forms of bare life governed by state power (Kim 2004).

However, such interpretations risk fixing human figures in dystopian narratives within a position of passive victimhood. In many dystopian texts, characters are

not excluded through direct force alone and instead come to understand their lives via the language of protection, management and necessity, in turn reproducing the governing order in everyday practice. Biopolitical power thus operates not by rendering life entirely powerless, but by presenting certain forms of life as the only viable/imaginable options.

The above leads the study to employ Agamben's concepts as an auxiliary framework rather than as its primary analytical axis. The focus lies less on the state of exception itself than on how human beings live amid such conditions and normalise their own lives within them. Here, Agamben's theory serves to delineate the outer limits of biopolitical power against which the everyday forming of human figures can be more precisely examined.

### 2.3 Reading Biopolitics in Dystopian Literature

Previous scholars have shown that biopolitics in dystopian narratives often operates not through overt violence but through forms of voluntary consent. As Rhie (2018: 235) states, promises of health, safety and survival function as mediating mechanisms via which individuals come to comply with governing orders.

From this perspective, dystopian narratives do not merely denounce biopolitical power and instead operate as narrative laboratories that render visible how sensibilities of life and modes of self-understanding are created in normalised biopolitical conditions. Characters, notably those situated in stratified communities, frequently recognise predetermined life trajectories without resisting them and accept restrictions on mobility and choice as basic conditions of existence. Such figures therefore appear not only as objects of governance but also as subjects who reproduce biopolitical order in everyday practice.

Building on this line of inquiry, the present study approaches biopolitics as a mechanism of dehumanisation yet also as a condition that shapes modes of relationality and perceptions of mobility and settlement. Application of this perspective provided the theoretical groundwork for the following chapters, which examine how *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea* articulate distinct human figures formed from within biopolitical regimes.

## 3 Human Figures of Biopolitical Management and Compliance: *Never Let Me Go*

This section analyses *Never Let Me Go* not from the aspect of how biopolitics eliminates/excludes human beings and instead from the standpoint of which kinds



of human figures it produces. Moving beyond interpretations that have generally defined the cloned characters as victims placed in a state of exception, in this section they are approached as beings whose sensibilities of life and modes of self-understanding are organised within a system of biopolitical management.

By so doing, the analysis shifts attention away from approaches that have tended to interpret the clones in *Never Let Me Go* in terms of ethical crisis, dehumanisation, or systemic regulation (Snaza 2015; Johansen 2016), and instead focuses on the everyday conditions through which life is regulated, normalised and made intelligible to those who inhabit it. Even though the clones in *Never Let Me Go* have often been interpreted as silenced subjects deprived of agency, here they are viewed as figures who come to recognise, accept and inhabit the life trajectories assigned to them, forming relationships, memories and expectations within those parameters.

Through this reading, in this section it is claimed that biopolitics in *Never Let Me Go* functions not primarily as a violent power which suppresses human beings, but as a condition that produces human figures premised on compliance. Biopolitical power operates by organising the terms in which life is perceived and lived, thereby shaping forms of subjectivity that do not necessarily resist the given order, but reproduce it via ordinary practices of living.

### 3.1 Clone Figures and the System of Life Management

In *Never Let Me Go*, Hailsham is an institution that was set up to raise clones for organ donation, yet it is narratively presented as a space of protection and education. Rhie (2018) interprets Hailsham as a hygienic space governed by disciplinary power and voluntary consent, whereas Park (2018) reads it as a panoptic order in which cloned lives are administered by state power. Despite effectively identifying mechanisms of regulation and control, these approaches do not fully account for the sensibilities of life the clones come to form within this environment. This study approaches Hailsham as a space in which life management is naturalised as an ordinary condition. Biopolitics within this framework operates through the prior organisation of life, influencing the conditions under which existence is perceived and lived. The clones are neither clearly informed of their designated purpose, nor required to demonstrate creativity or autonomy in any meaningful sense:

She was saying, but he just couldn't be very creative, then that was quite all right, he wasn't to worry about it. It was wrong for anyone, whether they were students or guardians, to punish him for it, or put pressure on him in any way. (Ishiguro 2005, 27–28)

This suggests the truth is not concealed inasmuch as it is displaced from the horizon of everyday relevance. Even though the future that will define the clones' existence remains present, it is unproblematised in the sense that it is neither explicitly questioned nor experienced as a problem triggering reflection or resistance. Ignorance is thereby produced through the structuring of attention rather than by way of prohibition.

The clones grow up experiencing socially recognisable elements of a normal life, including healthcare, peer relationships, play, and cultural activities. Such protection does not mark them as exceptional beings; rather, it situates them within socially sanctioned frameworks of normality. Protection in this context functions as a modality of management, and life is constituted to be at once an object of ethical concern and a resource to be organised. Art education serves as a key mediating mechanism in this system. Madame explains her collection of the children's artwork as follows: "Your art will reveal your inner selves! ... Because your art will display your souls!" (Ishiguro 2005, 248)

Here, art renders the clones' interiority visible while simultaneously subjecting it to evaluation and classification. Interior life does not become a basis for resistance and is instead an ethical justification for the continuation of life management itself.

It is via these mechanisms that *Never Let Me Go* depicts biopolitics not as an openly violent force, but as a regime that organises how life is lived, perceived and accepted. The clones' compliance emerges less from coercion than from a formative environment in which particular modes of existence are rendered normal and unquestionable.

### 3.2 The Internalisation of Compliance

Despite the clones in *Never Let Me Go* recognising their destinies are predetermined, they do not engage in organised resistance. Park (2018) explains this condition with the concept of *homo sacer*, interpreting the clones as powerless lives placed in a state of exception, whereas Yang (2020: 195–206) analyses them as figures experiencing identity confusion under conditions in which they are defined as non-human. Cho (2020, 138–140) likewise reads Kathy's narrative as a story of loss and mourning, interpreting the lives of the clones as denoted by a condition of fundamental lack. While these studies add significantly to elucidating the clones' vulnerability, they tend to explain the absence of resistance primarily as a consequence of resignation or oppression.

In contrast, this attitude is interpreted in this study as the result of compliance having already been constituted as a sensibility of life. For the clones, organ donation is not experienced as a sudden demand imposed from the outside, but as a life trajectory gradually accepted in the process of growing up. When

Ruth speaks of becoming a donor, she states: "I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it's what we're supposed to be doing, isn't it?" (Ishiguro 2005: 223)

The above statement is closer to a language of self-understanding than of coercion. No protest or grievance is expressed; instead, it is an internalised account of what her life is meant to be.

The clones are unable to choose their futures at the same time as not being educated to regard this limitation as unjust. Biopolitics does not operate solely by depriving individuals of choices. It instead functions by in advance structuring which kinds of lives are imaginable and which forms of life are seen as normal. In this way, it renders resistance itself unintelligible as a problem. Compliance is therefore not the outcome of direct force, but is a mode of understanding life.

Such internalised compliance is closely linked to the everyday normalisation of biopolitics. In the novel, health management, the carer system, and the sequential stages of donation are all presented as natural phases in a life course. Kathy describes her life as a carer without characterising it as an especially unhappy or abnormal role. The clones tend to understand their lives as individual paths shaped by circumstance rather than political conditions. Biopolitics, in this sense, governs human beings via the normalisation of everyday life instead of through exceptional violence or visible repression. Accordingly, individuals come to live following already determined trajectories without a persistent sense of being controlled.

### 3.3 Narratives of Memory and Mourning

In *Never Let Me Go*, narratives of memory and mourning function neither as denunciations of biopolitics nor languages of resistance. Kathy's retrospective narration does not seek to expose institutional violence, but organises memories of relationships and emotions within an already determined life course. The novel opens with a restrained self-introduction: "My name is Kathy H. I'm thirty one years old, and I've been a carer now for over eleven years. (...) I'm not making any big claims for myself" (Ishiguro 2005: 3).

This opening establishes a narrative stance which accepts the conditions of life as a given framework rather than a problem to be challenged.

Throughout the novel, loss appears not as an exceptional event rather than a structural condition of existence. The deaths of Ruth and Tommy, the closure of Hailsham, and the anticipation of Kathy's own donations are narrated as foreseen processes more than sudden catastrophes. After Tommy's death, Kathy remarks: "The only indulgent thing I did, just once, (...) and though the tears rolled down my face, I wasn't sobbing or out of control. (...) then turned back to the car, to drive off to wherever it was I was supposed to be" (Ishiguro 2005, 281–282).

Here, mourning does not interrupt everyday life and is instead absorbed into it. Rather than becoming a catalyst for resistance, loss is internalised as a normalised component of biopolitical existence.

Within this framework, memory functions not as proof of humanity or a counter discourse, but as a minimal practice by which meaning is conferred upon lives that are destined to disappear. Remembering and narrating preserve relationships and experiences without destabilising the system governing them. Memory and mourning thus articulate a mode of inhabiting life shaped by biopolitical governance more than opposition.

### 3.4 A Compliant Life

Building on the above analysis, this study proposes the novel concept of a “compliant life” as a notion. A compliant life refers to a human figure that is at once an object of biopolitical governance and a subject which internalises that order, coming to understand and accept its own life as possible and legitimate within the given conditions.

This concept stands apart from current understandings of the human figure centred on either homo sacer or victimhood. A compliant life is neither a completely powerless existence nor an active subject of resistance. Instead, it designates a form of life shaped in such a way that it does not problematise its own conditions of existence within what biopolitics labels ‘normal’. The clones in *Never Let Me Go* exemplify this condition: they are an extreme outcome of biopolitical governance, yet also constitute the most stable human figure required by that system.

This human figure also bears a structural affinity with diasporic life. Diasporic conditions are often accompanied by loss and liminality, albeit not all diasporic subjects understand themselves primarily as victims. In many cases, they adapt to new conditions of life and develop modes of living grounded in compliance rather than resistance. The concept of a compliant life proposed here does not seek to generalise diasporic experience. The proposed concept instead functions as an analytical tool for conceptualising forms of life that cannot be adequately captured by a binary opposition between victimhood and resistance.

In the following chapter, the concept acts as a point of reference in comparative analysis of *On Such a Full Sea*. By examining how biopolitics operates via collective narration and communal perspectives to produce a different human figure, the study elaborates on the variability of biopolitical life in distinct dystopian contexts.

## 4 Managed Communities and Diasporic Life: *On Such a Full Sea*

In this section, *On Such a Full Sea* is examined not as a dystopian narrative in which biopolitics eliminates human beings through extreme states of exception. Instead, it is viewed as a text which exposes how human life is managed, distributed and stabilised via stratified communities and collective perception. Rather than bringing spectacular violence or juridical exclusion to the fore, the novel depicts a social order in which biopolitics operates as an everyday system of organisation, allocation and differentiation.

In particular, this section focuses on the novel's distinctive narrative strategy, which privileges a collective narrator articulated with the pronoun "we" over individual interiority or confessional self-narration. (Lee 2017: 4-6). Using this collective voice, *On Such a Full Sea* presents a society where biopolitical governance is not experienced as an external imposition, but is reproduced by way of shared norms, communal memory, and spatial arrangements. Life is managed not only through institutional structures, but also through the ways in which the community observes, interprets and narrates itself.

By analysing this collective narrative framework, the section seeks to articulate a human figure that varies from the compliant life identified in *Never Let Me Go*. Whereas the latter is characterised by the internalisation of biopolitical norms on the level of individual sensibility, *On Such a Full Sea* gives rise to a form of managed diasporic life in which human existence is organised via communal regulation, spatial displacement, and differential access to protection and mobility. The described figure is not primarily defined by individual acceptance of a predetermined life course, but by collective adaptation to the conditions of management, precarity and uneven survival.

This move in analytical focus from individual subjectivity to collective narration and community based governance advances the comparative argument of the study. Biopolitics seen in this manner thus produces not a single, uniform human figure, but multiple configurations of life shaped by distinct narrative forms and social arrangements. The analysis below looks at how *On Such a Full Sea* constructs this collective biopolitical condition and the way it reconfigures diaspora, mobility and belonging within a managed dystopian order.

### 4.1 Stratified Community and the Management of Life

The society depicted in *On Such a Full Sea* manages human life not principally through explicit state violence, but with structural divisions of labour, residence and mobility. B-Mor is a community sustained by the fish-processing industry

where inhabitants are configured as bodies presumed to be suited to a specific rhythm of labour. As the collective narrator observes: "All around B-Mor it's much the same, which is happy enough. But maybe it's the laboring that gives you shape" (Lee 2014: 5).

Labour here functions not only as a means of survival, but as a normative criterion of belonging. To work is to qualify as a legitimate member of the community, while the capacity to labour becomes inseparable from the right to remain within the protected space of B-Mor: "B-Mor works because we work" (Lee 2014: 14–15).

The novel repeatedly infers that residents do not chiefly understand their lives in terms of exploitation. Labour discipline is instead accepted as the condition of stability and order, acting as a structuring condition of life that, like in *Never Let Me Go*, organises the terms according to which existence is understood and sustained. Such as perception is reinforced by the narrator's depiction of life beyond B-Mor: "For us B-Mors it's difficult to accept such a transformation, being as willingly cloistered as we are. (...) the native fuel of their society is risk" (Lee 2014: 140).

Life within B-Mor, even though strictly regulated, is thus perceived to be comparatively safer than existence outside its boundaries. In a world where survival is unevenly distributed, managed life is not seen as oppression, but as a rational and even desirable choice.

Within this structure, life is not protected as an equal value. Bodies that can no longer contribute to labour, or lives that deviate from communal discipline, are displaced beyond the community's limits. Biopolitics therefore operates less through spectacular exclusion than via the differentiation of life chances. Survival is conditionally extended as a reward for sustaining a form of life compatible with the management system.

In this sense, *On Such a Full Sea* portrays a biopolitical order governed by gradation rather than absolute exclusion. Life is continuously sorted and redistributed with respect to labour capacity and spatial belonging, providing a crucial contrast to the individualised compliance analysed in the previous section and shifting the focus toward collectively organised survival.

## 4.2 Mobility and Diasporic Conditions

In *On Such a Full Sea*, Fan's movement is not presented as an act of free escape or resistance. Although she leaves B-Mor, this movement signifies less the opening of new possibilities than a transition from a managed space to an unmanaged one. It is not the result of a clearly articulated choice, but a gradual departure produced within structural constraints. Mobility here functions as displacement generated from within the logic of the system itself rather than as an assertion of agency.

Critically, this movement does not destabilise communal norms. Fan's absence is reconstituted within B-Mor through stories and rumours that reinforce collective cohesion. Although she no longer belongs to "us", she is absorbed into "our story". The diaspora in this manner does not appear as a space of liberated identity beyond communal control and instead as an externality which stabilises the community from within.

From this perspective, the diasporic condition in *On Such a Full Sea* does not simply reside in physical mobility. The novel does not present any location – B-Mor, the Charter, or the Open Countries – as being a viable alternative to biopolitical order (Park 2023: 140). Even after her departure, Fan remains subject to the collective narration, while life beyond B-Mor is shaped by the absence of protection rather than the presence of freedom. Diaspora therefore emerges not as an alternative mode of belonging, but as a condition in which non-belonging is continuously reproduced. In this way, the novel complicates conventional associations between mobility and emancipation. Movement does not dissolve biopolitical governance and instead reconfigures its terms. Fan's trajectory reveals a form of life which does not fully belong fully to any space, yet remains persistently positioned within overlapping regimes of observation and differential care. The described condition contrasts with the individualised compliance analysed in *Never Let Me Go* and further demonstrates the plurality of human figures produced under biopolitical conditions.

#### **4.3 Disease, the Body, and Biopolitical Classification**

In *On Such a Full Sea*, disease does not appear as an exceptional disaster or sudden crisis. It functions more as a criterion of social classification by which lives are differentially evaluated and distributed. In spaces beyond B-Mor, infection and illness are pervasive, signalling that the lives of those who inhabit these zones have already fallen outside the sphere of protection. Describing people exposed to disease, the collective narrator remarks:

Fan did her part at first by helping Sewey, manage the waiting line of the sick and miserable. She watched how he gave out the numbered tickets and then took them back once they went in to be examined by Quig. (...) people jumping places in the line and then jumping again, and Fan made it simpler by doing away with the tickets altogether and instituting a separate bidders 'line alongside those taking places as they arrived. (Lee 2014, 80–81)

Here, the body articulates neither individual suffering nor subjective pain. It instead becomes a visible marker of social position, rendering life legible according

to biopolitical categories. Disease in turn operates less as a medical condition than as a signifier that locates individuals within a hierarchy of value and care. What is crucial in this representation is that illness is treated not as an object of cure, but as an index of management. The normality–abnormality distinction is not framed in moral terms rather than in terms of biopolitical efficiency. Healthy bodies are recognised as lives worth protecting, while bodies exposed to disease are perceived as already expendable. The boundary between protection and abandonment is therefore drawn not through explicit judgement, but bodily visibility. In this framework, human beings are no longer understood as singular subjects, but as aggregations of manageable bodies. Life is not upheld as an absolute value; it persists only insofar as it remains within the limits the system can sustain. Biopolitics hence governs not by openly denying the value of life, but by recalibrating the conditions in which life is deemed viable, protectable or disposable.

Through this emphasis on bodily classification, *On Such a Full Sea* reveals a mode of biopolitical governance in which the body itself becomes the primary site of political differentiation. Disease does not interrupt the social order; it stabilises it by providing a visible rationale for the unequal distribution of care, protection and survival. Such a configuration completes the novel's depiction of a managed community where life is continuously sorted and sustained only within administratively tolerable bounds.

#### 4.4 Managed Diasporic Life

Following the above analysis, the concept of “managed diasporic life” is proposed to characterise the human figure articulated in *On Such a Full Sea*. Managed diasporic life refers to a form of existence situated outside the sphere of protection provided by a certain community or nation state, yet does not collapse into complete exclusion or an exceptional state. Such lives are mobile without being free, positioned beyond the boundary while remaining encompassed by regimes of management, surveillance, and narrative control.

In this study, the diasporic dimension of *On Such a Full Sea* does not derive from ethnic displacement in a conventional sense and instead from the condition of unstable belonging under biopolitical management. In this respect, Fan may be understood as a diasporic figure not because she moves between fixed homelands, but since her movement continually repositions her across shifting regimes of protection and control without granting stable settlement. This condition is further reinforced by the novel's collective narration via which her life is mediated by communal perception rather than articulated as an autonomous individual trajectory.



Such a form of life cannot be reduced to that of a victim or an agent of resistance. Instead, it approximates one of the most generalised human figures produced in a world structured by biopolitics. Managed diasporic life persists within conditions where protection and abandonment, belonging and displacement, operate simultaneously. More than overt oppression, what defines this figure is the continuous modulation of life through allocation, observation, and differential care.

The concept of a managed diasporic life is clearly distinguishable from conventional accounts of diaspora. Traditional diaspora frameworks tend to explain human experience through narratives of loss, return, and fragmented identity. By contrast, a managed diasporic life designates a mode of living formed under conditions in which settlement and movement, protection and neglect, coexist as structural features. Neither a narrative of return nor a horizon of liberation is essential to this configuration. What matters instead is the persistence of management across spaces and boundaries (Jang 2011: 45–64).

In this regard, *On Such a Full Sea* presents a biopolitical human figure that stands in contrast to a compliant life identified in *Never Let Me Go*. Whereas the latter is characterised by the internalisation of compliance on the level of individual sensibility, the former describes a life dispersed and stabilised via collective perception and spatial arrangement. Together, these two figures show that biopolitics does not operate in a singular or uniform manner. Rather, it produces differentiated modes of life influenced by distinct narrative forms, social structures, and regimes of management.

## 5 Comparative Analysis: The Biopolitical Diasporic Human Figure

This section synthesises the analyses in sections 3 and 4 in order to comparatively examine the human figures articulated in *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea*. With the comparison, the aim of the section is to conceptually formalise what this study proposes as the “biopolitical diasporic human figure”.

Notwithstanding that the two novels adopt markedly different narrative strategies and spatial configurations, they share a fundamental critical concern. In each text, biopolitics does not operate solely through a binary logic of protection and exclusion. It instead functions by organising unprotected life as a normalised and sustainable form of existence. Human life is not simply divided into those who are safeguarded and those who are eliminated; rather it is differentially managed, stabilised and rendered viable within specific social and narrative conditions.

The discussion in this section proceeds by juxtaposing these shared biopolitical conditions with the distinct human figures they generate. While *Never Let Me Go*

stresses the forming of a compliant life via the internalising of biopolitical norms on the level of individual sensibility, *On Such a Full Sea* presents a managed diasporic life as a form of existence dispersed and regulated through collective narration, spatial displacement and communal governance. By placing these figures in dialogue, the section demonstrates that biopolitics produces not a singular human type, but multiple configurations of life shaped by different regimes of management and narrative articulation.

Using this comparative framework, the section establishes the analytical basis for understanding the biopolitical diasporic human figure not as an exceptional or marginal subject rather than a paradigmatic form of life emerging within contemporary dystopian narratives. In turn, it clarifies how biopolitics redefines normality, belonging and survival across divergent literary contexts, thereby consolidating the central argument made in the study.

### 5.1 Unprotected Life as a Shared Condition

Although the clones in *Never Let Me Go* and the residents of B-Mor in *On Such a Full Sea* occupy quite different ontological positions, both groups share a fundamental condition: they are lives which are not fully protected. The clones appear to be institutionally cared for, yet this protection strictly depends on the ultimate goal of organ donation.

In contrast, the residents of B-Mor are situated outside the sphere of explicit state or institutional protection, yet are not rendered immediate targets of elimination. Their lives are managed differentially according to their labour, residence, and bodily condition. The absence of protection does not translate into abandonment in an absolute sense; rather, it is transformed into a mode of governance that permits minimal survival.

At this juncture, the figures in both novels emerge as lives that must persist irrespective of the absence of full protection. As Park (2018: 27) observes, these figures are not best understood as lives immediately cast into a state of exception in the manner of homo sacer. Instead, they more closely resemble lives whose continued existence is conditionally permitted within a range deemed manageable by state or quasi state power. This study identifies this condition of being compelled to live without full protection as a central point of contact between the two works.

### 5.2 Compliance and Mobility in Contrast

The difference between the two novels is most apparent in the ways unprotected life is sustained over time. In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones remain within the institutional system and understand their lives as unfolding according to an

already given trajectory. Kathy's reflections on her future articulate this orientation not in the language of protest or despair, but as a normalised mode of self-understanding. Compliance is not experienced as an externally imposed demand, and instead as a sensibility of life gradually formed by education, care, and everyday routine. What appears as resignation from the outside functions internally as a coherent account of what life is supposed to be.

By contrast, *On Such a Full Sea* uses mobility as a central narrative element. Fan's movement away from B-Mor is not framed as a direct act of resistance or escape from the system. Rather, it resembles a transition from a managed space to an unmanaged one in which the conditions of governance are altered more than dissolved. Vitally, this movement does not guarantee freedom. Even after leaving B-Mor, Fan continues to be reconstructed through the community's gaze, stories and interpretations, and never fully exits the orbit of the system that once organised her life.

In this sense, mobility functions not as a narrative of liberation, but as a device that reveals the persistence of biopolitical conditions in altered forms. The movement from inside to outside does not suspend management; it reconfigures it. Whereas the clones in *Never Let Me Go* internalise compliance by remaining within the system, the figures in *On Such a Full Sea* inhabit its margins where life is still governed, albeit via less formalised and less protective mechanisms.

Viewed through this contrast, the human figure in *Never Let Me Go* may be characterised as a life that internalises compliance within the system, while the human figure in *On Such a Full Sea* emerges as a life that is managed through movement along the system's edges. In each case, biopolitics does not operate by eliminating life, but by modulating the range of possibilities by which life may be lived. The difference is not in the presence/absence of power, and instead lies in the distinct spatial and narrative forms through which biopolitical governance is enacted.

### **5.3 Formalising the Concept of the Biopolitical Diasporic Human Figure**

Following the comparative analysis presented above, the concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure is proposed as a new analytical category. The concept is to be distinguished from conventional understandings of diaspora, which are typically grounded in experiences of ethnic displacement, exile, or national migration. As formulated here, the biopolitical diasporic human figure refers to a form of human existence that remains outside the sphere of full protection provided by the state or institutional systems, yet is neither completely

excluded nor eliminated, persisting instead within regimes of management that condition the continuation of life.

This human figure may appear either fixed within the system, like with the clones in *Never Let Me Go*, or mobile along the system's margins, like with the figures depicted in *On Such a Full Sea*. Regardless of their degree of mobility, however, they share two defining features. First, they are unable to secure complete protection in any space they inhabit. Second, they are formed to accept this condition not as an exceptional rupture, but as a normal and enduring framework of life. This means the biopolitical diasporic human figure cannot be adequately captured in the conventional binary opposition between victimhood and resistance.

The biopolitical diasporic human figure thus emerges at the intersection of dystopia and diaspora. Dystopia makes the structural operations of biopolitics visible, while diaspora illuminates the condition of living without stable settlement or assured belonging within those structures. At this intersection, the human figure which takes shape does not mainly serve to denounce the violence of biopolitical power. It instead functions as an analytical object via which the forms of life produced by biopolitics itself can be critically examined.

The significance of the present study lies precisely in this conceptual intervention. Both *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea* operate as dystopian narratives that critique biopolitical regimes, yet they also offer meticulous representations of the lived modalities of human life formed under biopolitical conditions. The new concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure proposed here provides a conceptual tool for capturing these representations. As such, it offers a productive analytical framework for future studies that seek to examine dystopian narratives and diaspora literature in an integrated and comparative manner.

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Summary of the Findings

In this study, the limitations of existing approaches which have tended to understand biopolitics in dystopian narratives largely as a mechanism of repression, exclusion, or exceptional violence were critically examined. The point of departure taken was the proposition that biopolitics operates as a condition that impacts human sensibilities of life, modes of self-understanding, and forms of relationality. To that end, the study conducted comparative analysis of *Never Let Me Go* and *On Such a Full Sea*, with focus given to the human figures represented in each work within biopolitical conditions.

Section 3 analysed *Never Let Me Go* with close attention to the forming of cloned characters not just as victims placed in a state of exception, but as beings

who internalise compliance within a system of life management. The educational and protective framework of Hailsham, including its emphasis on care, artistic practice and health management, functions not as overtly violent repression, and instead as a set of normalised life conditions. The clones therefore come to understand their lives not as political problems to be contested, but as given trajectories to be lived through. By conceptualising this human figure as a “compliant life”, the study sought to articulate a biopolitical mode of existence which cannot be adequately captured by the binary victimhood–resistance opposition.

Section 4 examined *On Such a Full Sea* in order to analyse how biopolitics manages human life through collective perception and spatial organisation. Within the B-Mor community, life is differentially allocated according to one’s labour, residence, and bodily condition, while mobility appears not as the acquisition of freedom, but as a transformation in modes of management. In this context, diaspora is reconfigured not as a condition of liberation or return, and instead as a form of life in which protection and abandonment operate simultaneously. In the section, the concept of a “managed diasporic life” was proposed to account for a biopolitical human figure that is dispersed, stabilised and sustained via collective narration and communal regulation.

Through the comparative analysis in section 5, the study demonstrated that despite their distinct narrative strategies and spatial configurations, both novels share a fundamental condition: they organise unprotected life as a normal and sustainable form of existence. Whereas *Never Let Me Go* presents a human figure denoted by internalised compliance within the system, *On Such a Full Sea* depicts a human figure that moves along the system’s margins while remaining subject to ongoing management. Notwithstanding these differences, in each work biopolitics does not primarily operate through elimination, but via the modulation and adjustment of the conditions under which life remains possible. On that basis, the study formalised the concept of the “biopolitical diasporic human figure” as a contemporary human form emerging at the intersection of dystopia and diaspora.

In this sense, the biopolitical diasporic human figure functions as an overarching analytical category which encompasses both a compliant life and a managed diasporic life. It provides a conceptual framework for understanding the diverse configurations of human existence produced under biopolitical conditions.

## **6.2 Expanding the Study of Dystopian Literature in the Age of Biopolitics**

The arguments developed in this article suggest extending dystopian literary studies beyond approaches centred on ethical denunciation or political warning.

Rather than treating dystopia solely as a genre that exposes the violence of biopolitical power, the article proposes reading dystopian narratives as sites where everyday forms of life shaped by biopolitics become visible. Biopolitics operates less by way of exceptional violence than through the language of protection, management and safety, organising conditions in which individuals come to perceive their lives as normal and acceptable.

Seen in this way, dystopian narratives do not mainly predict future catastrophe but estrange and intensify conditions that already structure contemporary life. They render legible how human existence is organised and stabilised within biopolitical orders.

The concept of the biopolitical diasporic human figure further enables a re-thinking of diaspora beyond its conventional association with ethnic displacement or national migration. It conceptualises diaspora as a condition of life marked by the absence of stable protection alongside the persistence of management, and may be applied to contemporary narratives concerned with mobility, labour, and differential care.

Accordingly, dystopian literature in the age of biopolitics functions as a narrative laboratory for analysing the everyday configurations of life produced by contemporary regimes of power. The present study offers an analytical framework for such an approach and provides a conceptual reference point for future comparative research on dystopia and diaspora.

## References

- Agamben, Giorgio (1998): *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Agamben, Giorgio (2005): *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cheon, Hyun soon 천현순 (2022): *Ingan vs Bokjeingan: SF Soseore Jaehyeondoen Bokjeinganui Jeongcheseong Munje* 인간 vs 복제인간: SF 소설에 재현된 복제인간의 정체성 문제 (*Human vs Clone: Identity Issues of Clones in Science Fiction*). *Dogileoneomunhak 독일언어문학*, 98: 71–95.
- Cho, Sungran 조성란 (2020): *Gajeuo Isiguroui Nareul Bonaeji Mae Natananeun Sangsirgwa Gieokgwa Aedoroseoui Seutoritelring* 가즈오 이시구로의 상실과 기억과 애도로서의 스토리텔링 (*Storytelling of Loss, Mourning, and Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*). *Bigyomunhwayeongu 비교문화연구*, 58: 129–154.
- Foucault, Michel (1976): *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: The Will to Knowledge*. Translated by Robert Hurley. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, Michel (1977): *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Foucault, Michel (2003): *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*. Translated by David Macey. London: Penguin Books.
- Ishiguro, Kazuo (2005): *Never Let Me Go*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Jang, Yun su 장윤수 (2011): *Nomadijeumgwa Korian Diaspora Munhak 노마디즘과 코리안 디아스포라 문학 (Nomadism and Korean Diaspora Literature)*. Seoul: Book Korea 북코리아.
- Johansen, Erik (2016): *Bureaucracy and Narrative Possibilities in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go*. *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 51 (3): 416–31.
- Kim, Tae hwan 김태환 (2004): *Yeoeseongui Cheolhak: Joreujo Agambenui Homo Sacer: Tongchi Gwollyeokgwa Beolgeosungi Salm 예외성의 철학: 조르조 아감벤의 호모 사케르: 통치 권력과 벌거숭이 삶 (The Philosophy of Exception: Giorgio Agamben's Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life)*. *Literature and Society 문학과사회*, 17 (3): 1281–1297.
- Lee, Chang rae (2014): *On Such a Full Sea*. New York: Riverhead Books.
- Lee, Kwan soo 이관수 (2017): *Panageun Museun Iri Ireonasseunga? 판에겐 무슨 일이 일어났는가? (What Happened to Fan?)*. *Miguksoseol 미국소설*, 24 (1): 1–32.
- Nobel Prize (2017): *The Nobel Prize in Literature 2017*. NobelPrize.org. Available from: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2017/press-release/> (Accessed 26.12.2025).
- Page, Amanda M. (2017): *Understanding Chang rae Lee*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Park, Kyung seo 박경서 (2018): *Saengmyeongjeongchiwa Gukgagwonryeok: Ichangraeui Manjouui Bada Wiese wa Gajuo Isiguroui Nareul Bonaeeji Mareul Jungsimeuro saengmyeongjeongchiwa gukgagwonryeok: ichangraeui 만조의 바다 위에서와 가즈오 이시구로의 나를 보내지 마를 중심으로 (Bio Politics and State Power in Chang rae Lee's On Such a Full Sea and Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go)*. *Sinyeongeoyeongmunhak 신영어영문학*, 71: 27–49.
- Park, Su Jung 박수정 (2023): *Paen Baireoseuwa Segyeui Byeonhyeok: Poseuteu Korona Sidaee Chang rae Lee ui Manjo ui Bada Wieseoseo Ilgi 팬 바이러스와 세계의 변혁: 포스트 코로나 시대에 이창래의 『만조의 바다 위에서』 읽기 (Fan Virus Changing the World: Reading Chang rae Lee's On Such a Full Sea in the Post COVID Era)*. *Saehanyeongeoyeongmunhak 새한영어영문학*, 65 (4): 127–147.
- Rhie, Jounghyun 이정현 (2018): *Saengmyeongjeongchiwa Diseutopia Munhak saengmyeongjeongchiwa disetopia 문학 (The Interface of Biopolitics and Dystopian Literature: Between Korean Texts and Foreign Texts)*. *Eomunnonjip 어문논집*, 73: 233–268.
- Snaza, Nathan. 2015. "The Failure of Humanizing Education in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 26 (3): 215–34.
- Yang, Jong geun 양종근 (2020): *Bokjeingangwa Jaa Jeongcheseong: Nareul Bonaeeji Ma wa Oreore reul Jungsimeuro bokjeingan-gwa ja-a jeongcheseong: na-reul bo-nae-ji ma-wa o-re-reul jeung-sim-ro (Human Clones and Self Identity: Focusing on Never Let Me Go and Oreore)*. *Inmun Yeongu 인문연구*, 91 (1): 191–222.

**Author's info**

Dr. **Byoung Yoong Kang**, Associate Professor  
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Asian Studies  
Aškerčeva cesta 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia  
Email: kby@ff.uni-lj.si



Nataša Visočnik Gerželj

## THE STORY OF KIMCHI: IDENTITY AND DIASPORA OF ZAINICHI KOREANS IN JAPAN

### ABSTRACT

*The article examines kimchi's transformation from a stigmatised "immigrant food" to become Japan's most popular preserved vegetable, highlighting its role in identity negotiation among Zainichi Koreans living in Japan. Methods include ethnographic field work in Kyoto, interviews, examination of a book and website produced by a kimchi store, along with a literature review on diaspora foods with emphasis placed on the life history of Lee Yeon Soon as a central case study. The results show that kimchi is a cultural anchor and performative symbol/portrayal of Korean identity. Even as kimchi becomes ever more mainstream, indicating Korea's growing multiculturalism, Korean residents use it to stake a claim for identity and resist assimilation. It is concluded that food acts as a means of communication, which constructs identities and social relationships.*

**KEYWORDS:** Korean diaspora, ethnic food, identity, kimchi, Japan

## Zgodba o kimčiju: identita in diaspora Zainichi Korejcev na Japonskem

### IZVLEČEK

*Ta članek raziskuje preobrazbo kimčija iz stigmatizirane »hrane priseljencev« v najbolj priljubljeno konzervirano zelenjavo na Japonskem, pri čemer poudarja njegovo vlogo pri oblikovanju identitete med Zainichi Korejci. Metode vključujejo etnografsko terensko delo v Kjotu, intervjuje, analizo knjige in spletne strani trgovine s kimčijem ter pregled literature o hrani diaspore s posebnim poudarkom na biografski zgodbi Lee Yeon Soon. Ugotovitve kažejo, da kimči deluje kot kulturno sidro in performativni simbol korejske dediščine. Medtem ko njegova priljubljenost v glavnem toku nakazuje naraščajoči multikulturalizem, korejski*

*prebivalci kimči še naprej uporabljajo za uveljavljanje identitete in upiranje asimilaciji. Zaključki poudarjajo vlogo hrane kot komunikacijskega sistema, ki oblikuje identitete in socialne odnose.*

*KLJUČNE BESEDE: korejska diaspora, etnična hrana, identiteta, kimči, Japonska*

## 1 Introduction

Kimchi has become so popular in Japan that it is today the most popular preserved vegetable on the market, which reveals a considerable shift in culinary preferences and cultural attitudes. This trend stands out while considering the historical background, context and experiences of Zainichi Koreans, a multigenerational Korean minority in Japan. As the consumption of traditional Japanese pickles was declining in the 1990s, kimchi rose in popularity and prominence among Japanese consumers. By the 2000s, kimchi had become known as a "healthy food" in Japanese households, suggesting a general acceptance, re-evaluation and appreciation of Korean cuisine. The described transformation of gastronomic tastes may be understood by looking at broader social shifts in Japan with respect to increased globalisation and multiculturalism, together with stronger interest in diverse culinary experiences.

Japan's adoption of kimchi shows that intercultural exchange and acceptance are a two-way street. Zainichi Koreans have experienced multiple forms of discrimination and marginalisation in Japanese society for generations, from stigmatisation to prejudice seen in immigration restrictions and cultural and social barriers. Nevertheless, the rising popularity of Korean cuisine, particularly kimchi, suggests these barriers are softening and there is greater openness to Korean cultural influences. This culinary trend is also part of a global trend of local diets including ever more international tastes and ingredients. The kimchi phenomenon in Japan is arguably one aspect of the broader trend of accepting diversity and difference in food culture, which may lead to the appreciation and understanding of cultures different from one's own. In addition, the incorporation of kimchi into Japanese gastronomy may be seen as a form of cultural reconciliation between the two nations. Such a development signifies not just the acceptance of particular foreign food, but also recognition of the contributions made by the Zainichi Korean community to Japanese society. Once again, food is shown to be able to bridge gaps between cultures. Nevertheless, this change has not been achieved overnight. It is the result of the struggles and resistance of the Zainichi Korean community.

In this article, the complex processes of cultural diplomacy and identity negotiation among Korean residents in Japan is addressed, stressing the role of

kimchi as a cultural symbol and form of expression for Koreans. The way Korean residents in Japan utilise this traditional Korean food to navigate their identities in a society where their ethnic heritage intersects with a perceived homogenous Japanese national identity is considered. Once reviled as a symbol of ethnic marginalisation, kimchi in Japan has transformed, moving from an “immigrant food” to a valued comfort food. Even though some in the Korean community see Japan’s current kimchi snack boom as a sign of less antagonism and stronger acceptance of Korean identity, for many others kimchi is a way to express their identity as Koreans while negotiating their status as an ethnic minority when Japan is perceived to be homogeneous. The debate surrounding the production and consumption kimchi in Japan illustrates that the negotiations regarding claims to Koreanness by Koreans in Japan, who are in the minority, are complex.

The presented study employed a multi-methods qualitative research design that integrates ethnographic fieldwork, life-story narrative analysis, and digital ethnography. Fieldwork was carried out in Kyoto-based Korean migrant communities in 2012 under the coordination of Professor Ogura Kizo from Kyoto University, with follow-ups in 2014 and 2016, involving participant observation at kimchi-making workshops. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with kimchi producers, including Lee Yeon Soon (李連順), an author of *Kimchi Monogatari*, and her son Hoshiyama Kou (星山耕), who currently manages their kimchi business, as well as several other employees and customers that buy kimchi at Kimchi no Hoshiyama store. These interviews were supplemented with an in-depth narrative analysis of Lee’s memoir, exemplifying life-story narrative methodology. The analysis focused on how personal biography intersects with collective memory and identity construction within diaspora contexts. The study also included analysis of the Kimchi no Hoshiyama website, examining visual representation, branding, and discourse (Kyōto Kimchi no Hoshiyama 2026). Digital material was interpreted as an extension of identity performance in contemporary diasporic contexts. Together, these methods allow for triangulation between personal narratives, embodied practices, and mediated representations, strengthening the interpretative validity of the study.

The analysis followed Brannen’s framework that stresses the narrative aspects of chronology, thematic unity, and “narrative achievements”, namely, how people use life stories to claim an identity and sustain cultural repetition (Brannen 2020: 60–65). Further, as part of digital ethnography the website of the mentioned family-run kimchi store is examined where its brand, graphics, pictures and narrative around culture are investigated due to their ability to shape identity online (Kyōto Kimchi no Hoshiyama 2026). Finally, a review of literature on diasporic food studies provided the conceptual framework. The above-mentioned focus

of the article is based on the idea that cuisine establishes identity from within and holds the potential to facilitate inter-cultural communication (De St. Maurice 2022; Demelius 2023).

The findings reveal that kimchi plays a key role in maintaining the cultural identity of members of the Korean community in Japan, providing continuity in migration experiences and adding to their sense of belonging. It is a performative sign of daily practices, rituals, and public ways of life, and mobilises resistance to assimilation. For instance, Lee Yeon Soon's life story exemplifies kimchi-making's role in transmitting cultural knowledge and pride across generations, linking it to entrepreneurial resilience and heritage preservation. Kimchi is also shown to be a symbol of both the continuity and performative assertion of Koreanness. Whereas kimchi previously symbolised marginalisation and otherness, its current widespread presence on Japanese plates reflects the growing multiculturalism and appreciation of diversity in the country. Despite its great popularity, Korean communities emphasise authenticity, using kimchi to resist assimilation and foster cross-cultural understanding.

## 2 The Korean Diaspora and Changing Identities

"Diaspora" is a heavily contested concept in modern social and cultural theory. Originally referring to the scattering of peoples, notably the ancient Jewish exile from Judah, the word comes from the Greek *dia speirein*, meaning "to sow over", and implies spreading and scattering over territories. Alongside its traditional use, the term is now seen as having a more transcultural sense, describing all displaced and migrating communities that form on the basis of shared identity, memories, or transnational links (Kenny 2013: 3; Grossman 2019: 1264).

Grossman's (2019) inductive exploration of diaspora definitions identifies a set of characteristics they share: separation from the home country; a community structure giving a basis for solidarity; some degree of orientation to the homeland; existence over time without complete assimilation; and transnational links. Whether voluntary or not, these characteristics reveal a diaspora to be spatial, relational, and grounded in shared memories and ongoing social relationships (Grossman 2019: 1265). These robust theoretical definitions recognise a variety of diasporic experiences away from home.

Nonetheless, "diaspora" refers not simply to population movements and also relates to the forming of identity and practice of politics. Brubaker (2005: 5) cautions against essentialist readings of diaspora as permanent ethnic collectives. Instead, he construes diaspora as an idiom of identity – a position adopted and expressed in particular social contexts. Diaspora becomes a claim and an

argument for negotiation in transnational settings rather than a fixed category.

Adamson's (2008: 25) investigation of diasporic identity politics elaborates on these findings by treating diaspora as a category that emerges from transnational social movements. Identity is constructed and enacted by the political entrepreneurship of mobilising diasporic communities around collective memories, cultural narratives and homeland links. This also means that diaspora identity is not innate, but constructed and contested in sociopolitical arenas (Adamson 2008).

Hall (1990: 225) considers how cultural identity in a diaspora shows little evidence in support of this dynamic. For Hall, a diaspora is not monolithic or static and is instead fluid, fragmented, and in a state of constant change. Cultural identity is a construction – a process (Hall 1990) – always mediated via representation, memory and position. Hall regards it as lying between a “shared culture”, based on common ancestry, and the specifics of the less familiar socio-cultural spaces of the “new” home. The tensions and ambivalences experienced outside of what Hall mentions are the focus of a different subject: migration.

Constructing identity in a diaspora is thus multilayered and interconnected. First, there is communal memory and cultural reproduction: a shared repertoire of traditions, languages and symbols able to connect people to a mythical/historical homeland (Grossman 2019: 1270; Adamson 2008: 26). Second, transnational engagement involves cross-border communication, media, and political activism, which inform diasporic subjectivities (Bula 2023: 45; Adamson 2008). Third, diasporic identity entails performance and representation such as narratives and practices that negotiate belonging and difference in relation to the host society (Hall 1990; Brubaker 2005).

Diaspora may be understood in two ways, as a: spatial diaspora of communities distant from the motherland, or a social construct shaped by memory, transnational interaction, and political activism. Although Grossman (2019) identifies base attributes, scholars like Brubaker (2005), Adamson (2008) and Hall (1990) point out the active creation, storytelling and enactment of diasporic identities. Diasporic identity is fluid, contested, and fundamental to a diaspora's belonging to the host society in a globalising world.

## 2.1 Korean Diaspora around the World

The Korean diaspora are communities of Koreans and their descendants who live outside of the Korean Peninsula, which have been shaped by both voluntary and coerced migration. Large-scale migration began in the late 19th century when economic hardship prompted Koreans to move to neighbouring regions like China and the Russian Far East. These movements intensified under Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945), a time when Koreans were incorporated into

imperial labour systems. Many were brought to Japan to work in industrial and wartime sectors in coercive circumstances, reflecting a system of colonial labour mobilisation more than purely voluntary migration (Kwon 2010: 15).

Migration trajectories diverged further in the 20th century, especially under authoritarian regimes. A good example is the Korean population in Central Asia (the *Koryo-saram*) whose presence is the outcome of forced deportations carried out by Stalin in 1937. Around 170,000 Koreans were relocated from the Soviet Far East to Central Asia as part of state security policies, constituting a clear case of coerced migration (Kim 2017: 42).

The described historical processes show the Korean diaspora in Japan cannot be understood solely in terms of economic mobility. Instead, it reflects the intertwining histories of colonial exploitation by that country and forced displacement in the Soviet Union, with coercion being a central feature of how it formed.

Today, the Korean diaspora includes over 7 million people worldwide, creating transnational networks that resist assimilation yet also adapt to host cultures (Grossman 2019: 1265). Koreans can also be found in Europe. The largest community (nearly 50,000 people) is in Germany, followed by around 39,000 in the United Kingdom, 27,000 in France, Sweden and Ukraine around 13,000 etc. to more than 2,000–3,000 in the Republic of Hungary<sup>1</sup> (Brilliant Maps 2025).

Identity in a diaspora is not fixed; it is produced by way of cultural reproduction, recollection, and negotiation. A diaspora is “always in process” (Hall 1990: 225), with identity being mediated via difference rather than fixed essence. For diasporic Koreans, languages, Confucian practices, and symbols act as cultural ballasts, with language being the critical link between family ties and community (Kim 2017: 45). It is through these that continuity with the homeland is established and adaptation to new sociocultural places is achieved.

## 2.2 Koreans in Japan (“Zainichi Koreans”)

“Zainichi Koreans” are ethnic Koreans living in Japan and among the most well-examined groups in the Korean diaspora (Visočnik 2013). The Korean presence in Japan must be understood not only as a diaspora phenomenon but also within a broader postcolonial framework. A significant number of the Zainichi Korean population are descendants of migrants who arrived in the period of Japanese colonial rule over Korea (1910–1945) when migration was influenced by imperial economic structures, labour demands, and varying levels of coercion (Ryang 2014; Chapman 2008). This means the Korean diaspora in Japan cannot

1 Many research studies have focused on the Korean diaspora in Europe (see Kim and Ahn 2023; Jung and Lee 2019; Kovács 2025).

be adequately explained with voluntary migration models alone, and must be analysed as part of the historical legacy of colonialism and its continuing social inequalities. Even after decades of living in Japan, Zainichi Koreans are still victims of institutional discrimination, legal marginalisation and social exclusion, which have characterised their identity politics (Chapman 2008: 12).

The identity construction of Zainichi Koreans is imbued with counter-assimilation strategies and ethnic uniqueness. These include retaining Korean names, attending ethnic schools, and participating in cultural groups and activities (Chapman 2008: 18). Such practices serve as symbolic borders for Koreans, with their identities based on Japan's narrative of being a homogeneous nation (Brubaker 2005: 5). Meanwhile, identity is formed in hybrid ways – for instance, adopting elements of Japanese culture while maintaining Korean practices – reflecting Hall's (1990: 228) description of identity as shifting and split.

Today, the Zainichi Korean population in Japan is estimated at around 400,000–500,000 individuals. In Kyoto, Higashi Kujō (東九条) south of Kyoto Station remains a historically significant settlement area where Korean cultural presence is visible in shops, restaurants, and community institutions. Many Koreans moved to the area in the 1920s and 1930s to work in textile factories and on city development projects, and remained there through post-war reconstruction, adding diversity to the area's labour force and culture. Districts such as Higashi Kujō (in Kyoto's Southern District (Minami-ku)) have witnessed dramatic shifts in the past few decades as civil society movements have spread widely across the country. This district is home to the majority of Zainichi Koreans in Kyoto. Minami-ku has the biggest working-class population of any district in Kyoto after a large number of people have moved to rural areas for work over time. However, some land along the Kamo River is dotted with factories and industrial buildings rather than restaurants and clubs. Residential zones consist of typical houses and apartments, together with the occasional government-subsidised condominium block for residents with disabilities. Due to the large Zainichi Korean population, the district is occasionally referred to as "Kyoto's sole international town" (Visočnik 2019: 218–219).

### 3 Diaspora Identity and Food

In an increasingly globalised world, food is both a medium and symptom of acculturation and transculturation. For people in diaspora communities, everyday culinary practice offers a tangible means of negotiating a sense of belonging. Through the food they cook, share, refuse or adapt, people can create spaces in which identities can be formed, experienced and expressed. From a cultural

perspective, food is never simply sustenance. It carries sentiment and memory, connects people via exchange and commensality, fosters community boundaries, and can serve religious or ritual purposes. Since food is so ordinary and bodily, it also becomes politically charged – an arena where difference is marked and contested, and people are categorised based on assumptions about taste and habit. In this sense, ethnic cuisines are one of the easiest ways in which group identities can be seen, recognised and maintained (Caplan 1997; Counihan 1999).

In diaspora settings, food practices often become more explicitly “about identity” than in the homeland. Migrants and their descendants may discuss authenticity, ingredients and “proper” tastes quite intensely, partly because diaspora food is produced in constrained circumstances such as limited ingredient availability, challenging workplace schedules, public stigma, legal vulnerability, and pressure to assimilate (Duru 2017: 15). Diasporic food can function as a bridge to the homeland by providing a stable reference point for cultural continuity and loyalty. Yet it simultaneously draws an imagined boundary between the minority community and the host society. These boundaries hold sociopolitical significance: culinary distinctiveness can form the basis of group identity, mutual support and assertion of rights, particularly when restrictions or moral judgements of the host society communicate that migrants are not fully welcome. In such circumstances, establishing one’s “own space” through food is not merely a matter of preference, but a response to exclusion (Cohen 2000). Cooking and eating patterns therefore cannot be separated from social organisation; they embody hygienic, cultural and symbolic meanings that shape identity formation, social classification, and everyday coexistence (Counihan 1999).

Still, at the same time modernisation and global consumer culture have transformed the conditions in which “ethnic food” signifies ethnicity. Rather than being transmitted primarily through kinship and neighbourhood networks, everyday recipes now circulate more widely through cookbooks, magazines, restaurants and on the Internet. Once limited by access and social boundaries, ethnic cuisines have become widely available as commodities in cities, altering how people relate to “tradition” and weakening the social networks that previously anchored ethnic culinary continuity (Mintz and Du Bois 2002). This does not indicate the loss of ethnic identity, but its reconfiguration by way of new attitudes of consumption.

Japan is a useful case study while considering how national and minority cuisines are constructed and categorised. The term “national food” (*washoku*) refers to a standardised culinary tradition that symbolises Japanese identity. However, it is better understood as a comprehensive system of practices, knowledge and values covering preparation, sharing, seasonality, and social rituals more than



a fixed list of dishes (UNESCO 2013). Although often presented as a timeless tradition, *washoku* emerged historically in modern contexts and is continually influenced via discourse, the media, and institutional frameworks.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, narratives of national cuisine tend to marginalise minority contributions: “Ethnic foods” in Japan, such as those of the Ainu, Okinawan, Burakumin, Korean, Japanese Brazilian and other communities, might influence what is served on Japanese plates yet remain overlooked in mainstream frameworks that accentuate regional (geographic) diversity over ethnic diversity (De St. Maurice 2022: 205–209). This is important analytically given that the distinction between “national” and “ethnic” cuisines is also a boundary of recognition and power.

Food is central to the construction of a diasporic identity precisely since it is produced through routine practices. As Hall (1990: 228) argues, cultural identity is enacted in everyday life, and food is becoming a symbolic site of belonging. Among Zainichi Koreans, kimchi illustrates this well. Although once scorned in Japan as an “immigrant food” and a symbol of otherness (Walraven 2002: 96), kimchi has become ever more common in mainstream consumption. Nevertheless, its popularity does not erase its diasporic meanings. For Koreans in Japan, kimchi continues to signify heritage, resourcefulness and continuity. Kimchi-making, or *kimjang*,<sup>3</sup> functions as an intergenerational knowledge practice through which Koreanness is performed and reproduced (Kim 2017: 48). In this way, kimchi is both a material food and a cultural technology of memory and identity.

It is therefore crucial to make an analytical distinction between Korean *kimchi* 김치 and Japanese *kimuchi* キムチ since, although historically connected, they are not the same. Korean kimchi is a fermented dish typically made with a complex blend of seasonings (*yangnyeom*) and frequently includes fermented seafood (*jeotgal*), which gives it its distinct flavour and fermentation profile (Cwierka 2012; Walraven 2002; Kim 1987). Japanese *kimuchi*, in contrast, reflects local adaptation within the diaspora and host society. It is often milder and sweeter and omits fermented seafood in response to Japanese consumer preferences that prioritise freshness and accessibility over prolonged fermentation (Cwierka 2012).

2 De St. Maurice (2022: 210) criticises simplified understandings of Japanese cuisine (e.g., reducing it to sushi, umami, or a few ingredients). According to him, *washoku* should be understood not merely as a set of dishes or a national cuisine, but as a multi-dimensional, socially constructed system of taste and meaning.

3 *Kimjang* (also spelled *gimjang* 김장) is the traditional Korean practice of preparing kimchi, particularly in late autumn and winter. It is a communal activity involving families and communities, combining practical food preservation with strong social and cultural significance. It fosters cooperation, knowledge transmission, and a shared sense of identity and mutual support (Kim 2017: 49).

This distinction is essential for avoiding conceptual conflation and interpreting the transformation of kimchi as a diasporic food which is continually negotiated relative to the tastes of the host society.

The Korean diaspora thus exemplifies how identity is constructed by way of cultural replication, transnational interaction and routine performance. The mainstreaming of kimchi in Japan signals cultural diffusion and changing attitudes. Yet, for Zainichi Koreans, it remains a boundary marker and a resource for identity politics, linking homeland memories to local adaptation while resisting complete assimilation (Grossman 2019: 1270). Finally, food practices also reveal household power relations. As Duru (2017: 20) notes, the family is often the core unit of food production and transmission, meaning that culinary practice can reflect economic status and gendered labour. This is evident in Mrs Lee's case where kimchi-making was intertwined with care work, domestic responsibility, and entrepreneurship (Lee 2002).

## 4 Life story of Lee Yeon Soon

Life history theory is a qualitative research approach that harnesses personal narratives to understand individual and collective experiences within social, cultural and historical contexts. Ethnographic research complements this approach by emphasising immersive engagement and the interpretation of cultural meanings from an "insider" perspective, using methods such as participant observation, interviews, and artefact analysis. As part of this framework, life story methodology involves collecting in-depth narratives to examine how individuals interpret their life trajectories and major events over time (Dhunpath 2000: 545). Rooted in anthropology and interpretivist paradigms, the approach prioritises emic perspectives, enabling participants to articulate their own meanings and experiences. Data are typically gathered in semi-structured interviews, many times supported by personal materials like diaries, photographs and letters. Analysis focuses on narrative structures, including turning points, themes, and memory, alongside a reflexive consideration of the researcher's role (Dhunpath 2000: 546). Together, these methods reveal how personal identity and broader social histories intersect in lived experience, as shown in the life story of Mrs Lee Yeon Soon.

### 4.1 Lee Yeon Soon's Story

Lee Yeon Soon (李連順) is renowned in Japan as a pioneering kimchi artisan, entrepreneur and, author. Born in 1934 as the second of eight siblings in a Korean family, she grew up immersed in Korean culinary traditions, learning home-style kimchi-making techniques passed down over generations. After marrying, she

moved to Japan and, together with her husband, started to produce and distribute kimchi wholesale. Motivated by the goal of supporting their growing family, they expanded into retail, selling kimchi directly to consumers.

After moving to Kyoto's Rakusei (Umezuh) district, her early investment of just ¥500 in napa cabbage marks the beginning of her journey as an independent entrepreneur in Japan's postwar era. In 1958, she first founded "Kyojo Foods", which evolved into "Korean Foods", and also targeted supermarkets. By 1981, she had opened her first retail outlet, "Korean Foods Sanei", and in 1985 had rebranded it as "Kimchi no Hoshiyama" (Mindan 2008; Kyōto Kimchi no Hoshiyama 2026).

Affectionately known as "Hoshiyama Ōbāchan" ("Grandma Hoshiyama"), she started selling kimchi made with meticulous care using seasonal, locally sourced Japanese ingredients. Lee emphasised variety and taste adaptability: her product line encompassed several styles, such as light, spicy, rich and additive-free kimchis, as well as seasonal varieties.

In 2003, the business was formally incorporated as "Kimchi Star Co.", Ltd., with Lee Yeon Soon becoming president. Under her leadership, the company established a nationwide retail presence, including physical stores in Kyoto and Shiga, as well as growing e-commerce accounts. Lee is recognised for her rigorous selection of ingredients: Japanese cabbage, sun-dried Korean chillies, Okinawan sea salt, multi-origin garlic, and white peaches from Fukushima. Concentrating on freshness and seasonality, she blends these ingredients to create a variety of kimchi products, such as e-kimchi, GABA kimchi, and additive-free options (Mindan 2013; Kyōto Kimchi no Hoshiyama 2026).

Around 2010, Lee and her company established the Hoshiyama Research Institute to examine the health benefits of kimchi, such as supporting the immune system, detoxification, and enhancing metabolism. These efforts led to the development of functional product lines like GABA kimchi and e-kimchi. Lee's products encompassed several different flavours, ranging from the light Kyoto style to the richer, more Korean-inspired varieties. These included eight cabbage kimchi variants, targeting individual consumer preferences through mindful flavour profiles. As demand rose, Lee transformed the business into Kimchi Star Co. Ltd., where she served as chairperson. Even after stepping down from day-to-day management, she remains a senior advisor, passing on her philosophy and tradition. The brand has prospered for over five decades, earning recognition for its premium quality and nationwide shipping (Kyōto Kimchi no Hoshiyama 2026; Kyotopi 2025).

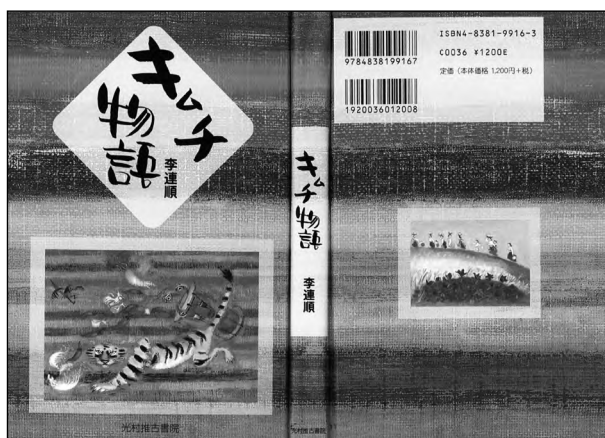
#### **4.2 Memoir: *Kimchi Monogatari***

In 2002, Lee published *Kimuchi Monogatari* (A Kimchi Story), a book that blends a personal biography with a collection of recipes. The book recounts her

journey from a home kitchen to becoming an entrepreneur, alongside reflections on kimchi culture and manufacturing insights. Through her creations and writing, Lee Yeon Soon played a significant role in introducing kimchi to Japanese households, thereby bridging Korean tradition with the local culinary culture. Her stress on authenticity, quality of ingredients, and respect for the seasons set a Japanese benchmark for artisanal kimchi. Hoshiyama kimchi is renowned for its variety and long history.

Lee Yeon Soon's life encapsulates a powerful narrative of cultural transmission, entrepreneurial spirit, and culinary legacy, shaping the future of kimchi in Japan with a commitment to quality and storytelling. This 159-page memoir comprises essays that recount her experiences in kimchi production and retail entrepreneurship, as well as her encounters with first-generation Zainichi Koreans and Japanese customers. The book includes themes of resilience, cultural exchange, community, and small-business adaptation.

**Figure 1: Cover of the book *Kimuchi monogatari* (李連順:キムチ物語), 2002 by Lee Yeon Soon.**



The mentioned book falls into the genres of kimchi-making, entrepreneurship, and Zainichi Korean life in Japan. Structured as short essays, it interweaves biography, craft and community.

Lee begins by recounting the origins of her relationship with kimchi: her childhood tastes, her migration, and the first decision to sell what she knew best. This chapter presents kimchi as both a livelihood and a lifeline, setting the scene for a memoir of a craft born out of necessity and memory. The second chapter humorously relays an adventure in which, amid postwar recovery, she nearly

sold an unrelated item, only to return to kimchi – a product that is genuinely in line with her skills and community. The anecdote underlines the nature of entrepreneurial trial and error. The next chapter is a statement of vocation. Lee explains why kimchi became her calling: it was familiar and evoked the flavours of home. She links taste memory to identity, recounting how the first regular customers sought familiarity in a foreign land. In the fourth chapter, she is faced with a pivotal reboot: with just 500 yen, she buys some napa cabbages and starts again. The tale details the process of sourcing ingredients, hand-mixing *yangnyeom*, and selling products directly to customers, an ethic that would later define “Kyōto Kimuchi no Hoshiyama”. This is the classic bootstrap moment in the brand’s history. The following chapter shows how the public markets acted as her classroom where she learned to price by feel, recognise freshness cycles, and establish bonds with shopkeepers and elders. The market is also where Zainichi stories gather, forming a node of mutual aid, gossip, and gentle competition. In the sixth chapter, Lee describes the hardships she faced with money. The first contract fell through before a stranger offered her a stall. These vignettes depict a moral economy in which reputation and reciprocity are as important as cash flow. The next chapter is a light and memorable episode centred on the scent of garlic and the etiquette of serving kimchi in Japan. The book’s tone is captured here: it is intimate and humorous, and builds cultural bridges by using food to approach delicate social boundaries with grace. In the eighth chapter, Lee also writes about borrowing time, labour and small sums, and repaying them with meals, care and reliability. Here, women (mothers and aunts) are portrayed as the unsung financiers of immigrant resilience. The chapter also illustrates how the Korean community comes together to help her overcome financial difficulties through “Mother’s Bank”, whereas the official bank turns her away. In the next chapter, she describes how her efforts to expand her business increased after two decades, and how she had to scale up, switching from all handmade processes to semi-systematised ones, training staff (including family members), and negotiating with wholesalers and retailers. The essay reads like a founder’s note on maintaining authenticity while Kimchi Star Co., Ltd. grows (Kimchi Star Co., Ltd.). In the final chapter, she discusses how her shop has become a meeting point for old friends, former customers and new neighbours. This “reunion” is a metaphorical place where Zainichi elders can reminisce and Japanese regulars can discover new tastes – precisely the social role that she cherishes for kimchi (see Lee 2002).

The book is important for several reasons. First, it is significant in the fields of culinary and cultural studies as Lee’s career is an example of Korean fermentation traditions merging with Kyoto’s established pickling culture. Her leadership

has established kimchi as a functional food and normalised it as an everyday dish in Japanese households. Scholars of Japanese food culture regard her as a prominent example of post-war ethnic cuisine integration and women-driven entrepreneurship in the food industry. Her focus on ingredient integrity, fermentation methods, and product development tailored to specific markets has become a model in academic discourse on food hybridity and dietary innovation.

The company also has a small restaurant where one can taste various soups and dishes with kimchi, and a store with fresh kimchi, spices, and other packed Korean food products.

**Figures 2 and 3: The Hoshiyama kimchi store, Kyoto. Photo by the author, 2012.**



### 4.3 The Story of Kimchi in Japan

Various types of Korean restaurant can be found in urban areas in Japan, especially those specialising in grilled offal (*horumon yaki*). In Kyoto, many of these restaurants are small establishments located beneath overhead train tracks, with smoke-stained interiors after years of barbecuing. Historical accounts suggest the consumption of meat in Japan was limited before the colonial annexation of Korea. Yet, this changed when Korean migrants introduced new methods for preparing meat, such as Korean barbecue (*yakiniku*), using beef produced on the peninsula (see Cwiertka 2012). These practices often began with lesser-known cuts, such as offal, which were not typically consumed by Japanese customers. As many employment sectors were closed to them, Korean migrants often turned to self-employment in the food industry. The grilled meat sector remains significant, with around 90% of Korean barbecue restaurants being owned today by Korean descendants. Members of Kyoto's Korean community note that food can be a stronger indicator of ethnicity than language, and Zainichi Koreans continue to eat kimchi alongside Japanese cuisine as a symbol of their identity.

**Figures 4 and 5: A Korean restaurant in Kyoto and yakiniku (Korean barbecue). Photo by the author, 2012.**



Beyond barbecue establishments and well-known producers such as Kimchi no Hoshiyama, Kyoto has a modest, albeit stable Korean food economy centred in historically Korean neighbourhoods like Higashi Kujō. Ethnographic data suggest the presence of around 20 Korean grocery stores and kimchi retailers across Kyoto and the surrounding area (Kyoto de osusume 2026). These range from long-established producers with national distribution to small, family-run businesses such as Onma's Store and Kimchi no Mizuno (Onma no Ten 2026; Kimchi no Mizuno 2026). Many of these businesses combine production, retail, and prepared food services. Some emphasise artisanal methods and intergenerational knowledge transmission, while others experiment with hybrid products using local vegetables or milder flavours suited to Japanese tastes. Such hybridity is in particular seen in the development of "kimuchi", a Japanese-style kimchi that is less fermented and adapted to local tastes (Cwierka 2012; Han 2010). Rather than indicating simple assimilation, such adaptations reflect ongoing processes of negotiation, localisation, and postcolonial hybridity. Kimchi thus remains a practical and symbolic means by which Zainichi Koreans can maintain cultural continuity while engaging with Japanese society (Demelius 2023).

Despite its cultural significance, kimchi has historically been stigmatised in Japan and associated with Korean identity. The derogatory phrase "*kimchi kusai*" ("they stink of kimchi") illustrates this prejudice (Lee 2002).<sup>4</sup> Kimchi has nevertheless gradually become embedded in Japanese food culture (Cwierka 2012). Initially, it was often encountered discreetly in Korean barbecue restaurants by early Japanese consumers before it entered the mainstream market. Today,

4 The novel *Pachinko* (Lee 2017) offers a literary parallel to these ethnographic observations, depicting Zainichi Korean experiences, including food-related discrimination (e.g., the smell of garlic, consumption habits).



kimchi is widely available across Japan in various forms, ranging from traditional pickled cabbage to innovative creations like *kimchi tomato*<sup>5</sup>.

Hybrid dishes also reflect evolving culinary identities. For instance, Laurent and Robillard-Martel (2022: 47–48) describe a dish combining kimchi and *natto* (fermented soybeans) from Osaka's Ikuno district, which blends two strongly flavoured foods traditionally associated with each culture. Such dishes exemplify how Zainichi Korean cuisine transcends strict national boundaries, embodying a lived experience that is neither purely Korean nor Japanese.

**Figure 6: Kimchi and other pickles, Kyoto. Photo by the author, 2012.**



More broadly within the Korean diaspora, cuisine operates as a complex cultural field that can evoke nostalgia, identity and conflict (Oum 2005: 109). Food is often essentialised as an expression of belonging, captured in the notion that “you are what you eat”, and kimchi is especially strongly linked to Koreanness.<sup>6</sup> Still, it can also function as a marker of cultural openness; non-Koreans who consume and appreciate kimchi may be viewed as demonstrating cultural

5 Further, hybrid or innovative variations – such as so-called “tomato kimchi/kimchi tomato” – are specific to Japanese food culture and do not reflect Korean culinary traditions. These products are a form of culinary hybridisation more than being authentic regional variations of Korean kimchi. This distinction is essential for avoiding conceptual conflation and understanding kimchi’s transformation within diasporic and host-society contexts (see Cwierka 2012 and Demelious 2023).

6 Even though kimchi is not unique to Korea as it belongs to the “fermented vegetable group”, which also comprises sauerkraut and Japanese *tsukemono* (pickles), kimchi is an important part of Korean ethnic cuisine. Served as an accompaniment to almost every meal, kimchi has almost as great a claim to be called a staple as rice. During the 20th-century Korean diaspora, wherever Koreans went (whether to Japan, California or Kazakhstan), kimchi followed as “a persistent bond linking the Korean people” (Chu 1994: 102).



receptivity, or as Ms. Lee put it: “they seem to pass a preliminary test of friendliness and accepting the Koreans and others”.

**Figure 7: Kimchi for sale at the Korean market in Osaka. Photo by the author, 2014.**



The history of kimchi among Zainichi Koreans is closely tied to experiences of marginalisation. Formerly referred to as “Korean pickles” (*chōsensuke*), it was largely consumed within migrant communities until the 1980s when it was still stigmatised by the wider Japanese public. Many Zainichi Koreans recall growing up in marginalised neighbourhoods where their mothers (*omonis*) produced and sold kimchi as part of the informal economy. These spaces, often located near industrial areas, sustained Korean cultural practices notwithstanding the social exclusion. Therefore, kimchi functioned not only as a staple food, but also as a symbol of resilience, gradually spreading beyond these enclaves into broader Japanese society.

As Mrs Lee (2002: 61) recalls:

Not surprisingly, when we started retailing, most of our customers were Koreans living in Japan. Fortunately, more and more people stopped pickling kimchi at home and started buying and eating it, and so more Zainichi Koreans came to our fountains than we expected. There were also a few Japanese, who at first hidden that they like kimchi and they were secretly buying it from me.

Yet, over time attitudes shifted. Economic development in South Korea and rising cultural confidence helped with a more positive perception of Korean culture. By

the 1990s, kimchi was being reimagined as a global cultural product in the context of globalisation. As Chu (in Walraven 2002: 99–100) argues, the international promotion of kimchi became linked to national self-respect and cultural recognition. Today, kimchi in Japan represents more than just a culinary import; it is a product of historical encounters, marginalisation, and adaptation. It embodies both the persistence and transformation of Korean identity in a Japanese context.

## 5 Conclusions

Studying food provides an important analytical lens via which we can understand not simply the everyday practices of nourishment, but in addition the broader cultural and social dynamics within which these practices are embedded. Feeding and eating are never merely physiological acts; they are deeply symbolic, socially structured processes in which identities, relationships and values are formed and conveyed. Food is a form of cultural expression in which the ingredients used, techniques employed to prepare them, and patterns of consumption that emerge together form a meaningful system that conveys social norms, collective histories, and individual identities.

Within this framework, the experience of Zainichi Koreans in Japan exemplifies how food can take on particular significance in contexts denoted by historical inequality and marginalisation. The presence of Koreans in Japan is shaped by the latter's colonial history, with this postcolonial condition having profoundly influenced the social positioning of Zainichi Koreans, who have long experienced discrimination and contested belonging within Japanese society (Chapman 2008). In these circumstances, everyday practices, including the production and consumption of food, acquire heightened importance as sites where identity is reproduced, negotiated and maintained.

As a central element of Korean culinary culture, kimchi is an example of this dynamic. It functions as both a dietary staple and a symbolic medium via which "Koreanness" is expressed and articulated in the Japanese social context (Demelius 2023). At the same time, kimchi's journey in Japan – from being associated with marginalised migrant communities to becoming a widely consumed product – reveals significant shifts in cultural perception. Once stigmatised as a symbol of foreignness, kimchi has gradually gained acceptance in mainstream Japanese society and become part of everyday consumption. This shift illustrates the complex relationship between cultural commodification, identity politics, and evolving societal attitudes to ethnic minorities.

The Korean food economy in Japan reflects these processes of transformation and negotiation. Small-scale enterprises, including kimchi manufacturers,

grocery stores, and restaurants, have historically provided economic opportunities for Zainichi Koreans, while also functioning as spaces of cultural continuity. In this context, the development of Japanese-style kimchi is particularly illustrative. Rather than being a mere imitation, Japanese-style kimchi reflects an adaptation process whereby Korean culinary practices are localised to suit Japanese tastes, often resulting in milder flavours and altered production methods (Cwiertka 2012; Han 2010). These adaptations highlight the flexible and dynamic nature of diasporic food cultures, which are in a constant state of negotiation between preservation and transformation.

Concurrently, the growing popularity of Korean cuisine in Japan exemplifies the ability of food to bridge cultural divides. Culinary exchange can facilitate mutual recognition and cultural curiosity, helping lead to a more diverse and interconnected social landscape. Still, this process is not without contradictions. The widespread acceptance of kimchi does not necessarily correspond to the full social inclusion of Korean residents. As scholars have observed, a persistent gap remains between the appreciation of cultural products and the acceptance of the people who produce them (Demelius 2023). This ambivalence reveals the importance of analysing food as both a cultural phenomenon and as part of broader structures of power and inequality.

The case of kimchi in Japan illustrates how food operates on multiple levels: as a commodity, a cultural symbol, and a site of identity negotiation. It shows how diasporic communities use everyday practices to maintain continuity with their cultural heritage while adapting to the new social environments. Further, it demonstrates how dominant societies selectively incorporate and reinterpret elements of minority cultures, often without addressing the underlying inequalities.

In an era of increasing globalisation, food is often seen as a medium through which cultural boundaries are softened and differences reconciled. However, the persistence of strong cultural associations and preferences suggests that food remains deeply tied to identity and social distinction. The historical example of kimchi consumption in Japan, where it was once consumed discreetly before becoming mainstream, underscores the gradual and frequently uneven nature of cultural acceptance (Walraven 2002: 96). Moreover, the global promotion of kimchi as a symbol of Korean national identity further emphasises its role in broader processes of cultural branding and international visibility.

Ultimately, studying Korean food in Japan reveals that culinary practices are central to understanding the complexities of social life; namely, neither trivial nor peripheral. Food embodies memory, identity and power, making it a fruitful area in which to examine how communities negotiate belonging, difference, and cultural continuity. The example of kimchi shows how everyday practices can

reflect and shape wider social transformations, contributing to ongoing processes of intercultural exchange, adaptation, and negotiation in contemporary society.

## Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Seed Programme for Korean Studies of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service at the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2022-INC-2250001). The ethnographic research in 2012 was also supported by the Japan Foundation and in 2014 and 2016 by Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARIS) as part of the research core funding Asian Languages and Cultures (P6-0243).

## References

- Adamson, Fiona B. (2012): Constructing the Diaspora: Diaspora Identity Politics and Transnational Social Movements. In T. Lyons and P. Mandaville (eds.): *Politics from Affair. Transnational Diasporas and Networks*: 25–42. London: Hurst & Company.
- Brannen, Julia (2020): Life Story and Narrative Approaches in the Study of Family Lives. In M. Jolly (ed.): *Family Lives: Ethnographic Approaches*, 60–75. London: Routledge.
- Brubaker, Rogers (2005): The 'Diaspora' Diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28 (1): 1–20.
- Bula, Merga Yonas (2023): Transnational Communication and Identity Construction in Diaspora: A Comparative Analysis of Four Diaspora Communities from the Horn of Africa. Springer VS. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-43275-1>.
- Caplan, Pat (1997): Approaches to the Study of Food, Health and Identity. In P. Caplan (ed.): *Health and Identity Food*: 1–31. London and New York: Routledge.
- Chapman, David (2008): *Zainichi Korean Identity and Ethnicity*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen P., Anthony (ed.) (2000): Peripheral Vision. Nationalism, National Identity and the Objective Correlative in Scotland. In A. P. Cohen (ed.): *Signifying Identities. Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values*: 145–170. London and New York: Routledge.
- Chu, Yong-ha 주영하 (1994): Kimch'i: hangugin-ui makkori: kimch'i ui munhwa illyuhak 김치 한국인의먹거리: 김치의문화인류학 (Kimch'i: the food of Koreans: the Cultural Anthropology of Kimch'i). Seoul: Tosoch'ulp'an konggan.
- Counihan, M. Carole (1999): *The Anthropology of Food and Body. Gender, Meaning, and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Cwiertka, Katarzyna J. (2012): *Cuisine, Colonialism and Cold War. Food in Twentieth-Century Korea*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Demelius, Yoko (2023): The Presentation of the Korean Self with Everyday Food: Negotiating 'Koreanness' through Kimchi Diplomacy in Contemporary Japan. *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, 36 (1), 87–116. DOI: 10.1353/seo.2023.a902135.

- De St. Maurice, Greg (2022): The Local and the National in Japan's Documentary food Show Kuichinbō! Banzai. In B. Forrest and G. De St. Maurice (eds.): *Food in Memory and Imagination. Space, Place, and Taste*: 201–213. London: Bloomsbury.
- Dhunpath, Rubby (2000): Life history methodology: "Narradigm" regained. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(5): 543–551.
- Duru, Maureen (2017): *Diaspora, Food and Identity. Nigerian Migrants in Belgium*. Bruxelles: Peter Lang s.a.
- Grossman, Jonathan (2019): Toward a Definition of Diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42 (8): 1263–1282.
- Hall, Stuart (1990): Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (ed.): *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*: 222–237. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Han, Kyung-Koo (2010): The 'Kimchi Wars' in Globalizing East Asia. In *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Jung, Jin-Heon, and Eun-Jeung Lee (2019): Division and Unification: Seen through the Eyes of Korean Migrants in Berlin. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 44 (4 (170)): 308–24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26804876>.
- Kenny, Kevin (2013): *What Is Diaspora? Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kim, Nadia Y. (2017): *Imperial Citizens: Koreans and Race across the Pacific*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Kim, Yang-ki 金 両基 (1987): *Kimuchi to Oshinako: nihhan hikaku bunka kō* キムチとお新香—日韓比較文化考 (Kimch'i and Oshinko: a Comparative Consideration of the Culture of Japan and Korea). Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha.
- Kim, Jihye, and Ahn, Yonson (2023): Gradual, Diverse, Complex—and Unnoticed: Korean Migration in Europe. *European Journal of Korean Studies*, 22 (2): 1–10. DOI: 10.33526/EJKS.20232202.1.
- Kovács, Ramona F. (2025): Cultural Adaption of Koreans Residing in Hungary: Changes in Daily Life and Customs. *Asian Studies*, 13 (suppl.): 231–58. <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2025.13.sup.231-258>.
- Kwon, Heonik (2010): *The Other Cold War*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Laurent, Christopher, and Robillard-Martel, Xavier (2022): Defying National Homogeneity: Hidden Acts of Zainichi Korean Resistance in Japan. *Critique of Anthropology*, 42 (1): 38–55.
- Lee, Yeon Soon (2002): *Kimuchi Monogatari* キムチ物語 (A Tale of Kimchi). Kyoto: Kinsonsui shoin.
- Lee, Min Jin (2017): *Pachinko*. New York: Grand Central Publishing.
- Mintz W., Sidney, and Du Bois, Christine M. (2002): The Anthropology of Food and Eating. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31. <http://anthro.annualreviews.org> (Accessed 10. 2. 2024).

- Oum, Young Rae (2005): Authenticity and Representation: Cuisines and Identities in Korean-American Diaspora. *Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (1): 109–125.
- Ryang, Sonia (2014): Space and Time: The Experience Of The 'Zainichi', The Ethnic Korean Population of Japan. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*, 43 (4): 519–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24643204>.
- Visočnik, Nataša (2013): Self- and other - representations of the Korean minority in Japan. *Dve domovini: razprave o izseljenstvu*, 37: 113–121.
- Visočnik, Nataša (2019): Discourse on Multiculturalism within the Korean Community of Kyoto. *Japanese review of cultural anthropology: JRCA*, 20 (1): 207–246. [https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jrca/20/1/20\\_207/\\_pdf/-char/ja](https://www.jstage.jst.go.jp/article/jrca/20/1/20_207/_pdf/-char/ja).
- Walraven, Boudewijn (2002): Bardot Soup and Confucians' Meat: Food and Korean Identity in Global Context. In K. Cwierka and B. Walraven (eds.): *Asian Food. The Global and the Local*: 95–115. London and New York: Routledge.

## Sources

- Brilliant Maps (2025): Korean Diaspora & Immigrants By Country. <https://brilliantmaps.com/korean-diaspora/> (Accessed 10.12.2025).
- Kyotopi (2025): "Kyōto" Kimuchi no meiten ga 'Matsuko no shiranai sekai' ni tōjō! Kankoku gurume-suki hikken 'kimuchi no hoshiyama' 【京都】キムチの名店が「マツコの知らない世界」に登場! 韓国グルメ好き必見『キムチのほし山』. *Kyotopi*, May 17, 2025. Available from: <https://kyotopi.jp/articles/EcX6h> (Accessed 10.12.2025).
- Kimchi no mizuno キムチのミズノの (2026). Available from: <https://www.kimchiya.com/> (Accessed 4. 5. 2026).
- Kyōto Kimchi no Hoshiyama 京都キムチのほし山 (2024). Available from: <https://hoshiyama.ne.jp/> (Accessed 15. 6. 2024).
- Kyoto de osusume no kimchi 10 sen 京都でおすすめのキムチ屋さん10選 (2026). Available from: <https://kyoto.tips/kimchi> (Accessed 4. 5. 2026).
- Mindanao (Zainippondaikanminkokumindan 在日本大韓民国民団) (2008): Furasshu dōhō kigyō hito (21) kimuchi-dzukuri han seiki フラッシュ同胞企業人 (21) キムチづくり半世紀. *Mindanao Shimibun 民団新聞*, April 16, 2008. <https://mindan.org/old/front/newsDetail52b7.html> (Accessed 15. 6. 2024).
- Mindanao (Zainippondaikanminkokumindan 在日本大韓民国民団) (2013): Yunesuko mukei bunka isan kinen Ri taishi ga kōrei-sha 150-ri ni kimuchi... Kimu Jan seishin o taigen ユネスコ無形文化遺産記念 李大使が高齢者150人にキムチ...キムジャン精神を体現. *Mindanao Shimibun 民団新聞*, December 25, 2013. <https://mindan.org/old/front/newsDetailaf3c.html> (Accessed 15. 6. 2024).
- Onma no ten おんまの店 (2026). Available from: <https://www.onma-kimuchi.com/> (Accessed 4.5.2026).

Unesco (2013): Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year. Available from: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869> (Accessed 4. 5. 2026).

### **Author's info**

Dr. **Nataša Visočnik Gerželj**, Associate Professor

University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts

Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana

Email: [natasa.visocnik@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:natasa.visocnik@ff.uni-lj.si)





EuiJin Hur

## DIASPORA AS HORROR IN PENINSULA: A PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE

### ABSTRACT

*This article examines horror in Peninsula (2020) through the Lacanian concept of extimacy. Rather than treating zombies as external monsters, it argues that horror arises through the transformation of familiar spaces, names, and social relations. Using a theory-led close reading with visual and narrative analysis, the article focuses on displacement, symbolic naming, and the uncanny reconfiguration of Korean urban space. "Diaspora" is employed in a limited analytical sense to describe the film's representation of displacement, failed return, and symbolic exclusion. It argues that horror emerges from the extimate relation between home and exile, while zombies and displaced figures function as symptomatic images of exclusion, survival, and the persistence of capitalist logics after social collapse.*

**KEYWORDS:** horror cinema, extimacy, diaspora, zombie, Lacanian film theory

## Diaspora kot grozljivka v filmu Peninsula: psihoanalitična perspektiva

### IZVLEČEK

*Prispevek obravnava grozo v filmu Peninsula (2020) skozi Lacanov pojem ekstimnosti. Namesto da bi zombije obravnaval zgolj kot zunanje pošasti, pokaže, da groza nastaja s preoblikovanjem znanih prostorov, imen in družbenih razmerij. Raziskava temelji na teoretsko usmerjenem natančnem branju ter vizualni in narativni analizi izbranih prizorov. Osredotoča se na premestitev, simbolno poimenovanje in nelagodno preoblikovanje korejskega urbanega prostora. Pojem diaspore je uporabljen v omejenem analitičnem smislu za opis filmske reprezentacije premestitve, neuspele vrnitve in simbolne izključenosti. Prispevek trdi, da groza izhaja iz ekstimnega razmerja med domom in izgnanstvom, medtem ko zombiji in razseljeni subjekti delujejo kot*

*simptomatične podobe izključenosti, preživetja in vztrajanja kapitalističnih logik po družbenem razpadu.*

*KLJUČNE BESEDE: kinematografija groz, ekstimnost, diasporičnost, zombi, lacanovska filmska teorija*

## 1 Introduction

Horror is often understood as a genre that operates through the intrusion of an outsider. More precisely, a familiar space, one's territory, or an everyday environment is abruptly transformed into something unfamiliar by the arrival of an external presence. All the spatial coordinates and the location are still the same. However, the appearance of an unfamiliar figure radically alters the way the space is experienced, turning the familiar into the strange. In this perspective, horror should not be understood only as an emotion that originates within the individual. Namely, it can also function as a structural affect produced by a reorganisation of coordinates triggered by an external intrusion. Expressed more concretely, periods of social transformation also entail transformations of the subject itself. Approaching horror as an affect operating on the social or structural level is thus in harmony with the way horror can be conceptualised within Lacanian psychoanalysis.

At the same time, this article regards the experience of displacement and failed return in *Peninsula* (2020) as closely connected to the film's production of horror. Here, "diaspora" is not used as a comprehensive sociological category to explain any form of migration, exile, or transnational identity. The term is instead used in a limited analytical sense to describe the film's representation of subjects expelled from a symbolic home, deprived of stable belonging, and forced to return to a space no longer recognisable as home. In this sense, the article is concerned less with diaspora as a stable collective identity than with the experience of displacement, exclusion and failed return conveyed in the film. Diasporic images in the film are hence not observed as empirical portrayals of diaspora in general, but as cinematic figures via which these conditions are visualised and narratively articulated. The displacement in focus also operates on what may be called a parallax level. What changes in *Peninsula* is not just the physical location of the characters, but the position from which Korea is perceived and named. The same geographical space appears differently when viewed from within the peninsula, from the position of exile, or in the gaze of foreign media. In this context, the film's horror depends on a parallax shift: a change in the observer's position that transforms the meaning of what is seen. Žižek's account of parallax is useful here since he argues a parallax shift is not

merely a subjective change of viewpoint, and is instead a shift that affects the way reality itself is structured for the subject (Žižek 2006: 258).

The psychoanalytic concept of extimacy can help make parallax displacement easier to comprehend. Extimacy describes the paradoxical relation in which what appears external is already located at the intimate centre of the subject or symbolic order (Lacan 2013: 76). In *Peninsula*, horror arises not simply because a foreign or unknown object intrudes into a familiar space. On the contrary, horror emerges when what was assumed to be familiar, such as Korea, home, family, urban space, and national belonging, returns in an estranged form. The film therefore produces horror through the collapse of the stable distinctions between inside and outside, home and exile, familiarity and threat.

*Peninsula* is a stand-alone sequel to *Train to Busan* (2016). A stand-alone sequel refers to a film that shares the same fictional universe as its predecessor yet is narratively independent of it. *Peninsula* is set 4 years after the zombie outbreak depicted in *Train to Busan*. The film was directed by Yeon Sang-ho, who also directed *Train to Busan* as well as the Netflix series *Hellbound* (2021), and attracted approximately 3.8 million viewers in South Korea. The narrative takes place on the Korean Peninsula after the zombie virus has spread to Busan – the last safe zone left in the earlier film – turning the entire region into ruins. What the film accentuates is the transformation of once familiar Korean urban landscapes into devastated spaces, creating an uncanny visual experience. In conventional apocalyptic narratives, the end of the world often implies the possibility of renewal or a new beginning. *Peninsula*, however, departs from this narrative logic. Instead of simply suggesting hope after catastrophe, it presents the post-zombie Korean Peninsula as a space in which the familiar has become fundamentally strange.

From this view, the presented study examines the way visual horror is articulated in *Peninsula* through a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework. More specifically, it analyses how the film transforms Korea from a familiar national and urban space into an uncanny site of displacement, exclusion, and failed return. The article proceeds as follows. First, the method, scope and terminology of the study are outlined. Second, the argument presented in the article is situated within Lacanian film theory and debates on spectatorship, ideology, and the cinematic apparatus. Third, analysis is provided of three visual and narrative mechanisms via which *Peninsula* produces horror: expulsion and displacement, the loss or transformation of names, and the uncanny reconfiguration of familiar spaces. Rather than offering a comprehensive analysis of the film's entire narrative, in focus in the article is how *Peninsula* constructs Korea itself as the spatial ground of horror.

## 2 Method and Scope

The research employs a close, theory-led reading of *Peninsula*. The film is selected as a case study because it combines zombie horror, post-apocalyptic spectacle, and the motif of return to a devastated homeland. It is also significant as a stand-alone sequel to *Train to Busan* since it shifts the focus from immediate survival during the outbreak of zombies to the aftermath of national collapse, refugee status, and the return to a ruined Korean Peninsula. Accordingly, *Peninsula* provides a useful case for examining how horror cinema can stage the transformation of a familiar national space into a strange and politically charged landscape.

The analysis concentrates on selected scenes and still images in which displacement, symbolic naming and spatial estrangement are made most apparent because these are the three central mechanisms *Peninsula* uses to produce horror. The selected images are not treated as isolated illustrations, but as visual evidence connected to the narrative structure, *mise-en-scène*, and the spectator's recognition of familiar Korean spaces. The article therefore subjects the film to a combination of close textual analysis and visual analysis. In that manner, the way the film organises relations between image and discourse, spatial familiarity and estrangement, and narrative events and symbolic transformation is examined.

The study does not claim to provide a general theory of diaspora, zombie cinema, or capitalism. Its scope is more limited. The way *Peninsula* represents displacement, failed return, and symbolic exclusion through a Lacanian framework is the centre of attention, with the primary concept used being extimacy. The latter describes the structural relation between inside and outside, home and exile, familiarity and threat. The uncanny is treated as a secondary concept that names the affective experience produced by this structure: the moment when what is familiar appears as strange. Concepts such as interpellation, symbolic naming, and capitalist survival logic are used only where they clarify particular scenes in the film.

To avoid terminological ambiguity, in this article "film" refers to the specific textual object of analysis – *Peninsula* – and "cinema" to the broader medium, apparatus, and institutional form by which images, spectatorship and ideology are organised. "Horror cinema" refers to the genre and its broader conventions, whereas "horror film" relates to a particular work. "Representation" designates the way the film constructs social and symbolic relations through images, narrative, naming, and spatial organisation. Finally, "psychoanalysis" does not refer to the psychological diagnosis of characters, and instead to a Lacanian theoretical framework for analysing desire, the Real, the symbolic order, extimacy, and the gaze.

### 3 Lacanian Film Theory, Extimacy, and the Uncanny

The Lacanian framework of this article operates in relation to film theory more than a general psychological interpretation of characters. Lacanian film theory is associated with earlier debates on the cinematic apparatus, spectatorship, identification, ideology, and the gaze. In the 1960s and 1970s, film theory drew on psychoanalysis and structuralism to determine how cinema positions the spectator and the manner by which images produce effects of identification and meaning. Metz's work on film semiotics and identification, Baudry's account of the ideological effects of the cinematic apparatus, and Mulvey's analysis of visual pleasure and the gaze are central to this history (Metz 1974; Baudry 1974–1975; Mulvey 1999). These works show how cinema organises meaning, identification and spectatorship using visual and ideological structures. Later, Joan Copjec's intervention was important for rethinking Lacanian film theory vis-à-vis approaches that reduced psychoanalysis to a simple theory of ideological misrecognition (Copjec 1994). In this context, Althusser's theory of ideological interpellation also became important for film theory, especially in discussions of the way cinema positions the spectator as a subject (Althusser 1971; Baudry 1974–1975).

This article draws on the tradition described above in a narrow way. While no attempt is made to reconstruct the entire history of Lacanian film theory, this tradition helps to clarify how *Peninsula* positions the spectator before images of a familiar space that has turned strange. The point is not that the film reveals the hidden psychological truth of the characters, but that the images organise a relation between spectatorship, symbolic identity, and the Real. In this sense, the concepts of extimacy and the uncanny are used to analyse the film's production of horror at the level of visual and symbolic organisation.

In psychoanalysis, notably the work of Jacques Lacan, the unconscious is not primarily related to the inner core or essence of the individual. On the contrary, Lacan famously defined the unconscious as "structured like a language" (Lacan 2006: 223). This formulation shifts the unconscious away from the domain of the personal or private and locates it within a socially structured order. For Lacan, the unconscious is not the nucleus of individual singularity and is instead articulated and organised through external conditions. Lacan argues the unconscious must therefore be understood via a topological model such as the Möbius strip whose inside and outside are found on the same surface (Kim 2010: 200). He namely does not treat the unconscious as a fundamental substance, but approaches it with a formal and topological logic that unsettles the simple opposition between interior and exterior.

This point is crucial for understanding extimacy. As a combination of exteriority and intimacy, the word denotes the idea that what appears most intimate within the subject is, on a fundamental level, externalised. That is, extimacy indicates that what the subject experiences as most familiar is structured and determined by external conditions. The interior is not self-contained; it is constituted through an outside that is already internal to it. Individual inner reality is hence shaped by social and symbolic structures. Ideology operates precisely by making this process appear natural, as if the subject's most intimate experiences belonged purely to the individual rather than the symbolic order in which the subject has been formed.

It is important to distinguish extimacy from the uncanny. In this article, extimacy refers to a structural relation: what appears to be outside the subject or symbolic order is already located at its most intimate point. The uncanny, in comparison, refers to the affective experience produced when this structure becomes perceptible. Following Freud, the uncanny names the return of what is familiar in an estranged form. Extimacy thus describes the structure of inside and outside, while the uncanny describes the spectator's affective experience of that structure. In *Peninsula*, Korea becomes uncanny not due to it being entirely unknown, but because it is still recognisable as Korea while no longer functioning as home, nation or a symbolic ground.

In this dimension, horror can be understood as an affect that emerges when the stability of symbolic coordinates is disrupted. What once appeared to be self-evident knowledge is transformed into an unfamiliar and unstable field. Horror does not necessarily arise from absolute otherness. It may develop when the familiar returns as something strange, when what should have remained stable becomes unstable, or when the subject encounters the dependence of its inner world on an external symbolic order. This explains why horror can have a political dimension: it exposes the fragility of the structures which organise identity, belonging, and social meaning.

The relationship between defamiliarisation and cinema should be clarified. Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* was mainly developed in relation to theatre, not as a general theory of cinema. Benjamin later discussed Brechtian techniques in the context of modern media, political art, and the transformation of perception. Therefore, in this article Brechtian defamiliarisation is not treated as a universal principle of cinema and is instead used in a limited sense to describe how certain moments in *Peninsula* interrupt familiar images of Korea and make them strange.

Seen in this way, the horror in *Peninsula* does not simply depend on immersion or shock. Horror also depends on moments in which the spectator recognises a familiar space and simultaneously perceives that this space no longer belongs to the symbolic order that once made it familiar. The mentioned process is connected to montage, framing and the placement of images in the sequences in the

film. It is argued that while cinema as such is not Brechtian, *Peninsula* employs certain techniques of estrangement to create an uncanny relation between the spectator and the image.

In this condition, horror can be understood as the spectator's encounter with the instability of the image, as in the recognition that what appeared to be a coherent and familiar world is sustained by symbolic frames that can collapse. What the spectator confronts is not a hidden substance behind the screen, but the absence of such substance and the dependence of meaning on fragile symbolic and visual structures. The Lacanian significance of this encounter lies in the fact that the Real does not appear as a positive object so much as a rupture within the symbolic field. The horror in *Peninsula* stems from this rupture: the familiar space of Korea remains visible, yet the symbolic order that made it recognisable as home has collapsed.

#### **4 Displacement, Naming, and the Uncanny Image of Korea in *Peninsula***

Even though the film shares the zombie-apocalypse setting and fictional universe of *Train to Busan*, it does not continue the earlier film's narrative and instead functions as a stand-alone sequel. Set 4 years after the outbreak of zombies depicted in *Train to Busan*, *Peninsula* portrays a devastated Korea abandoned by most of its population. Having fled to neighbouring countries as refugees, Korean survivors leave behind a peninsula transformed into a lawless wasteland inhabited by zombies and human violence. Against this bleak backdrop, the narrative centres on Jung-seok, a former soldier, Min-jung, a survivor who in the danger zone is raising two children, Joon, Yu-jin, and an elderly man, Kim, who protects Min-jung and her family. Through these figures, the film presents a story of survival within a ruined Korean landscape.

The film's narrative may be summarised as follows. After the collapse of the South Korean government due to the zombie outbreak, most Koreans must flee to neighbouring countries as refugees. Suddenly stripped of national belonging, these displaced Koreans suffer poverty and systemic discrimination, with Jung-seok being no exception. One day, he is summoned by a Triad organisation together with his brother-in-law, Chul-min, and two other Koreans. The group is offered a mission to retrieve trucks loaded with cash and valuables left behind in Korea. Since the country's collapse, all maritime and aerial routes into/out of the peninsula have been strictly controlled by the international community. There have nevertheless been occasions when people successfully entered the restricted zone and recovered ownerless assets, before again escaping. Labelled as people "from the zombie country" and exhausted by ongoing poverty and

discrimination, Jung-seok agrees to return to the ruined peninsula. The group plans to locate the lost truck and escape via the port of Incheon. The film concerns the events they encounter while on this mission.

On a structural level, *Peninsula* produces horror with three interrelated operations: first, displacement and failed return; second, the loss or transformation of names and symbolic identity; and third, the uncanny reconfiguration of familiar spaces. These three operations should not be understood as separate theoretical systems. Instead, they describe different levels of the same cinematic process: displacement names the narrative condition, symbolic naming describes the discursive mechanism, and the uncanny names the affective experience images in the film produce.

The first operation concerns displacement and failed return. In the film, the same geographical space appears differently subject to whether it is viewed from within the peninsula, from a position of exile, or via the gaze of foreign media. This shift can be understood in terms of parallax: not as an additional theoretical system, but as a way of naming the visual and positional change that makes the same object appears otherwise. As Žižek argues, parallax involves the shifting of perspective according to which an object appears differently, even though there is no direct change in the object itself (Žižek 2006: 4). Applied to *Peninsula*, this means that what was previously perceived to be familiar or self-evident is reconfigured through displacement and comes to appear fundamentally different. The transformation is observed in the following images.

**Figure 1: Spatial transformation according to shifts in the observer's internal and external position (a–d) (Yeon Sang-ho 2020).**







- (a) A city engulfed in flames amid a zombie outbreak.  
 (b) An urban landscape perceived to be in ruins.  
 (c) Korea as reported by media in the United States.  
 (d) Unfamiliar through the gaze of an external observer.

Figure 1(a–d) shows how *Peninsula* reconfigures the familiar image of South Korea according to the position of the observer. Figure 1(a), which appears at the start of the film, depicts a distant view of a city as the zombie outbreak intensifies and spreads nationwide. When isolated as a single image, the scene is ambiguous. Apart from the smoke rising from the city, it is difficult to recognise immediately that the urban space is under attack by zombies. What destabilises the familiar image of the Korean city is not the city itself so much as the framing in which it is viewed. This shot is captured from the back seat of a fast-moving car as Jung-seok and his sister's family flee in an emergency. The perspective is thus defined by retreat rather than approach. The film's use of sound, distant explosions, indistinct impacts, and hurried breathing further signals that this is no longer the city as previously known. Yet the decisive factor that renders the city precarious lies in the movement away from it: the contrast between the city and the surrounding green forest, combined with unstable frames caused by the car's speed, transforms what otherwise might be an ordinary cityscape into an image of loss.

While Figure 1(a) demonstrates how a shift in viewpoint produced by motion can transform the same space into something different, Figure 1(b) shows how sequential placement can alter an image's meaning despite its visual content remaining similar. Compared to Figure 1(a), Figure 1(b) presents the city from a closer distance and, on the surface, appears to depict a familiar South Korean metropolitan landscape. However, by the time this image appears, the audience no longer regards the city as ordinary. This effect is produced less by the image

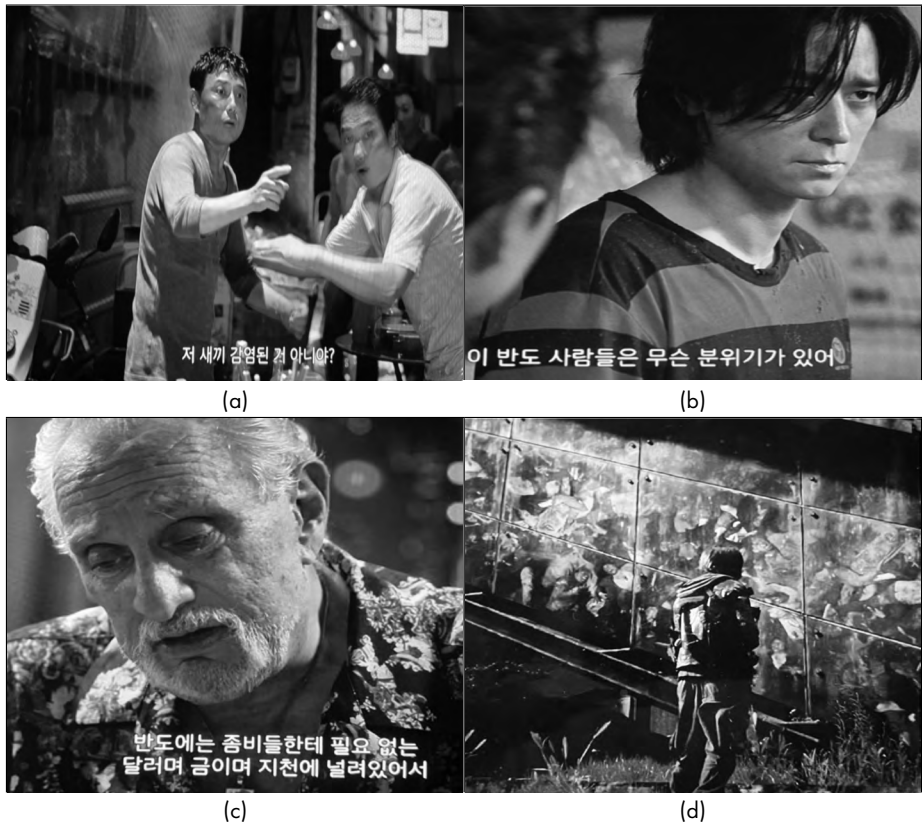
itself than by its position in the film's sequence. Earlier scenes of zombie attacks have already established the interpretive frame by which the subsequent city image is viewed, such that what might otherwise register as conventional is signified as ruined and dangerous.

A further shift comes with Figure 1(c–d), which depicts the outbreak as reported by American news media. Here, Korea is framed through an external gaze within the film, borrowing the authority of the diegetic world itself to declare that Korea is no longer Korea. The Korean landscape is mediated through foreign observers who speak English and appear with English subtitles, rendering the familiar space strange using linguistic and institutional distance. The reports state that South Korea collapsed on a single day after the outbreak, mention claims that the virus originated from a pharmaceutical company, and assert that North Korea is the safest place on the peninsula. In this sense, Figure 1(c–d) functions symptomatically. Rather than simply introducing new information, these scenes reinforce the collapse already established in Figure 1(a–b) by re-staging it as an external and quasi-official declaration. The film namely supplements the disappearance of Korea by placing it in the mouth of American media, publicly announcing that the nation state has vanished from the peninsula.

The early production of horror in the film, as well as the establishment of its narrative background, relies on this transformation of what existed before. Through shifts in character viewpoint as well as diegetic devices that function as an apparently objective world, familiar spaces and events are reconstituted as no longer fundamentally the same. This operation exposes a key aspect of the film's visual logic: a phenomenon is not replaced by a wholly different object; instead, it appears as other while remaining recognisably what it was previously. The horror of the image emerges from this simultaneous continuity and estrangement.

Figure 1 demonstrates how the familiar is made strange by changes in gaze and symbolic framing, whereas Figure 2 illustrates a different process: the loss of a name or the deprivation of symbolic articulation. Here, the issue is not simple erasure but transformation. The main concept at stake is interpellation. In Althusser's sense, interpellation is the process by which ideology addresses individuals and constitutes them as subjects. In *Peninsula*, naming functions as such an ideological and symbolic operation: the displaced Koreans are no longer called "Koreans", but "Peninsula people" or people from the "zombie country". The change in name thus signals a change in symbolic position. In Lacanian terms, this imposed naming also indicates the subject's dependence on the Other because the subject is positioned by a signifier it does not choose.

**Figure 2: The loss of naming and the imposition of appellation (a-d) (Yeon Sang-ho 2020).**



- (a) The loss of a name.
- (b) The common noun "peninsula".
- (c) The substructure of the symbolic system.
- (d) Imposed names.

Figure 2 shows how the collapse of a symbolic structure leads the subject to find what once was familiar to be radically strange, as if it were discovered in a place that had not been anticipated. Stated differently, a change in naming produces a transformation that is not merely a semantic shift (Žižek 37–36 :2025). Figure 2(a) depicts Korean refugees living in poverty and humiliation in a foreign land. Having escaped Korea, they are no longer recognised as "Koreans" and are instead treated as refugees from a failed state. Previously identified and interpellated as nationals, they are now reduced to embodiments of the nation's contradictions and viewed as

sources of disorder or infection. This process symbolically transforms them into surplus, a transformation linked imaginatively and symbolically to the zombie virus itself. As Figure 2(a) suggests, even minimal expressions of anger/agitation become grounds for suspicion since refugees are accused of being infected and turned into objects of ridicule, fear and contempt.

The described mechanism is condensed in the name "Peninsula people". Figure 2(b) depicts a scene when a member of the Triad approaches Jung-seok and calls him using this term. The collapsed state is no longer "Korea" but reduced to "the Peninsula". The symbolic proper name is erased and replaced with a common noun. Although the referent remains unchanged, this substitution produces estrangement via a shift in symbolic positioning. The transition from "Korea" or "Koreans" to "the Peninsula" and "Peninsula people" generates a gap, despite only the act of symbolic naming having been altered. What becomes evident here is that horror does not necessarily arise from what is entirely unknown, but from the transformation of what previously was assumed to be known through a change in naming.

Such symbolic estrangement recalls the logic in Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, in which Gregor Samsa remains the same being on one level while his symbolic and social position changes radically following his transformation. The comparison is not meant to make Kafka a central framework of the article, and instead to clarify the logic of symbolic displacement: what changes is not only the body or the place, but the position from which the subject is recognised and named.

In other words, symbolic transformation does not stem solely from a change in substance itself. Rearrangement on the symbolic level instead produces a transformation in reality (Žižek 2014: 303). What is revealed when interpellation renders the subject unfamiliar is not a hidden essence, but the absence located at the place of the supposed cause (Lacan 2013: 55). This logic becomes clearer in the sequence shown in Figure 2(c–d), which begins with the Triad ordering Jung-seok and his companions to enter the peninsula to retrieve the trucks and continues until they arrive at Incheon. Figure 2(c) reveals that once Korea has disappeared as a stable symbolic name, a remainder surfaces: abandoned gold and US dollars. In psychoanalytic terms, this remainder can be seen as a point at which the subject is forced to confront the truth of the symbolic order, not as a positive substance, but as a gap or rupture (Lacan 2013: 68). Linked to the subject's split, this confrontation also recalls the logic by which the object of desire is found to be absent at the place of its cause (Lacan 1998a: 103). Within this framework, the Triad's demand exposes what appears after the symbolic veil has been lifted: behind the symbolic order of Korea is not an intact national substance, and instead the material underside of exchange, survival, and capitalist value.

The Triad has no interest in Korean currency. It desires valuables and dollars that circulate globally. The scene thus exposes Korea's implication within a dollar-centred market system. With the same logic, "Peninsula people" are commodified by functional necessity. They are named as such because they are familiar with the peninsula's physical terrain and are required for the truck retrieval. The recruitment itself is not symbolic in any dignified sense but practical. The team is assembled to maximise efficiency with minimal personnel: Jung-seok, a former soldier experienced in combat; Chul-min, a communications technician capable of maintaining satellite contact within the disconnected peninsula; a former taxi driver able to navigate routes; and a mechanic capable of recovering and re-starting vehicles. Whether they wish it or not, they are interpellated under names they did not choose, according to the Other's practical calculus.

Figure 2(d) stages the moment when subjects forcibly constituted by the naming confront the rupture between symbolic identity and the Real. Having crossed into the peninsula and entered Seoul via Incheon, Jung-seok and his companions encounter a glass-enclosed pedestrian overpass near Guro Digital Complex Station. As moonlight illuminates the corridor, it is revealed to be densely packed with zombies. What they confront is the gap between the symbolic system and the Real, concretised by bodies pushed into the place of what the social order cannot assimilate. Together, Figure 2(a–b) and Figure 2(c–d) visualise the Real following the collapse of the symbolic order: the abstract substitution of a proper name by a common noun is first presented, then made concrete in economic surplus, and finally rendered as a recognisable image of dissonance in a Seoul subway site filled with zombies.

In summary, the fear experienced by both the retrieval team and the spectators in Figure 2(d) may be understood as an image of Seoul projected as its possible future and recalled as its ruined past (Kim 2000: 48–49). Zombies materialise the gap between Korea as it once functioned within a symbolic and economic order and the surplus that is left after Korea has 'disappeared' as a stable symbolic name. What confronts those who return to the peninsula is not a homeland to be restored, but an allegorical image that reveals the underside of the social relations that previously sustained it (Benjamin 2002: 40). This also marks a vital difference from *Train to Busan*. In the earlier film, zombies function primarily as direct threats and obstacles. In *Peninsula*, by contrast, zombies increasingly operate as allegorical images embedded in the landscape, while antagonism shifts toward human violence and the social relations that emerge after the symbolic collapse.

The third mode of operation extends the loss of names through the uncanny familiarity of the space. The film's mechanism of horror lies in images that spectators

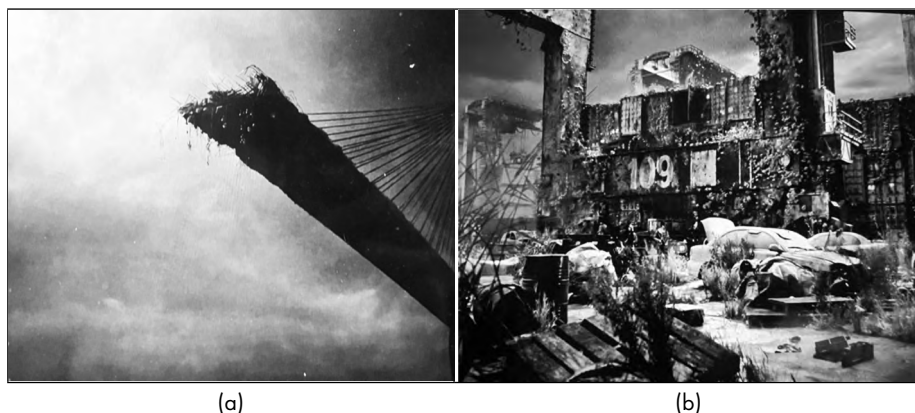
believe they already know, presented as something else. To accomplish this effect, *Peninsula* relies heavily on the audience's memory. Rather than depicting pre-outbreak Korea with archival footage or flashbacks, the film offers indirect cues through passing dialogue and remnants of everyday signage, prompting viewers to imagine Korea as it existed prior to it becoming "the Peninsula".

**Figure 3: The slogan "A healthy nation without worries about the future" on display at Yeongdeungpo Station in the film (Yeon Sang-ho 2020).**



Figure 3 shows insurance slogans that are glimpsed while passing through Yeongdeungpo Station, such as "A healthy nation without worries about the future" and "A great support for those who prepare for the future", while a character remarks that "everything has turned into ruins in just four years". Horror thus emerges not just from what is shown, but from the distortion of an image of Korea already lodged in the audience's knowledge. In itself, the slogan is not frightening. It becomes uncanny because it persists in a ruined space, detached from the social order that earlier had given it meaning.

**Figure 4: Aspects of the peninsula's landscape rendered unfamiliar and threatening (a–b) (Yeon Sang-ho 2020).**





- (a) The broken Incheon Bridge.
- (b) An unfamiliar landscape of the peninsula.

This strategy appears in both panoramic landscapes and condensed form via the large shopping mall occupied by Unit 631.

**Figure 5: A large shopping mall as the peninsula's principal stage (a–d) (Yeon Sang-ho 2020).**



- (a) The fortified shopping mall.
- (b) Gladiatorial combat and gambling.
- (c) A gladiatorial tournament.
- (d) Domesticated zombies.

As Figure 4(a–b) indicates, the film reconstructs familiar infrastructures as radically strange: the severed Incheon Bridge and the post-apocalyptic routes between Incheon and Seoul persist throughout the film. These landscapes establish atmosphere by unsettling perception, albeit the decisive space emerges in the shopping mall fortified by Unit 631.

Unit 631 was originally tasked with rescuing civilians in early stages of the outbreak. After the government collapses, the unit fortifies a large shopping mall, where supplies remain relatively abundant, and waits to be rescued. Yet, when no signal arrives, the unit descends into despair and self-abandonment. The soldiers refer to civilians as “wild dogs” and force them to play “hide-and-seek”, a survival game set in the mall lobby in which captured zombies and human survivors are released together. The soldiers and remaining survivors gamble on the outcomes using necessities and survival goods.

Figure 5(a–d) shows how the chain shopping mall, an important symbol of South Korean consumer capitalism, is transformed into a militarised fortress and a gladiatorial arena. The film does not present what the shopping mall used to be. Instead, it offers indirect cues, such as the triangular roof typical of Korean chain malls or franchises like “Dunkin’ Donuts”, to indicate that the space was at one time ordinary and familiar. This matters because, while zombies remain objects of fear, the film’s more fundamental horror lies in the modes of survival adopted by those who remain, and in the descent from “Korean” to “Peninsula person”. The gap that is revealed is not simply a fall from civilisation into barbarism; it suggests that the boundary between civilisation and barbarism is less stable than first appears (Lee 2002: 121).

This logic is elaborated through Figure 5(b–c). In Figure 5(b), the survival game proceeds as spectators gamble with allotted necessities. Participants include civilians originally rescued by Unit 631 and those who barely survived on their own. If they fail to prove their usefulness, for instance by searching for supplies outside, they become targets for the game. Those who cannot demonstrate their utility are reduced to what Agamben calls “bare life” in a figurative sense: they are included in the survival economy of the mall solely through their exposure to violence. The gambling game organises and discharges discontent within a militarised order, while the captured civilians are turned into expendable bodies. Figure 5(c) offers a more direct representation of this condition: As one of the “wild dogs”, Chul-min is captured and forced into the game. If the “wild dogs” survive for a limited time, Unit 631 throws them expired food, prompting a desperate struggle, after which they are confined until the next round begins. With these scenes, the film visualises an enclosed economy in which human life is valued exclusively according to utility, exposure and survival.

As the sequence culminates in Figure 5(d), the scene becomes highly symptomatic. Here, the film exploits the zombies’ sensitivity to sound and movement, manipulating them like instruments within the game. The distinction between zombies produced by the initial outbreak and those created during the hide-and-seek collapses. At this point, Žižek’s discussion of zombies becomes relevant. Approaching zombies



through the figure of the proletarian subject, Žižek conceptualises the capitalist subject as biologically alive yet already dead, a form of living death (Žižek 2014: 355). Drawing on Marx's account of capital as dead labour feeding on living labour and Lacan's concept of *jouissance* as a drive that circulates without fulfilment, Žižek characterises the capitalist subject as a "pure labour subject".

From this perspective, zombies are not only remnants of collapse. They can also be seen as symptomatic and allegorical figures via which the film visualises the reduction of life to mechanical reaction, survival, and circulation. Still, this does not mean that zombies directly represent capitalism as such. Instead, in the context of the shopping mall and the retrieval mission, they help make visible a survival logic whereby bodies are valued only insofar as they can be used, exchanged, manipulated or discarded.

The shopping mall's transformation to become a militarised fortress and gladiatorial arena therefore does not simply denote a fall from civilisation into barbarism. More precisely, it stages the persistence of certain logics associated with consumption, competition, spectacle and survival following social collapse. The mall remains organised around exchange, gambling, hierarchy, and the management of expendable bodies. In this dimension, *Peninsula* suggests the collapse of the state does not automatically produce a space outside capitalist social relations. Namely, when Korea collapses as a symbolic system, the film does not present a liberated world outside the social order. In fact, it stages what Lee describes as "artificial nature": a second nature produced by social and economic systems, but experienced as unavoidable or natural (Lee 2018: 110–112). In *Peninsula*, this artificial nature appears through the shopping mall's survival economy where exchange, utility, spectacle and violence organise social relations after the state's collapse. The film hence imagines a world in which fragments of those relations persist in brutalised and distorted forms.

Seen in this way, the shopping mall acquires paradoxical significance best understood through extimacy. The hide-and-seek reveals that the mall, although precarious, functions as the centre sustaining its internal economy. Without the game, the hierarchy would collapse. Zombies, functioning mechanically within this system, make this world possible. This extimate structure organises not only the mall but the film as a whole. Unit 631's exploitation of the "wild dogs" mirrors the transaction that initiates the narrative: the Hong Kong Triad's deal with the retrieval team replicates the relation between distant observers and expendable subjects. For the Triad, it does not matter who retrieves the truck, so long as the truck returns. Positioned at a distance, they observe the struggle. Jung-seok's group thus also occupies the position of "wild dogs" compelled into violence by an external calculus.

The mentioned repetition becomes explicit when Captain Seo, the commander of Unit 631, seizes the truck and boards the Triad's ship. Dreaming of a new beginning, Captain Seo believes that he alone has succeeded in escaping the peninsula. However, once his function has been fulfilled, he is immediately discarded by the Triad, revealing that he, too, was nothing more than an expendable body within the same logic. Facing imminent death, Seo smashes the ship's rear gate and allows zombies to flood the vessel, thereby repeating the collapse of the shopping mall and completing the film's allegorical circuit.

**Figure 6: Hwang Jun in the closing sequence delivering her final line of dialogue (Yeon Sang-ho 2020).**



The film concludes with Jung-seok and Min-jung's family boarding a UN helicopter. Although the ending initially appears to promise rescue, this idea is upturned in the final line delivered by Hwang Jun (Figure 6). When a UN soldier reassures her that a "new world" lies ahead, she replies, "The world I lived in wasn't so bad". Instead of offering a simple resolution, this line condenses the film's irony by suggesting that the outside may not be fundamentally different from the inside. Altogether, the analysis shows that *Peninsula* advances in a dual structure: the shopping mall stages extimacy on the level of space, while the retrieval mission functions as the mechanism which compels entry into the peninsula and sustains the narrative tension.

In sum, the term "the Peninsula", used to replace "Korea", designates the same geographical location while signalling a shift in symbolic and ideological positioning. While the film generates horror through post-outbreak devastation, its central operation lies in the uncanny effect produced by displacement, visual re-framing, and symbolic substitution. Horror emerges not simply because the familiar becomes strange, but since the strange appears via what is already known and re-situated. In this perspective, *Peninsula* distinguishes itself from *Train*

to *Busan*. Whereas the earlier film features zombies as direct objects of fear, *Peninsula* increasingly treats them as figures embedded in a broader structure of displacement, exclusion and survival. The film ultimately suggests that systemic collapse does not automatically inaugurate a positive new beginning. Instead, it stages horror as the persistence of familiar structures after their apparent downfall, producing subjects who are simultaneously recognisable and estranged. Zombies can accordingly be viewed not as direct models of capitalist subjectivity, but as symptomatic figures through which the film visualises the reduction of life to survival, utility and exclusion. Diaspora, likewise, appears less as an external theme than as a cinematic form of failed return by which the familiar becomes threatening and exclusion is made visible.

## 5 Conclusion

The article has considered how *Peninsula* produces horror through displacement, symbolic naming and the uncanny transformation of familiar Korean spaces. By using Lacan's concept of extimacy, it was argued that the film's horror does not simply arise from zombies as external monsters. Horror instead emerges when what appears external or threatening is revealed to be intimately connected to the familiar structures of home, nation, urban space, and social order.

The analysis has focused on three mechanisms. First, the film stages displacement and failed return by transforming Korea from a familiar homeland into a space that can only be approached from the position of exile. Second, it shows how symbolic naming changes the status of subjects and places: "Korea" becomes "the Peninsula", and Koreans become displaced figures associated with infection, danger and uselessness. Third, the film produces an uncanny effect by making familiar infrastructures like bridges, stations, roads and shopping malls appear as ruined and threatening spaces.

The article also clarifies the relationship between extimacy and the uncanny. Extimacy describes the structural relation in which the outside is already located at the intimate centre of the inside. The uncanny describes the affective experience produced when this relation becomes visible. In *Peninsula*, Korea becomes uncanny since it remains recognisable while no longer functioning as a stable symbolic home. The horror of the film therefore lies not in absolute otherness, but in the return of the familiar in an estranged form.

Finally, it was suggested in the article that *Peninsula* can be interpreted as a reflection on the persistence of survival logics following social collapse. This does not mean the film offers a complete theory of capitalism, or that zombies or displaced figures should be treated as direct models of capitalist subjectivity.

Rather, the film allows us to see how exchange, utility, spectacle and exclusion continue to organise social relations even after the apparent breakdown of the state. Depending on this dimension, *Peninsula* stages horror as the recognition that what survives a catastrophe is not just life, but the distorted persistence of familiar symbolic and social structures.

## References

- Agamben, Giorgio (1998): *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Althusser, Louis (1971): *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*: 127–186. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Baudry, Jean-Louis (1974–1975): *Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus*. *Film Quarterly*, 28 (2): 39–47.
- Benjamin, Walter (2002): *Selected Writings, Volume 3: 1935–1938*. Eds. H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA, London: Harvard University Press.
- Copjec, Joan (1994): *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Freud, Sigmund (2003): *The Uncanny*. London: Penguin Books.
- Kafka, Franz (2009): *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kim, Soyoung (2000): *Ghosts of Modernity (근대성의 유령들)*. Seoul: Ssiat-eul Ppureun Saramdeul.
- Kim, Soyoung (2010): *The Primitive Scene of Modernity (근대의 원초경)*. Seoul: Hyunsil Munhwa.
- Lacan, Jacques (1998a): *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI*. New York, London: W. W. Norton.
- Lacan, Jacques (1998b): *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*. New York, London: W. W. Norton.
- Lacan, Jacques (2006): *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. New York, London: W. W. Norton.
- Lacan, Jacques (2013): *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959–1960*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Lee, Taekwang (2002): *The Obscene Fantasy of Korean Culture (한국 문화의 음란한 판타지)*. Seoul: Ihu.
- Lee, Taekwang (2018): *Red Ink (빨간잉크)*. Seoul: Yeondoo.
- Metz, Christian (1974): *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mulvey, Laura (1999): *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. In L. Braudy and M. Cohen (eds.): *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*: 833–844. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Žižek, Slavoj (2006): *The Parallax View*. Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2014): *The Universal Exception*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Žižek, Slavoj (2025): *Quantum History: A New Materialist Philosophy*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

## Sources

- Yeon Sang-ho (2016): *Train to Busan* (Busanhaeng). Film. South Korea.
- Yeon Sang-ho (2020): *Peninsula* (Bando). Film. South Korea.

## Figures

All figures are screenshots from *Peninsula* (Yeon Sang-ho, 2020) and are used solely for scholarly analysis.

Figure 1. Spatial transformation according to shifts in the observer's internal and external position

- (a) A city engulfed in flames amid a zombie outbreak
- (b) An urban landscape perceived to be in ruins
- (c) Korea as reported by media in the United States
- (d) Unfamiliar through the gaze of an external observer

Figure 2. The loss of naming and the imposition of appellation

- (a) The loss of a name
- (b) The common noun "peninsula"
- (c) The substructure of the symbolic system
- (d) Imposed names

Figure 3. The slogan "A healthy nation without worries about the future" on display at Yeongdeungpo Station in the film.

Figure 4. Aspects of the peninsula's landscape rendered unfamiliar and threatening

- (a) The broken Incheon Bridge
- (b) An unfamiliar landscape of the peninsula

Figure 5. A large shopping mall as the peninsula's principal stage

- (a) The fortified shopping mall
- (b) Gladiatorial combat and gambling
- (c) A gladiatorial tournament
- (d) Domesticated zombies

Figure 6. Hwang Jun's in the closing sequence delivering her final final line of dialogue.

**Author's info****EuiJin Hur**, PhD Candidate

University of Ljubljana, Department of Asian and African Studies

Aškerčeva cesta 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia

E-mail: eh78748@student.uni-lj.si

Sun Young Yun

# SINGING BELONGING: A KOREAN DIASPORA WOMEN'S CHOIR AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN AUSTRIA

## ABSTRACT

*As a site of diasporic cultural practice and community care, the article examines the Vienna Korean Women's Choir (VKWC) founded in 2007 by first-generation Korean migrant women in Austria. Drawing on participant observation (2017–2024) and interviews conducted in 2024–2025, this qualitative study explores how sustained choir participation enables migrant women to negotiate ageing, gendered care responsibilities, and belonging.*

*The choir is found to function as a gendered third space where informal care ethics are enacted through dense interpersonal relationships. Combining Korean art songs with Western classical works, the VKWC sustains cultural memory while fostering meaningful ageing. Performances in nursing homes and cultural venues constitute everyday cultural diplomacy, permitting members to reposition themselves from former migrant labourers to active cultural agents.*

**KEYWORDS:** Korean diaspora in Austria, women's choir, care ethics, meaningful ageing

## Prepevanje pripadnosti: zbor korejskih žensk iz diaspore kot kulturna praksa in gradnja skupnosti v Avstriji

## IZVLEČEK

*Članek obravnava Dunajski korejski ženski zbor (Vienna Korean Women's Choir, VKWC), ki so ga leta 2007 ustanovile korejske migrantke prve generacije v Avstriji*

*kot prostor diasporične kulturne prakse in skupnostne skrbi. Na podlagi opazovanja z udeležbo (2017–2024) in intervjujev, izvedenih v letih 2024–2025, kvalitativna raziskava analizira, kako dolgotrajno sodelovanje v zboru migrantkam omogoča soočanje s staranjem, spolno zaznamovanimi skrbstvenimi odgovornostmi in vprašanji pripadnosti.*

*Ugotovitve kažejo, da zbor deluje kot spolno zaznamovan tretji prostor, v katerem se etika neformalne skrbi udejanja skozi gosto mrežo medosebnih odnosov. S povezovanjem korejskih umetnih pesmi in zahodnih klasičnih del VKWC ohranja kulturni spomin in spodbuja smiselno staranje. Nastopi v domovih za starejše in kulturnih prizoriščih predstavljajo obliko vsakdanje kulturne diplomacije, prek katere se članice iz nekdanjih migrantskih delavk preoblikujejo v aktivne kulturne akterke.*

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** korejska diaspora v Avstriji, ženski zbor, etika skrbi, smiselno staranje

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Korean migration to Austria has historically been characterised by its transient nature. It has primarily consisted of students who came for artistic or academic purposes and typically returned to South Korea after completing their degrees. However, a significant demographic turning point occurred in the early 1970s through organised labour migration. The arrival of 50 Korean nurses on 27 August 1972, followed by a further 50 on 31 May 1973, marked the start of a Korean diaspora settling in Vienna (Yun 2017; Yun 2025). These women, many of whom married and established permanent roots, transformed the community from a temporary student population into a stable ethnic minority. In the ensuing decades, the community continued to grow and diversify. Aside from the nurse cohort, later waves of migration brought students, company employees, artists, and spouses of Austrian citizens to Vienna, gradually expanding the community's occupational and generational range (Yun 2025: 154). A considerable institutional milestone came in 2012 when the Korea Kulturhaus was established, which provided the diaspora with a permanent communal home and a focal point for its developing network of organisations. As documented in Yun (2025: 156), the Korean community in Austria has expanded to encompass approximately 20 known organisations (professional associations, cultural clubs, educational

<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by the Seed Programme for Korean Studies of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service at the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2025-INC-2250001).



institutions, social groups). According to the Overseas Koreans Agency, today the community numbers around 3,000 individuals (permanent residents, regular residents, international students, naturalised citizens).

Against this historical backdrop, the Vienna Korean Women's Choir (VKWC) was officially founded in April 2007. The choir was a grassroots movement initiated by the mentioned former nurses – now senior members of the diaspora – who wanted to enhance their quality of life through music and engage in a meaningful social service. As the members navigated the challenges of ageing in a foreign land, the choir became more than a mere musical ensemble and acted as a valued social anchor providing what the members describe as vitality and healing.

Despite the significance of such grassroots organisations, the Korean diaspora in Austria remains an under-researched field in migration studies. Existing scholarship has largely focused on diplomatic relations (e.g., Verein der Koreaner in Österreich 2012), family and migration (e.g., Hartmann 2009) and religious institutions (e.g., Pokorny and Sung 2018), yet little attention has been paid to the intersection of gender, ageing and cultural practice in this particular community (e.g., Kim 2022; Yun 2025). An attempt is made in this article to fill the described gap by providing in-depth ethnographic analysis of the VKWC. The central inquiry is guided by three main research questions. First, how does the collective act of singing function as a form of embodied cultural memory that sustains a sense of Korean identity across borders? Second, in which ways does the choir serve as an informal, gendered support network that addresses the needs of senior migrant women outside of formal institutional frameworks? Finally, how do the choir's public outreach activities constitute a form of everyday cultural diplomacy from below?

It is argued in this article that the VKWC functions not only as a cultural ensemble, but as a gendered, grassroots infrastructure of care – that is, a set of informal yet reliable practices via which members support each other in everyday life. Through this infrastructure, ageing migrant women actively negotiate belonging, memory, and social recognition. The methodological framework is rooted in a multi-method ethnographic approach conducted over several years. Data were collected through participant observation at public performances between 2017 and 2024, with interviews and documentary analysis performed between November 2024 and July 2025, allowing for a longitudinal perspective on the choir's evolution. The study draws on narrative and semi-structured interviews with four choir members and one conductor, including those who were present upon the choir's inception. Given the small and ageing nature of the founding cohort, these interviewees represent a significant proportion of the choir's core

members. These qualitative data are supplemented by an extensive analysis of documentary materials, including meeting minutes, performance reports, and commemorative booklets.

The aims of the study is to contribute to ongoing debates in Diaspora, Gender and Cultural Studies by highlighting ageing, care, and informal cultural labour among migrant communities. By moving beyond macro-level sociological analyses of migration, the study shows the importance of small-scale, everyday cultural practices in sustaining diasporic life. Dominant narratives that often frame ageing migrants via the lens of dependency or vulnerability are thereby challenged. Instead, the VKWC reveals how senior women utilise their professional backgrounds in care to establish self-directed networks of mutual support and meaningful ageing. Moreover, the concept of cultural diplomacy from below developed in this paper offers a novel perspective on how minoritised communities negotiate visibility and recognition within a host society through grassroots artistic engagement.

## **2 Theoretical Framework: Diaspora, Belonging, and Cultural Practice**

In this section, the theoretical framework for interpreting the ethnographic data of the Vienna Korean Women's Choir (VKWC) is established. To understand the choir's significance, one must go beyond a view of music as mere aesthetic entertainment and instead position it at the intersection of transnationalism, embodied memory, and gendered social care.

### **2.1 Diaspora, Transnational Cultural Practice, and Music**

The concept of diaspora is foundational to the present study. Traditionally, diaspora studies often concentrated on the trauma of displacement or the longing for a lost homeland – a tendency scholars such as Clifford (1994) have critiqued. In this article, a contemporary perspective is adopted, emphasising transnational cultural practice whereby maintaining heritage is an active, ongoing process sustained with everyday engagement. Stuart Hall's (1990: 222) influential framework of cultural identity posits that diasporic identities are not fixed essences but positions which are continually produced via representation and cultural practice. Hall (1990: 223–225) distinguishes two modes of cultural identity: one based in a shared history and a collective "one true self", while the other acknowledges the ruptures and discontinuities inherent in the diasporic experience. For the Korean women of the VKWC, both dimensions are at play: their shared history as migrant nurses provides a stable cultural foundation, while

their decades-long residence in Austria has inevitably transformed their sense of Korean identity. Complementing this, Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of "homing desire" offers a crucial distinction between the desire for a mythical homeland and the actual process of making home in the place of one's settlement. The VKWC embodies this distinction: the longing expressed through Korean art songs is not a literal desire to return, but a culturally constitutive practice that anchors identity in the present. In this article, the VKWC is approached as a diasporic formation in which belonging is enacted through repeated cultural practices rather than articulated via explicit narratives of homeland or return. The described perspective aligns with Vertovec's (2009) understanding of transnationalism as a set of sustained, cross-border social relations and practices that shape the everyday lives of migrants. For the Korean women in Vienna, the homeland is not just a geographical memory, but a cultural space actively recreated through collective action.

Drawing on social theories of music, in this article singing is treated as a social practice which actively constructs community rather than just reflecting it. Christopher Small's concept of musicking (Small 1998) is relevant here, suggesting that the meaning of music lies in the totality of the social relationships established during the musical act – encompassing not only the performers but also the audience, the venue, and the broader social context. In the context of the VKWC, the focus is on the embodiment of memory and identity: how the physical act of singing in the mother tongue allows members to recall and reinforce their cultural belonging. The vibration of the voice and synchronisation of breathing during choral practice create a tangible sense of we-ness, providing a structured environment for regular interaction and mutual reliance. Further, as DeNora (2000) argues, music functions as a technology of the self, a resource that individuals and groups actively use to regulate emotion, construct identity, and organise social life. For the VKWC, the weekly rehearsal is therefore not merely a musical exercise but rather is a social ritual in which members actively construct and reconstruct their diasporic identities. In the case of the VKWC, the choir serves as a sonic archive through which cultural capital is preserved and transmitted across generations of the diaspora. By synthesising Hall's (1990) theory of cultural identity, Brah's (1996) homing desire, and Small's (1998) musicking, this section establishes that the choir's significance is not found in the music itself, but in the ongoing social and cultural work it performs for its members.

## **2.2 Gendered Migration, Care, and Meaningful Ageing**

For this study, a framework that specifically addresses the intersection of gendered migration, care, and ageing is needed. Since the VKWC is composed

almost exclusively of women, many of whom migrated as professional nurses in the 1970s, their experience is fundamentally gendered. Their professional background in the care sector informs their current capacity for communal organisation and mutual support. To understand the choir's significance for its members' later lives, the article draws on feminist gerontology and critical ageing studies. Sarah Lamb's (2017) critique of "successful aging" as largely a Western, neoliberal obsession is particularly relevant here. Lamb states that dominant models of successful ageing tend to valorise individual productivity, independence, and self-management, in turn marginalising those whose ageing does not conform to these norms – including elderly migrants navigating structural exclusions in a foreign country. A deliberate move away from such normative frameworks is made in this article. Accordingly, meaningful ageing is not treated as a normative ideal to be achieved, and instead as an emic process via which members themselves articulate purpose, social value, and well-being in later life. The mentioned emic approach allows for a culturally grounded understanding of how these women define a good old age on their own terms, rooted in their specific histories as Korean migrants and former care professionals. The ethics of care, as developed by Carol Gilligan (1982) and expanded by Joan Tronto (1993), provides the moral dimension of this framework. Gilligan's relational ethics, grounded in webs of interdependence rather than abstract principles, resonates deeply with the VKWC's communal practices. Tronto's political extension of care ethics further reveals how the informal care enacted within the choir constitutes not just a private virtue but a socially and politically significant practice. In the absence of traditional extended family structures in the diaspora, the choir functions as an informal care network that sustains well-being collectively. By engaging in active cultural production, these women challenge dominant narratives that often characterise elderly migrants as passive or dependent, asserting instead their role as active agents of care and culture.

### 2.3 Everyday Cultural Diplomacy from Below

The third theoretical pillar of the present study is the concept of everyday cultural diplomacy from below. To situate this concept, it is first necessary to engage with the broader field of cultural diplomacy and its critiques. Ang, Isar and Mar (2015: 365) identify a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of the field: a persistent conflation of cultural diplomacy *stricto sensu* – defined as an essentially interest-driven governmental practice – and cultural relations, which tends to be driven by ideals and is practised mainly by non-state actors. As they argue, the most effective and meaningful forms of intercultural exchange are frequently not those orchestrated by governments in the name of the national interest, but those that arise organically from people-to-people contact, mutual learning, and shared

vulnerability (Ang et al. 2015: 377). It is precisely this distinction that underpins the analytical framework of this study. The VKWC operates entirely outside the apparatus of state-led cultural diplomacy. It receives no governmental mandate and serves no explicit national agenda. Yet its activities – performing Korean art songs for Austrian nursing home residents, organising charity concerts in Viennese churches, appearing in prestigious public venues – constitute a sustained and meaningful form of intercultural engagement. Therefore, in this article the term everyday cultural diplomacy from below is proposed to capture this grassroots, relational and non-instrumental character. The term ‘from below’ stresses the agency of minoritised actors – in this case, senior migrant women – who negotiate visibility and recognition in the host society not through official channels but through the persistent engagement of cultural practice. Unlike top-down models premised on the projection of national images, the VKWC’s diplomacy is based on shared human experience: the vulnerability of ageing, the longing for belonging, and the universal language of music. Such an approach resonates with Ang et al.’s (2015: 377) call for a more ethnographic perspective on cultural diplomacy, one that attends to the on-the-ground processes of relationship-building rather than measurable policy impacts. In the sections that follow, the concept of everyday cultural diplomacy from below is applied to the empirical data. Still, its theoretical foundations are established here. Subsequent sections will refer to this framework without repeating its conceptual elaboration.

By synthesising these three theoretical pillars – diasporic cultural practice and musicking, gendered care and meaningful ageing, and everyday cultural diplomacy from below – the article provides a lens via which to analyse the VKWC. It moves from the macro-level of diasporic theory to the micro-level of embodied musical practice, ultimately connecting these to the broader social issues of gendered care and intercultural relations in contemporary Europe.

### **3 Ethnographic Context and Research Design**

This section details the methodological framework and particular ethnographic setting of the study. To capture the multifaceted nature of the Vienna Korean Women’s Choir (VKWC), a qualitative, multi-method ethnographic approach was employed, permitting a deep longitudinal engagement with the community.

#### **3.1 Ethnographic Methods: In-depth Interviews, Participant Observation, and Documentary Materials**

The study employed a qualitative, multi-method ethnographic research design based on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary analysis.

At the time of the research (2024), approximately 25 members were actively participating in the choir's rehearsals and performances (Korean.at 2024). Five semi-structured interviews were performed with four women – one who continues to be an active singer and advisor (Interviewee 1), one who actively participates in both the choir and the Korean Literature-Friends-Club (Interviewee 3), two who are no longer active in the choir (Interviewees 4 and 5) – and one former conductor (Interviewee 2), focusing on migration histories, choir participation, and experiences of ageing and care. Interviews were conducted in Korean after informed consent was provided. To ensure the integrity of the data, interviews were audio-recorded where possible. For the analysis, relevant excerpts were translated into English and combined with field notes taken during informal interactions. The data were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, informed by sociological and feminist approaches to care, culture, and everyday belonging. Table 1 provides an overview of the interview participants, interview dates, and locations.

**Table 1: Interviewees, Interview Dates and Interview Locations.**

| Interviewee | Date       | Location                   | Role                                                                 | Field note                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1)          | 22.11.2024 | in a coffee house          | founding member, active singer, and advisor for the choir            | First 30 minutes: Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 3 together. Interviewee 3 left to pick up her grandchild; Interviewee 1 remained with the author for over 1 hour |
|             | 19.12.2024 | a restaurant near her home |                                                                      | 2 hours, including a meal                                                                                                                                        |
|             | 06.01.2025 | Kulturhaus                 |                                                                      | About 30 minutes, with two choir members responsible for the archives                                                                                            |
| 2)          | 12.02.2025 | Online                     | Former conductor                                                     | About 40 minutes                                                                                                                                                 |
|             | 13.02.2025 | Online                     |                                                                      | by email                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3)          | 19.11.2024 | in a coffee house          | founding member, active in the choir and the Literature-Friends-Club | About 1 hour                                                                                                                                                     |
|             | 22.11.2024 | in a coffee house          |                                                                      | About 30 minutes with Interviewee 1                                                                                                                              |
| 4)          | 10.12.2024 | at her home                | founding member (no longer active)                                   | About 30 minutes                                                                                                                                                 |
| 5)          | 29.07.2025 | at her shop                | founding member (no longer active)                                   | About 30 minutes                                                                                                                                                 |

These interviews provided the study with critical life-history data, especially regarding members' experiences as migrant nurses and their motivations for founding the choir.

Participant observation complemented these narratives and was conducted over 8 years (2017–2024). This involved attending public performances, which allowed for a direct analysis of the group's musicking practices (Small 1998) and internal social dynamics.

The study further draws on analysis of documentary materials totalling 100 pages, including meeting minutes, reports, and concert programmes from the 9th and 10th anniversary performances.

### **3.2 The Vienna Korean Women's Choir: Formation and Membership**

The VKWC was officially established in April 2007 in Vienna, Austria. Its formation was a community-driven initiative by Korean women who had settled in Vienna since the 1970s, many of whom arrived as part of the organised labour migration of nurses. While the choir's membership was initially almost exclusively composed of these former health professionals, it later expanded to include other Korean residents. Today, the choir remains a significant institution within the approximately 3,000-strong Korean community in Austria. According to an event announcement on Korean.at (2024), the online platform serving the Korean community in Austria, around 25 members were actively participating in the choir's performances and regular rehearsals. The membership is characterised by its senior demographic, with many founding members now over the age of 70, which influences the choir's dual focus on musical excellence and mutual support.

### **3.3 Researcher Positionality and Ethical Considerations**

In this section, the researcher's relationship to the field site and the ethical measures taken during the study are addressed. Given the researcher's background and connection to the broader Korean community in Austria, a reflexive approach to researcher positionality is employed. The researcher's position as an insider within the community facilitated trust and provided nuanced access to the choir's social dynamics, yet the author maintained a critical distance through rigorous ethnographic documentation.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the anonymity of interviewees, were strictly adhered to. For instance, while detailed narratives of Interviewees 1 and 2 are shared to provide depth, their identities remain anonymised to protect their privacy within the small, interconnected diaspora community. The objective was to faithfully and ethically represent the

experiences and voices of the choir members, assuring their contributions were documented with respect and academic integrity.

To ensure the integrity of the choir's natural practice environment, the author adopted a non-intrusive approach to participant observation. Recognising that the author's presence as a non-member during rehearsals might disrupt the group's focus or internal dynamics, the author deliberately refrained from being in the rehearsal room. Instead, the author remained on the floor below, listening to the collective sound of their voices while reviewing archival documents and meeting minutes. Formal interviews were conducted only with those who had provided prior informed consent, and the author's active observation of the choir as a whole was primarily focused on their public performances.

As part of the ethnographic context, informal conversations and interviews revealed that the primary reasons for members being absent from rehearsals were deeply tied to the realities of ageing and gendered family roles. Members frequently cited medical appointments necessitated by ageing or the responsibility of caring for grandchildren as the main factors preventing their attendance. These observations provide crucial context for understanding the choir not just as a musical group, but as a community of senior migrant women navigating the competing demands of health, family, and personal fulfilment.

## **4 Singing, Repertoire, and Embodied Cultural Memory**

### **4.1 The Genesis of Harmony: From Domestic Spaces to Public Stages**

The Vienna Korean Women's Choir (VKWC) originated in domestic singing practices that gradually transformed personal nostalgia into a shared cultural expression. In the early 2000s, before it was officially founded in 2007, Korean women – many of whom had come to Austria as nurses in the 1970s – gathered in domestic settings to sing together. These gatherings often centred around a karaoke machine, giving a rare respite from the rigorous demands of their professional lives in Austrian hospitals and the challenges of raising families in a foreign culture. Interviewee 5 recalled: "Singing together at Interviewee 1's house – that became the seed of the VKWC". When the choir was officially established in April 2007, it brought these private voices into the public sphere, signalling a new era in which Korean migrant women sought to define their identity through their contributions as cultural practitioners.

### **4.2 Strategic Hybridity in Repertoire: Balancing Two Worlds**

The VKWC's repertoire is a sophisticated manifestation of strategic hybridity, carefully curated to bridge the gap between the members' Korean heritage and



their lived reality in Vienna. The repertoire typically has three pillars: Gagok (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture), a genre that emerged in the 1920s setting Korean poetry to music; *Minyo* (Ibid.), traditional folk songs transmitted orally through the generations; and Western classical compositions, including German Lieder. Korean art songs like *Gohyang-ui Bom* (Spring in My Hometown) or *Arirang* serve as the emotional core of the choir. For women who have spent over 40 years away from their birthplace, these songs are not simply melodies; they are linguistic and emotional vessels that carry the memory of Korea.

Among the choir's repertoire, Spring in My Hometown holds a particularly sacred place. The lyrics evoke the landscape of childhood hometowns, including peach blossoms and colourful villages, and refer to *My hometown*, allowing members to symbolically return to that formative space each time they sing. For the VKWC members, it signifies not only a longing for their physical birthplace in Korea but also for a lost childhood and a time of innocence that cannot be recovered. Through collective performance, the choir transforms these memories into a shared, lived experience. Such emotional resonance was consistently expressed across all the interviews: members described how singing these songs brings them to tears, and that these moments are filled with thoughts of the family they left behind in Korea (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 2 2025; Interviewee 3 2024; Interviewee 4 2024; Interviewee 5 2025). The researcher's own participant observation confirmed this: as someone who has also experienced the emotional weight of diasporic life, the researcher found these moments of collective mourning and remembrance deeply affecting, underscoring the validity of the members' accounts.

The inclusion of Western classical music demonstrates the choir's intentional integration into the host society. Performing Mozart or Schubert in the heart of Vienna allows members to assert belonging within the Austrian cultural landscape, signalling that they are not merely eternal foreigners but residents who have mastered aspects of high culture while maintaining their ethnic roots. This dual repertoire enables the choir to address two audiences at once: offering comfort and nostalgia to the Korean diaspora while earning recognition and respect from the Austrian public. In this way, the VKWC practises a form of everyday cultural diplomacy from below.

#### 4.3 Singing as Embodied Cultural Memory

One of the most profound aspects of the VKWC's practice is the concept of embodied cultural memory. For ageing migrants, memory is not just mental: it is physical. While performing Korean folk songs, the choir members enact a physical retrieval of cultural identity. The rhythmic patterns of *Minyo* are deeply

ingrained in their bodily memory, dating back to childhood in Korea. Vocalising these rhythms in Vienna allows them to manifest their heritage in the present, creating continuity between the young women who first arrived as migrant nurses in 1972 and the senior citizens they have become. This embodied practice fosters resilience and social cohesion. The harmony they strive for in the choir symbolises their navigation of a transnational life – a blending of personal histories, cultural memory, and collective identity into a shared, harmonious sound. Two founding members articulated this dynamic quite vividly: they had assumed that the songs of their childhood had faded from memory, buried beneath decades of demanding hospital work, but singing together in the choir brought those memories flooding back (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 3 2024).

#### **4.4 The Social Soundscape: Resilience and Care through Musicking**

The VKWC serves as a vital social soundscape fostering emotional resilience and mutual care. Drawing on Small's (1998) concept of musicking, weekly rehearsals are as significant for the members as public performances. These sessions provide a structured environment where women exchange news, share health advice, and support one another through the challenges of ageing and bereavement. The choir functions as an informal support network mediated through music. Members describe a sense of healing and vitality derived from singing as a collective. Preparing for concerts offers purpose and accomplishment, countering potential stagnation in later life. As one member actively involved in both the choir and the Korean Literature-Friends-Club observed, the choir serves to confirm that one is not alone – it is a space where members reassure one another that they are still present in each other's lives, much like the literary club does (Interviewee 3 2024).

The VKWC's public performances, including visits to Austrian nursing homes and charity concerts, further contribute to meaningful ageing. By bringing joy to others, members transform their roles from recipients of care to providers of cultural care. During nursing home visits, the researcher consistently witnessed Austrian residents clapping, swaying to the rhythm, and humming along – clear evidence of an emotional connection via music. The choir's long-term impact as a form of cultural diplomacy from below is evident in the continued demand for performances, its ongoing relationships with care institutions, and repeated invitations to community settings.

#### **4.5 Challenges Facing the Diasporic Voice**

As the VKWC approaches its third decade, it faces considerable challenges associated with the ageing of its founding members. Regular rehearsals and public

performances are increasingly physically demanding for those now in their mid-to late seventies. Simultaneously, the gradual decline in new membership among younger generations raises concerns about long-term sustainability. The described generational gap is driven by structural barriers: the Monday afternoon rehearsal schedule conflicts with younger women's work commitments, and the geographical location in Donauinsel demands over 3 hours, including travel time. These concerns were voiced repeatedly throughout the fieldwork in both formal interviews and informal encounters. Interviewee 1, one of the choir's most dedicated founding members, raised the issue of ageing membership and the lack of new recruits on multiple occasions beyond the formal interview setting. Upon learning of the researcher's own brief experience as a university choir member, she actively encouraged the researcher to join the VKWC – a gesture that itself speaks to the urgency members feel about renewal (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 1 2025). Despite these challenges, the VKWC's legacy is firmly anchored in the cultural capital it has generated, functioning as a living record of the Korean diaspora in Austria and showing that the community is not simply a demographic presence but a vibrant, culturally active community.

## **5 Community-building, Gender, and the Ethics of Care**

### **5.1 Constructing a Gendered Third Space: Beyond Labor and Domesticity**

In migration studies, the concept of *Third Space* refers to a social realm that exists beyond the domestic sphere (first space) and the formal workplace (second space). In this context, the Third Space is not merely symbolic and instead functions as a materially and socially sustained site of everyday practice. For members of the VKWC, this space is profoundly gendered and historically situated. Most founding members belong to the pioneering cohort of Korean nurses who came to Austria in the 1970s. For decades, their identities were defined by the second space of Austrian hospitals – where they provided professional care – and the first space of the home, managing transnational family responsibilities. Upon retirement, many encountered the risk of social isolation and role loss. The VKWC emerged as a strategic response, offering a space where these women could reclaim agency as cultural subjects rather than solely as labourers or caregivers.

Building on the choir's embodied cultural memory and musical repertoire (section 4), this study frames the VKWC through the ethics of care developed by Carol Gilligan and expanded by Joan Tronto. Gilligan (1982) emphasises a form of moral reasoning historically associated with women, rooted in webs of relationships and responsibilities rather than abstract rules, while Tronto

situates care as a democratic practice requiring recognition of others' needs and competent response. Tronto (1993: 126) notes that "the ethic of care is a practice, rather than a set of rules or principles ...", stressing that care's moral qualities emerge from lived experience. The VKWC exemplifies this approach by transforming weekly musical and communal activity into an ethical practice where members engage in mutual emotional and social support as active agents rather than passive recipients.

The choir thus functions as more than a musical ensemble. It represents a caring community that challenges the patriarchal norms often found in ethnic organisations. Unlike religious or family-oriented groups with fixed roles, the VKWC maintains a horizontal structure focused on shared artistic and emotional labour. The conductor (Interviewee 2) reflected on the choir's founding performance: "That first concert brought the Korean community in Vienna together – it was a moment when we realised we could be united through our own culture". This gendered Third space facilitates a transition from clinical to aesthetic and communal care, validating the lived experiences of migrant women and demonstrating how collective relational practices strengthen resilience in the face of ageing and migration. The following section explores how this ethos of care extends beyond the choir itself into the broader Korean community in Vienna.

## 5.2 A Web of Relationships: Integrating Clinical Expertise into Communal Care

The VKWC's ethics of care extends beyond rehearsals into the broader Korean community, forming an informal social safety net. Members perceive their identity as inherently relational, whereby attending to the needs of vulnerable individuals is a moral imperative. As Tronto (1993: 126) argues, "To be a morally good person requires ... that a person strives to meet the demands of caring ...", highlighting that ethical life is inseparable from the practical demands of care. The mentioned perspective illuminates how VKWC members' outreach to elderly Koreans constitutes both a moral and a communal practice. This is evident in their proactive outreach to older community members living alone, often overlooked by both the host welfare system and fragmented diaspora families.

The choir's support synthesises cultural intimacy and professional expertise. Through the preparation and sharing of traditional foods such as *kimchi* and *banchan* (side dishes), members provide sensory anchors that offer emotional stability and a sense of home. Simultaneously, retired nurses leverage their professional capital by interpreting for Koreans (both young and elderly) who are not fluent in German, conveying language and clinical nuances, and helping them navigate the complexities of the Austrian healthcare system. Such outreach

extends beyond the choir itself into the wider Korean community in Vienna. Interviewee 3, who serves as an officer of the Korean Nurses Association in Austria, described how she regularly visits and cares for elderly Koreans in poor health who live alone and are at risk of social isolation (Interviewee 3 2024). She noted that her Catholic faith provides an additional motivational framework for this voluntary work, lending her caregiving activities a sense of spiritual meaning and moral obligation that exceeds professional duty (Interviewee 3 2024).

This form of instrumental and competent care is an example of Joan Tronto's (2013) concept of *caring with* in practice – a form of lateral solidarity where care is enacted collectively rather than hierarchically. The choir's internal solidarity becomes a collective resource for the community. Professional skills once applied in Austrian hospitals are reclaimed as gifts of care, reducing the likelihood of isolation. The VKWC thereby reveals how gendered expertise and relational labour intersect to sustain both cultural and social well-being within the diaspora.

### **5.3 Gendered Realities: The Double Burden of Ageing and Grandchild Care**

However, this ethics of care practised by the VKWC does not exist in a vacuum. Even in their retirement years, VKWC members navigate what sociologists term the double burden of care. While the choir offers personal fulfilment and a site of social engagement, participation is negotiated against persistent domestic expectations. As noted in section 3.3, absences are primarily due to ageing-related health issues and responsibilities for grandchild care. This participation gap highlights a clear intersectional challenge of age, class and gender. The Monday afternoon rehearsal schedule structurally excludes younger generations of the diaspora who are active in the workforce. In addition, the significant time investment required – exceeding 3 hours given the Donauinsel rehearsal site's remote location – acts as a deterrent for women balancing multiple roles. For many younger mothers in the community, the conflict between choir participation and the need to be there when their children come home reflects the persistent pressure of gendered family labour.

A gendered paradox is apparent here: though retired from their formal nursing roles, these women's informal family labour remains indispensable. First-generation grandmothers in Korean-Austrian families often provide childcare, enabling the second generation's careers. Rooted in Confucian relational values, this grandmother labour sustains family stability, but it imposes both physical and emotional strain on women managing the vulnerabilities of advanced age.

From Gilligan's (1982: 32) perspective of care as "a web of relationships that is sustained by a process of communication", this tension shows the challenge

of balancing care for the self and care for others. Choir rehearsals represent a sacred time – a manifestation of their Third Space and a deliberate act of resistance against becoming totally absorbed into their domestic roles. Attending rehearsals despite exhaustion or family demands asserts their right to a Third Space where identity is not defined solely by utility. Absences due to grandchildren's schedules reflect the unidirectional nature of this care whereby younger generations are prioritised over the cultural and social well-being of the elderly.

Ageing itself adds complexity: frequent medical appointments require managing what members describe as their failing bodies while simultaneously sustaining the vital bodies of their grandchildren. The VKWC becomes a site of collective resilience in which such struggles are shared and validated. By framing absences as negotiated survival rather than a lack of commitment, the choir fosters an environment that acknowledges the structural inequalities of gendered ageing. The ensemble thus acts as a space where the double burden is rendered visible and mitigated through shared solidarity. The described dynamic is perhaps best illustrated by the experience of Interviewee 1, a founding member who has held a leadership position in the choir from its inception until the present day. Despite repeatedly expressing a wish to step down from her role, she has continued because so many of her fellow members are frequently absent due to grandchild care commitments. Her sense of responsibility to the group – the feeling that someone must hold the choir together – has kept her in the post far beyond her original intentions (Interviewee 1 2024). Her account encapsulates the paradox at the heart of this section: the very care obligations that pull members away from the choir are at the same time the force that binds its most committed members ever more tightly to it.

#### **5.4 Professional Identity and the Aesthetics of Care: Cultural Diplomacy from Below**

Notwithstanding these constraints, the longevity and success of the VKWC is inseparable from the professional background of its core members. Most founding members were trained nurses, a factor that shapes the choir's organisational culture and aesthetics of care. The discipline, punctuality and responsibility instilled in Austrian hospitals have been repurposed for artistic and social coordination, exemplifying a form of capital transfer from professional labour to communal practice. The decision to extend the choir's performances beyond the Korean community into Austrian nursing homes was not incidental but instead deeply rooted in this shared professional history. Members recalled that during their years of hospital work, they frequently encountered elderly Austrian patients who were profoundly lonely, and this experience left a lasting impression (Interviewee

1 2024; Interviewee 3 2024; Interviewee 4 2024). The impulse to perform for nursing home residents therefore emerged organically from a collective memory of caregiving. Moreover, members consistently framed these outreach performances as an act of giving back: they reflected that upon first arriving in Austria as young migrant nurses Austrian society supported them in both visible and invisible ways, helping them to settle and build their lives (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 3 2024; Interviewee 4 2024). The choir's public performances are hence understood not merely as a cultural display, but as reciprocal care – a form of everyday cultural diplomacy from below in which the boundaries between artistic practice, professional identity and ethical obligation dissolve into a single, sustained act of communal generosity.

This manifests as clinical precision in harmony: the rigour once applied to life-saving tasks is redirected to perfecting choral scores and coordinating complex performance schedules. For these women, the choir is not passive leisure but a secondary arena of professionalised passion. Their lifelong identity as caregivers remains central, but in the choir this care is transformed into a self-directed gift of art and empathy. How this professional identity translates into specific repertoire choices and intercultural encounters with Austrian audiences is examined in detail in section 6.

## **6 Intercultural Encounters and Everyday Cultural Diplomacy**

### **6.1 Reconceptualising Cultural Diplomacy: The Grassroots Perspective**

Traditional discourse in international relations has long defined cultural diplomacy as a state-led, top-down strategy designed to project soft power and enhance national prestige. Yet, the activities of the Vienna Korean Women's Choir (VKWC) call for a reconceptualisation of this term. As theorised in section 2.3, this research employs the framework of everyday cultural diplomacy from below, which focuses on the informal, relational and decentralised cultural exchanges initiated by minoritised groups within their host societies. For the VKWC, cultural diplomacy is not an abstract geopolitical goal and is instead a lived practice of intercultural encounter rooted in the shared physical and emotional space of Vienna. This grassroots diplomacy is driven by the proactive labour of senior migrant women who, via their performances, negotiate their visibility and recognition in Austria. Such a shift from state-centric to person-centric diplomacy highlights the agency of migrants in shaping the social fabric of their host country. Importantly, this diplomatic function was not initially self-conscious. In the choir's early years,

members understood their outreach performances simply as acts of sharing and gratitude, not as cultural diplomacy in any formal sense. It was only as the number of public performances grew, media coverage increased, and – crucially – as the South Korean government awarded the choir a commendation that explicitly used the term cultural diplomacy, that members began to consciously understand their activities in those terms (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 3 2024). This trajectory from unreflective practice to recognised diplomatic agency illustrates precisely what is meant by cultural diplomacy from below: it originates in lived experience and community need, and only subsequently acquires the political recognition that validates it.

## 6.2 The Sonic Bridge: Repertoire as a Tool for Intercultural Recognition

The choice of repertoire within the VKWC's public performances serves as a sophisticated tool for building a sonic bridge between Korean heritage and Austrian tradition. In their intercultural encounters such as charity concerts at local churches or performances in public squares, the choir strategically balances Korean *Gagok* and *Minyo* with Western classical pieces and German *Lieder*. The inclusion of a Western repertoire was a deliberate decision made by the conductor from the choir's earliest days, driven initially by a consideration for members from multicultural families – Korean nurses who had married non-Korean partners and whose households straddled two musical traditions (Interviewee 2 2024). As the choir's public profile rose and performances beyond the Korean community became more frequent, this mixed repertoire evolved naturally into a broader intercultural strategy. By performing Mozart or Schubert, the choir signals their mastery of and respect for Austrian high culture, thereby earning the cultural legitimacy required to be heard. Once this bridge was established, the introduction of Korean music performs a complementary function: it introduces the otherness of Korean culture in a way that is accessible and emotionally resonant. When the choir performs *Arirang* or *Gohyang-ui Bom*, they share a universal human emotion – longing for home and a sense of roots – creating a space of intercultural recognition where the Austrian audience can identify with the emotional landscape of the performers.

## 6.3 Encounters in Spaces of Vulnerability: Performing at Nursing Homes

One of the most significant sites of the VKWC's everyday diplomacy is the Austrian nursing home. These performances represent a unique intersection of migration, ageing and care. As discussed in section 5.4, many choir members



previously worked as nurses in these very institutions. Returning to these spaces as performers constitutes a symbolic re-entry that subverts the traditional power dynamics of care. In these encounters, the choir provides aesthetic and emotional care to Austrian elderly, many of whom encounter their own forms of social isolation. During these visits, the emotional impact was palpable. The author consistently observed Austrian residents – many with limited mobility – clapping their hands, swaying their shoulders to the rhythm, and even humming along with the melodies. After the concert, choir members would leave the stage to personally greet each resident, wishing them a joyful Christmas. In these moments, several elderly audience members were observed quietly wiping tears away. What is particularly striking is that this emotional exchange flows in both directions. Both the conductor and choir members consistently noted that despite the VKWC not being a professional ensemble, the depth of feeling with which the elderly Austrian audiences receive their performances never fails to move the performers themselves in return (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 2 2025; Interviewee 5 2025). For the conductor, this sustained commitment to outreach performance is further grounded in religious conviction: she described the continuation of these concerts as part of her sense of Christian calling, understanding her role not simply as a musical director but as someone responding to a vocation of service (Interviewee 2 2025). In this reciprocal dynamic, the perceived boundaries between migrant and host, or Korean and Austrian, dissolve into a shared social soundscape. The vulnerability of ageing becomes the common ground upon which a new, inclusive community emerges via song.

#### **6.4 Spatiality and Institutional Belonging**

The evolution of the VKWC's rehearsal and performance spaces provides a spatial narrative of the Korean diaspora's institutional settlement in Vienna. In its early years, the choir relied on a local Korean church. However, following the establishment of the Korea Kulturhaus in May 2012 the choir moved its weekly rehearsals to this dedicated communal site. It is important to note that the Korea Kulturhaus is not a state-run cultural institute, nor should it be confused with the Korea Kulturzentrum, which is a governmental institution funded and operated by the South Korean state. The Korea Kulturhaus is, by contrast, a self-organised community space that emerged from the collective initiative and ongoing financial contributions of Koreans living in Austria (Korea Kulturhaus Österreich 2022). This distinction is analytically significant: as a grassroots institution sustained by the diaspora itself, the Korea Kulturhaus exemplifies the same logic of self-organised, non-state cultural agency that characterises the VKWC's everyday cultural diplomacy from below. By paying rent to the Korea Kulturhaus, the choir

contributes directly to the building's financial maintenance, fostering a sense of collective ownership and assuring that the diaspora has a permanent, community-owned institutional home in the city. The choice of performance venues further illustrates the choir's philosophy of cultural reciprocity. For their regular concerts, the VKWC consistently rents the Ehrbar Saal, a historic and prestigious concert hall in Vienna. Although the rental costs are substantial, the choir insists on this venue to make sure its performances remain open and accessible to the general public. According to a founding member (Interviewee 1 2024), this is a conscious decision to give back to the host society; the members believe that since they received substantial help from the local Viennese community in the early years after settling here, providing high-quality musical experiences in a professional setting is a way of expressing their gratitude. The financial sustainability is maintained through a combination of active sponsorships from Korean businesses in Austria, regular membership dues, and special donations.

## 6.5 Sustainability and Long-term Demand

The effectiveness of the VKWC's cultural diplomacy is best shown by its sustainability and ongoing demand from the host society. A critical ethnographic finding is that the choir's visits to nursing homes are not isolated events initiated just by the choir. Members recently reported that their performance schedule for these institutions is already being booked well into the future. Such long-term demand proves that the Austrian community finds these encounters to be valuable and meaningful. In social capital theory, this represents the successful creation of bridging social capital – links that connect different social groups and foster mutual trust. The fact that Austrian institutions proactively invite the choir back year after year suggests that the VKWC has successfully integrated itself into the local care infrastructure of Vienna. The longevity of these relationships reinforces the choir's role as an essential cultural institution that adds to the social well-being of the city. Still, the choir's internal sustainability presents a more complex picture. All interviewees openly expressed being concerned about the difficulty of maintaining the ensemble in the future, citing the ageing core membership and the structural barriers that prevent younger Korean women from joining (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 2 2025; Interviewee 3 2024). The researcher's own observation of recruitment announcements posted on Korean community websites confirms that new member drives have been conducted on multiple occasions with limited success. It appears unlikely that any future iteration of the choir will have a noticeably younger average age than the present one: the demands of working life make sustained participation unrealistic for most younger women. The choir's current adaptive strategy – inviting Korean music students and young

vocal performers to make guest appearances at major concerts – points to a probable future model in which a small core of older dedicated members is periodically supplemented by younger performers at public events. Indeed, recent concerts have already featured special appearances by conservatory students specialising in voice. The researcher, who intends to join the choir after retiring from academic life, finds in this trajectory a personal resonance that mirrors the broader sociological pattern: full participation in diasporic cultural life often becomes possible only in later life, when professional obligations recede.

## **6.6 Voices as Instruments of Peace and Belonging**

Building on their professional and relational expertise discussed in section 5, the VKWC translates these assets into a powerful form of intercultural engagement. Through their everyday cultural diplomacy from below, the choir members have transformed from being silent labourers into vocal citizens. Such a transformation is not merely metaphorical. Many of the founding members, having married and settled permanently in Austria, have taken Austrian citizenship, and with it a strong sense of identity as Viennese residents rather than temporary migrants (Interviewee 1 2024; Interviewee 3 2024; Interviewee 5 2025). It is precisely this dual rootedness – in Korean cultural heritage and in Viennese civic life – that makes their cultural diplomacy so distinctive and so effective. They do not perform as guests or visitors, but as neighbours, as members of the city, giving back to the community they have helped to build over five decades. In an era of increasing global migration and social fragmentation, the VKWC provides a hopeful model of how cultural practice can foster belonging and resilience. Their performances remind us that cultural diplomacy is most effective when rooted in empathy, shared vulnerability, and the persistent labour of local communities. By singing together across cultural and linguistic divides, the women of the VKWC have not only preserved their own roots but have also helped the city of Vienna grow into a more inclusive and harmonious home.

## **7 Discussion**

### **7.1 Reclaiming Agency: From Migrant Labourers to Cultural Subjects**

The findings of this study provide a significant counter-narrative to the traditional sociological depiction of first-generation migrant women as passive or purely labour-oriented subjects. For the members of the Vienna Korean Women's Choir, the transition from their professional lives as nurses to their current roles as choral singers represents a profound reclamation of agency. In the 1970s, their

presence in Austria was defined by their utility within the clinical infrastructure of the host state. However, through the musicking practices within the choir these women have successfully shifted their identity from objects of labour to subjects of culture. This suggests that for senior migrant women cultural participation is not a peripheral hobby but a central strategy for maintaining a sense of self and social relevance in a transnational context.

## 7.2 The Ethics of Care and the Communal Table

A central theme of this discussion is the rise of a lateral ethics of care that functions as an informal social safety net. This study's ethnographic observations at the Korea Kulturhaus offer concrete evidence of this care in action. As noted in Yun (2025), the Korea Kulturhaus serves as a vital hub for overlapping communal activities. The author frequently observed that after the Korean Literature-Friends-Club in Austria (*munuhoe*) meetings concluded on Monday mornings, members would transition into the afternoon choir rehearsals. Crucially, the interval between these two activities was filled with the collective sharing of home-prepared lunches.

The act of sharing a meal before the singing begins is a profound manifestation of Carol Gilligan's web of relationships. These shared lunches act as a communal table, facilitating the exchange of emotional support, health advice and cultural knowledge, thus reinforcing belonging among elderly migrants. The choir, therefore, does not exist in a vacuum but forms part of a continuous cycle of social care that starts with literary discussion and culminates in choral harmony. This seamless transition between different forms of cultural labour highlights the resilience of the first-generation cohort who use the Korea Kulturhaus as a space for holistic well-being.

## 7.3 Cultural Diplomacy from Below: Reciprocity and Spatial Belonging

The spatial and performative activities of the VKWC offer a new perspective on cultural diplomacy. Unlike top-down initiatives, the choir's everyday cultural diplomacy from below is built on the principle of reciprocity. The decision to perform at the prestigious Ehrbar Saal and the commitment to nursing home visits – with schedules already extending into the future – show a desire to 'give back' to the host society. This sense of gratitude for the help received during their early years of settlement transforms their musical practice into a form of relational diplomacy.

The spatial move to the Korea Kulturhaus in 2012 further underscores this sense of belonging. By paying rent, the choir contributes to the financial main-

tenance of the diaspora's institutional home. Further, by occupying public and prestigious spaces like the Ehrbar Saal the choir members perform their right to the city. They are no longer guests in Vienna; they are active contributors to its cultural soundscape. The emotional connection witnessed during performances – the non-verbal synchronisation with the Austrian audience – proves that music serves as a sonic bridge that can mitigate the otherness of the migrant experience.

#### **7.4 Challenges of Sustainability and the Legacy of the Nurse Cohort**

Despite the choir's successes, the discussion must address the inevitable challenges of sustainability. The ageing of the founding nurse cohort poses a structural threat to the group's future. The physical decline of members coupled with declining membership among younger generations suggests that the VKWC is at a critical juncture. Still, the institutional memory they have created – documented through the presented research – serves as a vital cultural archive for the Korean community in Austria.

The financial model of the choir, which balances member dues with support from Korean corporate sponsors, provides a template for other diasporic organisations. Nevertheless, the true legacy of the VKWC lies in its professionalisation of community. The standards of excellence they have set in their performances and their meticulous organisational structure are a direct reflection of their professional history. Even as the membership evolves, the aesthetics of care established by the pioneers will remain a guiding principle.

#### **7.5 Theoretical and Policy Implications**

Finally, this study holds broader implications for social science research and immigrant policy. Theoretically, it expands the Ethics of Care into the realm of migration studies, showing how care labour can be transformed into cultural capital. Practically, it suggests that host societies should recognise and support grassroots ethnic organisations not simply as cultural clubs, but as vital providers of social and emotional welfare. For the city of Vienna, the VKWC is an asset that promotes social cohesion and intercultural understanding. The story of the VKWC is a powerful reminder that integration is not a one-way street of assimilation, but a multidirectional process of singing together where the unique melodies of the diaspora enrich the overall harmony of the host city.

## 8 Conclusion

### 8.1 Summary of Research Findings

The research has explored the multifaceted role of the Vienna Korean Women's Choir (VKWC) as a site of resilience, community-building and everyday cultural diplomacy. Building on the professional and relational expertise discussed in section 5, the article examined the lives of first-generation Korean migrant nurses who settled in Austria in the 1970s. The findings demonstrate that choral singing is far more than a leisure activity.

For these women, musicking serves as a profound mechanism for reclaiming agency in their retirement years. The transition from professional care labour in Austrian hospitals to the aesthetic care performed through the choir represents a significant identity shift – from being invisible workers to becoming visible cultural subjects.

The ethnographic data revealed that the choir functions as an informal social safety net, operationalising a lateral ethics of care. Consistent with Gilligan's (1982) web of relationships, members provide each other with emotional and instrumental support, ranging from medical interpretation to the communal sharing of food at the Korea Kulturhaus. Moreover, the choir's outreach to the Austrian public, notably through performances at nursing homes and prestigious venues like the Ehrbar Saal, constitutes a form of everyday cultural diplomacy from below. Built on reciprocity and shared human vulnerability, this grassroots diplomacy has successfully bridged the cultural gap between the Korean diaspora and the Austrian host society, fostering a sense of mutual belonging that persists into the present and the foreseeable future.

### 8.2 Academic and Practical Contributions

The present study makes several key contributions to the fields of migration studies, gerontology, and the sociology of music. The research reveals that senior migrants can transform relational labour into cultural and social capital, offering both theoretical insights and practical models for meaningful ageing. Practically, the VKWC serves as a blueprint for how grassroots organisations can mitigate the isolation of senior citizens while simultaneously performing cultural diplomacy. For policymakers in Vienna and beyond, this study underscores the importance of supporting such organisations as vital components of a city's social and cultural infrastructure.

### 8.3 Research Limitations

Despite its depth, this study has certain limitations. First, as a qualitative ethnography focused on a specific nurse cohort, the findings may not be universally generalisable to all migrant groups or even to younger generations of the Korean diaspora whose migration motivations and professional backgrounds differ. Second, while the researcher maintained a critical distance as an insider, the study is inherently rooted in a specific cultural and linguistic context, which may limit its application to non-Asian diasporas. Finally, the research chiefly captures the perspectives of active choir members; those who have already left the choir due to extreme health decline or other barriers were more difficult to reach, potentially creating a survivor bias in the narrative of resilience.

### 8.4 Future Prospects and Final Reflections

The VKWC's future is at a critical juncture. As the founding members slowly enter their 80s, the choir faces the inevitable challenge of generational transition. Future research should focus on how the institutional memory of these pioneers can be transmitted to the second and third generations of Korean-Austrians. Comparative studies of the VKWC and other senior migrant choirs in Europe could also provide deeper insights into how different host societies influence the formation of such caring communities.

In conclusion, the story of the Vienna Korean Women's Choir is a powerful testament to the enduring human spirit. These women, who once navigated the silence of a foreign land and the rigours of hospital wards, have found their collective voice. Their journey from the 1970s to the present is a song of resilience – a melody that harmonises the past and the future, the personal and the political, and the Korean and the Austrian. As they continue to rehearse and perform, they remind us that integration is not about the erasure of one's roots, but about the courage to sing one's own song in a new home, creating a richer, more diverse harmony for all. Their legacy is not just the music they make, but the web of care they have woven, demonstrating that shared cultural practice fosters enduring community and care.

### References

- Ang, Ien, Isar, Yudhishtir Raj, and Mar, Phillip (2015): Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest? *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21 (4): 365–381.
- Brah, Avtar (1996): *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge.
- Clifford, James (1994): *Diasporas*. *Cultural Anthropology*, 9 (3): 302–338.
- DeNora, Tia (2000): *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Gilligan, Carol (1982): *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hall, Stuart (1990): Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (ed.): *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*: 222–237. London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hartmann, Abraham (2009): *Koreanische Migration nach Österreich. Familie, Verwandtschaft und Netzwerke*. MA thesis, Fakultät für Sozialwissenschaften, Universität Wien.
- Kim, Nakhye (2022): *Tiasu'p'ora chaeosu't'u'ria haninmunhagu'i hyo'nhwanggwa so'ngnyang* (eng. *Current Diaspora Status and Korean Literature in Austria*). *Ömunnonjip*, 92: 235–267.
- Korea Kulturhaus Österreich (2022): *10 Jahre Korea Kulturhaus in Österreich. Osu't'u'ria haninmunhwahogwan 10nyo'nu'i palchach'wi* (eng. *The Trace of Korean Culture House in Austria for 10 years*). Vienna: Korea Kulturhaus Österreich.
- Lamb, Sarah (ed.) (2017): *Successful Aging as a Contemporary Obsession: Global Perspectives*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Pokorny, Lukas, and Sung, Sang-Yeon Loise (2018): Today Vienna, Tomorrow All of Europe: The History of the Vienna Korean Church. In H. G. Hoedl and L. Pokorny (eds.): *Religion in Austria*, 4: 161–204. Wien: Praesens Verlag.
- Small, Christopher (1998): *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Tronto, Joan C. (1993): *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge.
- Tronto, Joan C. (2013): *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*. New York: NYU Press.
- Verein der Koreaner in Österreich (2012): *Die Geschichte der Koreaner in Österreich. Osu't'u'ria sogu'i han'gugin: han o sugyo 120 chunyo'n kinyo'm, hanin tongp'o 50 nyo'nu'i kirok* (Korean-German bilingual book). Seoul: Readersguide.
- Vertovec, Steven (2009): *Transnationalism*. London: Routledge.
- Yun, Sun Young (2025): A Case Study of Korean Diaspora in Austria. *Asian Studies*, 13 (suppl.): 153–180.
- Yun, Vina (2017): *Homestories: Koreanische Diaspora in Wien, Seoul–Wien*, 1. Wien: Eigenverlag.

## Sources

- Encyclopedia of Korean Culture: Gagok. Available from: <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0000038> (Accessed 15.12.2025).
- Encyclopedia of Korean Culture: Minyo. Available from: <https://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Article/E0020212> (Accessed 15.12.2025).
- Korean.at (2024, April 8). *Bienna haninyeoseong habchangdan je 14hoe jeonggi yeonjuhoe* [Vienna Korean Women's Choir 14th regular concert]. Available from: <https://www.korean.at/33533/> (Accessed 23.12.2025).



Overseas Koreans Agency (n.d.): Current Situations of Overseas Koreans. Available from: [https://www.oka.go.kr/web/content.do?menu\\_cd=000188](https://www.oka.go.kr/web/content.do?menu_cd=000188) (Accessed 15.12.2025).

### **Author's info**

Dr. phil. **Sun Young Yun**, Assistant Professor  
Keimyung University, Office of International Affairs  
1095 Dalgubeol-daero, Dalseo-gu, Daegu 42601, Republic of Korea  
Email: [syyun@kmu.ac.kr](mailto:syyun@kmu.ac.kr)  
ORCID iD: 0009-0008-6242-186X



**Boram Han & Yesul Han**

## **THE REALITY AND SELF-IDENTITY OF KOREAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN AMERICA IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL RECORDS AND LITERARY WORKS**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The research examines the experiences and representations of early-twentieth-century Korean immigrant women by integrating historical documents, oral narratives and literary representation. It addresses the persistent marginalisation of women in studies of Korean migration to the United States, particularly Hawai'i. Juxtaposing newspaper articles, picture bride testimonies and Eugenia Kim's *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, the study reveals that these women actively exercised agency through migration, education and family decision-making under conditions of colonial rule and gendered constraint. Rather than passive dependents, these women strategically pursued education and mobility for themselves and their children. The article concludes that education functioned as a central means through which Korean immigrant women constructed selfhood and asserted historical subjectivity within a transnational and colonial modernity.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Korean immigrant women, picture bride, *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, women's agency, education and mobility*

# Realnost in samoidentiteta korejskih priseljenk v Ameriki v začetku 20. stoletja: primerjalna analiza zgodovinskih virov in literarnih del

## IZVLEČEK

Raziskava preučuje izkušnje in reprezentacije korejskih priseljenk z začetka 20. stoletja z integracijo zgodovinskih dokumentov, ustnih pripovedi in literarne reprezentacije. Obravnava vztrajno marginalizacijo žensk v raziskavah korejskih migracij v Združene države Amerike, zlasti na Havaje. S primerjalno analizo časopisnih člankov, pričevanj »picture brides« in romana *The Calligrapher's Daughter* avtorice Eugenie Kim raziskava pokaže, da so te ženske aktivno udeležene svojo agencialnost skozi migracijo, izobraževanje ter odločanje o družinskih vprašanjih v razmerah kolonialne oblasti in spolno zaznamovanih omejitvah. Namesto pasivnih spremljevalk so te ženske strateško uresničevale izobraževanje in mobilnost zase ter za svoje otroke. Članek ugotavlja, da je izobraževanje delovalo kot osrednje sredstvo, prek katerega so korejske priseljenke oblikovale svojo subjektivnost ter uveljavljale svojo zgodovinsko vlogo znotraj transnacionalne in kolonialne modernosti.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** korejske priseljenke, »picture bride«, *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, ženska agencialnost, izobraževanje in mobilnost

## 1 Introduction

In the early twentieth century, Koreans initially migrated to Hawai'i in response to demand in the United States for inexpensive plantation labour before later proceeding under the expanding conditions of Japan's imperial aggression on the Korean peninsula. Even though Korean immigrant women were present from the earliest stages of migration and later arrived in significant numbers through picture marriages, their movements and contributions were often rendered less visible in contemporary public narratives and subsequent historiography. The article therefore examines the experiences and representations of early-twentieth-century Korean immigrant women by integrating historical documents, oral narratives of picture brides, and literary representation. The aim is to address the persistent marginalisation of women in Korean migration studies by revealing how they actively exercised agency under colonial rule and gendered constraint.

The following research questions are addressed in this article. First, how

do historical records of early Korean migration to Hawai'i represent women's migration-related decision-making, and what do these representations reveal about women's agency and educational aspirations? Second, how do the oral narratives of picture brides explain women's motivation to migrate amid colonial and gendered constraints, and how is education articulated as aspirations and obligations within these accounts? Third, how does *The Calligrapher's Daughter* render women's desire, flexibility, and identity construction, and how does this literary articulation converge with or complicate the patterns observed in historical and oral sources?

Methodologically, the article employs a comparative analysis of three categories of sources: historical documents (including newspaper articles from the Korean Empire period); oral narratives of picture brides; and a literary narrative (*The Calligrapher's Daughter* by Eugenia Kim). By comparing these sources, the study examines how women negotiated social constraints, migration, and national belonging, and how women's agency becomes visible across the different genres of evidence.

The structure of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 provides a literature review of early Korean migration and scholarship on Korean immigrant women, identifying key research gaps. Section 3 analyses historical documents to discuss women's agency and public self-positioning. Section 4 examines picture bride narratives that foreground women's decision-making in the circumstances of colonial and familial constraint and the centrality of education as an aspiration and obligation. Section 5 explores the literary representation of these themes in *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, showing how Najin Han's pursuit of an education and self-making offers a literary articulation of historically grounded processes of identity construction. Finally, section 6 synthesises the findings to argue that early Korean immigrant women's agency constituted a patterned response to constraint, with education functioning as a key practice via which women claimed historical subjectivity.

The study generally follows the McCune-Reischauer system for Korean terms and names, maintaining the traditional surname-first order. Nonetheless, exceptions are made for historical figures and authors who have an established presence in English-language scholarship under a different spelling. For instance, Chun Yun-hee is used instead of the McCune-Reischauer form (Ch'ŏn Yŏn-hŭi) to maintain consistency with the literature. In addition, the given name-first order is applied to individuals with Westernised names (e.g., Mary Paik Lee) and fictional characters (e.g., Najin Han) to reflect their specific cultural or literary contexts.

## 2 Literature Review and Research Gaps

Research on early Korean migration to the United States has often focused on the structural conditions of labour recruitment and plantation life, along with the political activities of male leaders and the forming of immigrant institutions in Hawai'i (Baik and Murabayashi 2011; Patterson 1988). Within this historiography, women have frequently appeared only in supporting roles – as wives, family members or “picture brides” – rather than as historical subjects whose perspectives and decisions shaped migration and settlement.

### 2.1 The Marginalisation of Women in Migration Historiography

More recent studies in both English and Korean have noted this imbalance and stressed that Korean immigrant women's voices and experiences remain underrepresented in historical records (Park 2024). As a result, key dimensions of women's lives – such as daily struggles, cultural agency, and identity formation – have often been under-examined or approached indirectly through male-centred archives or institutional histories (Fan 1996; Bae 2024).

### 2.2 The Dearth of First-Person Narratives

A recurrently mentioned limitation is the dearth of first-person accounts by early Korean immigrant women. With only a handful of memoirs or autobiographies available, historians have had few direct women's voices to draw upon. Mary Paik Lee's memoir *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America* (1990) and Marie Park Fujii's *Growing Up American in Papa's World: Stories of a Korean Immigrant Family* (2012) are frequently mentioned as rare and invaluable first-hand narratives of an immigrant Korean woman. Such narratives offer “rare insight into a group often neglected in history” (Park 2024: 2). At the same time, the prominence of these works shows how unusual it remains to centre women's voices via written sources alone. The paucity of women's writings has forced researchers to rely on male-centred archives or second-hand reports, leaving women's personal experiences under-documented.

### 2.3 Methodological Limitations: Institutional and Macro-Historical Emphases

Traditional historical and sociological research on early migration has often prioritised demographic trends, institutional events and political mobilisation. Despite the acknowledged importance of early Korean immigrant women – often referred to as “picture brides” – in contributing to the forming of Korean communities and the anti-Japanese independence movement (Chai 1988; Kim

2020), academic discourse has historically tended to centre on male-dominated narratives of sugarcane farm workers and political leaders' achievements, thereby causing women to be invisible (Bae 2024; Fan 1996; Gravdahl 2025). Further, existing macro-historical and sociological approaches have many times obscured the meaning of Korean immigrant women's lives due to an overriding interest in dominant national, class and gender groups (Oh 2017: 1634). Accordingly, these macro-level emphases leave less room for analysing the everyday meanings of women's lives, including decision-making, moral reasoning and educational aspirations.

## 2.4 The Need for Interdisciplinary Juxtaposition

On top of these documentary constraints, interdisciplinary perspectives – especially from literature, culture and gender studies – have only recently started to inform historical research on early Korean immigrant women. Much of the previous research was written in a traditional historical or sociological mode, emphasising dates, demographics and institutional events, yet neglecting the cultural expressions and personal stories of immigrant women. This is a notable gap because, as Oh (2017) argues, fictional and narrative works can reveal truths about immigrant women's daily lives and inner worlds that official records omit. For example, Younho Oh's study *Korean Picture Brides in Hawaii: Historical and Literary Narratives* (2017) analyses recent novels, poems and plays – from Korea and the Korean diaspora – that imaginatively reconstruct the experiences of picture brides. She found that these literary works provide important details of women's daily living, emotional struggles, and the "transboundary culture" (Oh 2017: 1634) they created, details largely missing from conventional histories. The literary perspective exposes facets of immigrant women's reality (such as intimate family dynamics, personal resilience, and cultural adaptation) that a purely fact-based approach might overlook. Oh suggests that such stories, whether drawn from oral narratives or creative fiction, raise awareness of the complex reality of Korean women's migration a century ago.

Taken together, existing scholarship points to several persistent gaps, and this article fills a critical gap by undertaking a unique comparative analysis of diverse source categories. While some studies have investigated literary representations of picture brides alongside a historical background, not many have directly juxtaposed official historical records, first-hand personal accounts and literary works. By integrating these perspectives, the presented study moves beyond previous emphases on political activism alone and sheds light on how these women, with their determined pursuit of education and economic independence, asserted significant agency that has often been overlooked. Rather

than the familiar stereotype of passivity, historical sources reveal these women led active and multifaceted lives, participating in political causes, educating themselves, and working to secure opportunities for their families. Their individual experiences thus demonstrate resilience and agency in the face of colonial rule, migration, and cultural upheaval.

This study comparatively analyses historical documents, oral narratives of picture brides, and literary representation, thereby examining how early Korean immigrant women constructed a sense of self and national belonging while negotiating colonial rule, gendered constraint, and migration.

### **3 Historical Documents and Oral Records: Women's Agency and Public Self-Positioning**

The USA's annexation of Hawai'i in 1898 accelerated the plantation economy's growth, generating structural demand for inexpensive Asian contract labour. As Chinese migration became restricted by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and Japanese labourers organised themselves for higher wages, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA) sought alternative labour sources and turned to Korea. On 13 January 1903, the first organised group of Korean labour migrants (102 individuals including workers and accompanying family members) arrived at Honolulu Harbour to work primarily on Hawaiian sugar plantations (Baik and Murabayashi 2011: 77–79; Patterson 1988). Between early 1903 and the suspension of Korean labour immigration to Hawaii in August 1905, approximately 7,400 Korean labourers were recruited to the islands, a figure commonly rounded down to about 7,000 in later scholarship on the first wave of Korean migration (Baik and Murabayashi 2011: 80–81; Gravdahl 2025: 4–6). Passenger manifest-based reconstructions further indicate that more than 600 women were included in this early cohort, representing roughly one woman for every ten men. Most of these women were listed as wives or other family members of male labour migrants rather than independent contract workers (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Center for Korean Studies 2024; Young 2022). During the Japanese colonial period, the colonial authorities permitted Korean women to migrate to Hawai'i specifically as brides of Korean men who had already settled there, with the outcome that a further 1,000 picture brides arrived between 1910 and 1924. These women played a crucial role in stabilising community life, organising family structures, and sustaining immigrant institutions such as churches, schools, and nationalist associations (Bae 2024; Fan 1996; Oh 2017).

Although these women, through their combined wage and reproductive labour and their participation in religious and political networks, were foundational to the



formation and continuity of the early Korean diaspora in Hawai'i, their presence did not necessarily translate into visibility in contemporary public discourse. In late 1902, *Hwangsŏng Sinmun* (皇城新聞, a daily newspaper published in 1898 and forcefully discontinued in 1910 due to Japan's imperialisation) reported that an American resident in Incheon had planned the emigration of Koreans to Hawai'i, and that 54 Koreans who initially responded to the recruitment left on 22 December, travelling via Japan to Hawai'i (Hwangsŏng Sinmun 1902). Even though there were 102 Koreans in total, including 21 wives (Baik and Murabayashi 2011: 77), the newspaper only reported about male labourers and omitted the 21 women who also embarked. Although nearly half of those on board were adult women and minors, they did not appear in this coverage of Korea's first official immigration convoy. This silence is not accidental; it reflects the broader gendered hierarchies of the late Joseon and Korean Empire period, which continued to operate under a Confucian, patrilineal order that had structured society for over five centuries. In the described context, men appeared at the forefront of public narratives as formal workers and household heads, whereas women's movements and contributions were relegated to the background or rendered invisible. When considering women of the Joseon-Korean Empire era within this framework, it becomes understandable that they were imagined as passive and submissive figures standing behind the men who occupied the front of society, even as their actual decisions and migrations were integral to the making of Korea's early diaspora.

### 3.1 Women's Public Voice in *Cheuk Sinmun* (1907)

*Cheuk Sinmun* from 1907 provides direct evidence that Korean immigrant women engaged with political news, followed social developments in Korea, and articulated their place within a national community even while residing abroad. A letter published on 26 June 1907 shows the writer's ongoing attentiveness to social transformations in the homeland and her valuation of information concerning educational and industrial change. Another 1907 article documents immigrant women's contributions to the National Debt Repayment Movement, expressing that "even though we are humble women, we are still among the 20 million Koreans", in turn asserting a shared sense of responsibility for national survival. Read together, these materials complicate the assumption that early immigrant women existed outside political discourse. They show women speaking publicly as national subjects – politically informed, socially engaged, and conscious of collective obligation.

### 3.2 Oral Records of Migration Decision-Making Beyond Accompaniment

This political and social awareness was closely connected to a distinct feature of women's migration to Hawai'i at the time: in several cases, women did not migrate merely as accompanying family members but made the decision to emigrate independently. One example appears in testimony concerning Rosie Kim Chang's maternal grandmother, who had migrated to Hawai'i in 1904 through the Methodist Church together with her 5-year-old daughter, without a husband (Lee and Chang 2014: 328–330). The case indicates that the grandmother did not rely on the judgment of others but instead exercised her own agency in determining both her own and her daughter's future.

Other cases further reveal that women chose migration while assuming full responsibility for young children, and did so without the presence of husbands. One such case is Mun T'ōra, born in Pyongyang, who served as a Sunday school teacher at the Namsan-hyōn Methodist Church before she migrated. In 1903, she left her non-Christian in-laws and migrated to Hawai'i together with her 8-year-old daughter under the title of Bible woman (Lee Tōk-hŭi 2003: 194). Her case demonstrates how religious conviction provided both the motivation and the institutional framework which enabled women to undertake independent migration.

While some women migrated based on religious commitment, others did so out of profound dissatisfaction with their marital circumstances. One example is Kim Elaine's maternal grandmother. After witnessing her husband attempt to silence their crying infant by covering the baby with a blanket, she feared for the child's life and alone fled to Hawai'i with the baby. Her husband was a habitual gambler, and several of their children had already died during the marriage (Lee et al. 2016: 290–291). This case highlights how women's migration decisions were sometimes driven by immediate concerns for physical safety and survival.

Women who chose to leave unsatisfactory marriages did not always migrate alone with young children. In some cases, women assumed leadership over the entire family's relocation, deliberately excluding their husbands from the migration. A good example is Mrs Hwang, the mother of Kim Hei-won. Mrs Hwang migrated to Hawai'i with her eldest son and his wife, her daughter, and her youngest son. At first glance, it might appear that she migrated as part of her adult son's household. Yet, according to Kim Hei-won's testimony, Mrs Hwang herself decided to abandon her husband and take the family to Hawai'i. Although her husband was a high-ranking official in the P'yōngan region and Mrs Hwang came from a yangban family, she left after her husband took a *kisaeng* concubine. Declaring that she would take the children to America so that they could receive

an education, and that she herself would become a morally exemplary person, she carried out the migration. After arriving in Hawai'i, Mrs Hwang worked on a sugarcane plantation with her son and daughter-in-law, despite having lived a life far removed from manual labour in a wealthy household (Sunoo 2002: 155, 172; Lee Tök-hŭi 2003: 195). Her decision to migrate was grounded in her refusal to endure the continuing disappointment in her husband as a life partner and in her determination to lead her children in search of a new path.

These cases collectively demonstrate that at the dawn of the twentieth century – when overseas migration to the West was virtually unprecedented in Korean history – some women made deliberate and decisive choices to enter an unfamiliar and uncertain future. Contrary to the prevailing stereotypes of women in a Confucian society as passive, these women actively sought alternatives when they judged that their dignity, values, or the safety of their children, were threatened. For such women, migration to Hawai'i represented a viable means of escaping their constraining social and familial circumstances.

### **3.3 Education as an Aspiration, Obligation and Strategy**

Across these oral records, education emerges as a recurring value through which women framed both migration and settlement, often as a moral obligation and a strategy for mobility. Mary Paik Lee (1990) and Lee et al. (2016) show that Mary Paik Lee's mother, Song Gwang-do, received an education in Korea from her mother-in-law, who herself had been taught to read and write by her husband. After converting to Christianity, the grandmother actively evangelised local women and taught Hangul using the Bible, arguing that educational customs privileging men alone were unjust. She later founded a school for girls in Pyongyang and recruited female students door to door. These efforts coincided with broader developments, including the Joseon government's 1895 Elementary School Ordinance granting girls access to schooling and the 1898 Women's Rights Petition issued by women in Seoul's Bukchon area. Together, these developments formed a cultural foundation that encouraged women's education.

This educational orientation continued among women who migrated to Hawai'i. As already noted, Rosie Kim Chang's grandmother, who had migrated with her young daughter in 1904, worked while placing her daughter in the Susanna Wesley Home and enabled her to graduate from McKinley High School (Lee and Chang 2014: 328–330). Similarly, Mary Paik Lee herself attended high school despite extreme poverty, relying on her father's farm labour and her mother's laundry work amid intensifying anti-Asian discrimination (Sunoo 2002: 234). Kim Elaine's grandmother ensured that her daughter attended school, and Kim Elaine recalls that her mother took great pleasure in studying English and reading

newspapers in full. Even under harsh conditions, these women actively cultivated their children's intellectual capacities (Lee et al. 2016: 291).

Mrs Hwang, the mother of Kim Hei-won mentioned earlier, likewise regarded children's education as a moral obligation. She sent both sons to school and supported her eldest son through a Korean boarding school and eventually to doctoral studies in Chicago. When her daughter Kim Hei-won expressed a desire to pursue education, Mrs Hwang agreed and undertook laundry work to finance her schooling. Although Kim Hei-won later withdrew from the seminary due to financial and academic difficulties, her commitment to education remained, and she later married on the proviso that her husband would support her continued schooling (Sunoo 2002: 158–160). The fact that daughters as well as sons were viewed as rightful recipients of education under such constrained circumstances is particularly significant.

Institutional evidence further supports this pattern. At the Kawaiaha'o Girls' Seminary in Hawai'i, 18 Korean female students were enrolled between 1908 and 1919, accounting for approximately 4% of the total student body of 484 (Lee Tök-hŭi 2003: 54–55) – a notably high proportion given the severe poverty experienced by Hawaiian immigrants. Mollie Hong Min, who had migrated to Hawai'i in 1903 with her parents following her older brother's missionary journey, attended this seminary at her brother's initiative. After graduating, she went on to study at the Methodist Deacon Theological College, where she was the sole Korean and the only Asian student at the time (Lee and Chang 2014: 78–79).

Such cases suggest that, even under severe economic hardship, education could function as a core aspiration shaping women's family strategies and self-understanding.

In sum, this section has shown that women's agency is visible not only in later community stabilisation but also in early public speech and decision-making. *Chekuk Sinmun* documents women's political self-positioning as national subjects, while oral records reveal women's migration choices and educational commitments as deliberate responses to constraint. The next section turns to picture bride narratives more directly in order to examine how women framed migration under colonial and familial pressure and how education operated as both an aspiration and an obligation within these accounts.

## **4 Picture Brides under Colonial Constraint: The Pursuit of Freedom via Education**

After 1905 marked the end of the initial wave of labour migration, women once again migrated to Hawai'i in the 1910s under the designation of "picture brides".

According to immigration statistics, from 1910 until 1924 – when immigration by Japanese nationals, including Koreans, was prohibited by the Immigration Act of 1924 – the number of Koreans who arrived in Hawai‘i totalled 859, among whom 800 were women (Lee Tök-hŭi 2003: 121). The predominance of women in this period resulted from colonial policy: following Japan’s annexation of the Korean Empire in 1910, the Japanese authorities permitted overseas migration from Korea chiefly in the form of marriage migration, allowing Korean women to emigrate as wives of men who had migrated earlier between 1903 and 1905.

Compared to the initial wave of labour migration, these women entered migration with an even greater degree of individual initiative. They chose to leave their familiar social environments and to marry men whose identities they knew only through photographs and correspondence. While such decisions entailed considerable uncertainty, the motivations underlying them can be approached through the autobiographical writings of Chun Yun-hee, a picture bride whose life narrative offers rare insight into women’s subjective experiences of migration under colonial rule.

#### **4.1 Choosing a “Free Country”: Chun Yun-hee’s Decision-Making and the Logic of Migration**

Born in Jinju in 1896, Chun Yun-hee survived the loss of most of her siblings and received an education at a Christian private school. She later described picture marriage as the only viable path through which she could emigrate, motivated by a desire to reach what she called a “free country”. Romantic attachment was secondary; for Chun Yun-hee, migration itself represented the primary objective, reflecting a conscious effort to shape her own future.

Her interest in picture marriage first emerged in 1914 while attending Gwangnim Girls’ School in Jinju, Gyeongsangnam-do. At the time, picture marriage – as reported in newspapers – was a frequent topic of discussion among students. That summer, Chun Yun-hee travelled alone on horseback from Jinju to Masan to visit the family of Park Geum-u, who was already living in Hawai‘i as a picture bride, and actively requested that Park Geum-u’s father arrange a picture marriage for her. Her determination surprised those around her. Park Geum-u’s father questioned why the daughter of a well-off family would seek such a path, and Chun Yun-hee’s teachers attempted to dissuade her, warning that the men in Hawai‘i were merely ignorant farmers. Despite these objections, Chun Yun-hee later recalled her then reasoning as follows: “At that time, my hope of going abroad drowned out everything else – love and all other considerations could not be heard at all. All I could think about was going to a free country. The desire to marry and live in love with a husband came second; going abroad

became the first priority, and I hurried to arrange it" (Mun et al. 2017: 165–167).

When she received the photograph of her prospective husband, Gil Chan-rok, she felt little emotional response; who he was mattered far less than the opportunity to leave Korea. After her travel permit was issued in January 1915, family members, friends and teachers alike attempted to stop her. Nevertheless, she later recalled that she could not hear their objections and focused solely on departing Korea. Her memoir recounts the medical inspections in Japan, the arduous trans-Pacific journey, and her shock upon meeting a husband far older than she had expected.

#### **4.2 Colonial Unfreedom, Memory, and the Value of Freedom**

Chun Yun-hee's desire to leave her family and homeland stemmed from the profound sense of suffocation she experienced within the realities of colonial rule. Recalling memories from around the age of 12 or 13, she described sharing in the collective grief surrounding the loss of national sovereignty. She remembered the day when villagers wept openly as Japanese flags replaced Korean ones, and the following day when Japanese *kisaeng* paraded through Jinju celebrating the annexation, humiliating the Korean leaders, and mocking the defeated nation. Schools were closed for what the colonial authorities declared a holiday, while for Koreans it marked the loss of freedom and dignity. Although young, Chun Yun-hee recalled that she understood the gravity of the situation and felt compelled to witness these events first-hand (Mun et al. 2017: 162–163).

She further recounted experiences of Japanese police entering her school to enforce Japanese-language education and the replacement of Korean history with Japanese history (Mun et al. 2017: 163), as well as the fate of her cousin Ch'ŏn Myeong-ok, who had attended a boys' school and was imprisoned, tortured and killed for refusing to submit to the colonial authority (Mun et al. 2017: 626–627). These encounters with violence and repression shaped Chun Yun-hee's understanding of colonial domination and directly informed her decision to pursue migration. Her reflection on her desire to go to a "free country" encapsulates both the harsh realities of colonial Korea and her resolve to escape them.

The emotional impact of liberation from colonial oppression remained vivid even decades later. When Chun Yun-hee began recording her life story in 1971, she recalled that although she had arrived in Hawai'i as a young girl who knew little and endured many hardships, she regarded it as a genuinely good place because it was a democratic country of freedom. While she also noted the island's mild climate, she emphasised that even in her seventies being a "citizen

of a free country” remained a central and enduring value, outweighing all other considerations and underscoring how deeply the experience of colonial unfreedom had influenced her worldview.

Her subsequent life in Hawai‘i included multiple marriages and divorces – choices that were highly unusual for Korean women of her generation. Her first divorce resulted from economic instability that prevented her husband from supporting their children’s education. Her second divorce followed her husband’s refusal to allow her daughter to attend university. In each case, Chun Yun-hee prioritised her children’s educational opportunities over social convention. Among her six children, several completed secondary and higher education, reflecting her sustained commitment to education as a means of securing social mobility.

### **4.3 Education as an Aspiration and an Obligation: From Women’s Hopes to Intergenerational Strategy**

Chun Yun-hee’s experience was not exceptional. A strong aspiration for education can be observed across the life histories of many picture brides, and this desire often preceded concerns for children’s schooling. For many women, picture marriage offered the possibility of pursuing education unavailable to them in Korea. Park Young Chin, who arrived in Hawai‘i as a picture bride in 1913, decided to marry after her prospective husband promised that she would be able to continue her education after exchanging letters with him, who was 13 years older than her (Lee and Chang 2014: 199). Mary Lee, who arrived in 1915 at the age of 17, likewise chose migration in the hope of receiving a free education in America. She left her widowed mother, older brother and younger sister in Korea. Having made her decision independently, she did not relent despite the fierce opposition of her mother and brother (Sunoo 2002: 194–198). Choi Ho-kyong, who arrived in 1924, cited education as her primary motivation. She was the youngest daughter of a wealthy family in Pyongyang and had attended elementary school. While her family opposed Christianity and objected to her becoming a picture bride, she was able to migrate to Hawai‘i because her mother accompanied her to America. Still, from the day of her arrival, she was required to work on a plantation, and this harsh plantation labour prevented her from realising this ambition (Sunoo 2002: 115–118). Kang Sung-hak, who migrated to Hawai‘i as a picture bride in 1917, was the daughter of a relatively affluent family from Gyeongsang Province. Even though she planned to study in the United States, extremely harsh living conditions and the birth of five children prevented her from realising her dream; instead, she redirected her unrealised educational ambitions toward securing educational opportunities for her children (Sunoo 2002: 297–298).

For many picture brides, the promise of education quickly gave way to the reality of unrelenting labour. Yet their frustrated personal ambitions did not disappear and instead were transferred to the next generation. Women perceived their children's education as a responsibility that they themselves were obliged to fulfil, often compensating for their husbands' limited economic capacity. For instance, Song Jeong-yun, who arrived in 1914, worked as a domestic labourer to fund her son's university education when her husband's income proved insufficient (Lee et al. 2016: 38–39). This demonstrates that she actively took on the responsibility of her child's education as her own duty, irrespective of her husband's capacity.

Chun Yun-hee herself articulated this sense of responsibility clearly. She went through two divorces, both because her husbands had obstructed her children's education. In her first marriage, she had two daughters and one son, but her husband, who drank heavily and frequently missed work, lacked the ability to support the children's education. Faced with financial hardship that made it impossible to raise the children properly, Chun Yun-hee chose her first divorce in order to allow her children to study freely. In her second marriage, she had two more daughters and another son, but divorced once again when her remarried husband opposed the college education of a daughter from her previous marriage. Chun Yun-hee stated that her own mother had sent her, a daughter, to school even in Korea, and that she herself could not become someone who failed to fulfil her parental duty by being unable to educate her children after coming to such a good country (Mun et al. 2017: 227). For her, educating her children was no one's responsibility but her own. "Earning money with my own hands and educating my children" was Chun Yun-hee's goal (Mun et al. 2017: 423). Her resolve was realised in the outcome that, among her six children, three graduated from high school, two from college, and one left college without completing a degree.

As examined above, Hawaiian immigrant women demonstrated agency by establishing a personal foundation through education. Education extended not only to themselves but, when circumstances did not permit their own educational advancement, to their children. These women saw education as a means of standing upright as human beings and continuously acted to realise that belief despite the structural and cultural constraints imposed by colonial rule, migration, and gendered expectations.

## 5 Literary Representation: *The Calligrapher's Daughter*

Eugenia Kim's *The Calligrapher's Daughter*, inspired by the author's mother, portrays similar themes through the fictional character Najin Han. Najin grows



up in Japanese-occupied Korea where educational opportunities for girls are limited by patriarchal expectations. However, her deep yearning for education and the construction of her identity via this pursuit serve as central themes that reflect the broader struggles faced by women in early-20th-century Korea.

### **5.1 Intergenerational Desire for Education**

Despite her father's rigid adherence to Confucian traditions (which dictate that women should prioritise domestic roles), Najin's mother, Haejung, quietly supports her ambition to receive an education since she regrets her own lack of schooling. A passage describing Haejung's childhood envy of her brothers' lessons captures the gendered constraints of the period: "The first tutor had come to the house in Najin twenty years ago when Haejung was seven, and at this moment she felt as if she were seven still, sitting outside her brother's classroom window, fuming with envy" (Kim 2010: 18). In this sense, she plays a critical role in transmitting both cultural values and a desire for learning. Though her own opportunities were limited, Haejung dreams of a future where her daughter might receive formal schooling (as hinted at by the mention of the newly reopened Ewha College). The described personal hope for education is intertwined with the family's broader experience of colonial modernity and the transformation of traditional roles. This underlines not only Najin's personal determination but also the generational desire for learning among women, even in a society that largely restricted their access to formal schooling.

Najin's pursuit of education is challenged by her father, however, who equates modern schooling with the erosion of Korean traditions under Japanese rule. He sees imperial education as a tool for colonisation rather than empowerment, making Najin's access to schooling a battle not only against gender norms but also colonial control.

As the previous chapter showed, early Korean immigrant women pursued education both formally and informally notwithstanding systemic barriers, treating learning as a means of independence and family survival in a new social environment. Much like Najin, who must balance familial duty with her educational aspirations, these women saw education as a tool for survival and empowerment, even if it was not formally encouraged by the men in their lives.

### **5.2 Flexibility and the Pursuit of New Opportunities**

Najin's journey in the novel illustrates her adaptability in navigating societal constraints. When her dream of formal education is stifled, she finds alternative routes to expand her knowledge and experiences, such as working at the royal

court and later adjusting to married life with Calvin Cho. She also takes on work assisting in household tasks and tutoring the children of the Gordon family, an American missionary household, despite her father's belief that it is undignified for a noblewoman to work. Her ability to adapt and seek out opportunities, even when initial plans fail, reflects the lived experiences of immigrant women who undertook various forms of labour to ensure their family's survival.

The novel further depicts Najin's identity formation across different cultural spaces, from colonial Korea to the United States, mirroring the transnational negotiation experienced by many immigrant women. Flexibility, therefore, becomes a crucial survival strategy for women facing displacement and political upheaval. Just as early Korean immigrant women adjusted to shifting social and economic conditions, Najin's flexibility enables her to navigate the Japanese occupation and eventual migration. Whether through education, work or marriage, Najin and historical immigrant women alike show perseverance in shaping their futures.

### 5.3 Constructing the Self under Constraint

In the novel, Najin's identity is shaped by her persistent desire for an education and her ability to adapt to life's challenges. Throughout the novel, she transitions from a daughter bound by familial expectations to a woman who carves her own path, navigating both personal and political upheavals. While her journey remains deeply rooted in her cultural heritage, she learns to reconcile her identity in the different environments – first in Japanese-occupied Korea and later as an immigrant in America. A particularly striking moment occurs when she realises that not being given a name by her father in her early age granted her a form of freedom, unlike her brother, who was confined by the weight of lineage and expectation. Her namelessness becomes a metaphor for self-determination, allowing her to construct her identity on her own terms. This theme closely parallels the experiences of Korean immigrant women in the USA who had to negotiate their sense of self while adapting to a new cultural landscape. Many immigrant women straddled the expectations of their home culture and the opportunities available in America, shaping identities that were neither fully traditional nor entirely assimilated.

Altogether, Najin's narrative does not merely parallel the experiences of early Korean immigrant women but renders legible the same processes of self-construction observed in historical records. Much like the immigrant women discussed above – who pursued an education, redefined family roles, and exercised agency amid conditions of constraint – Najin's namelessness functions as a literary articulation of a historically grounded strategy of survival and self-definition. In both historical reality and fiction, identity is not inherited uncritically but actively negotiated through education, mobility, and moral choice. The convergence of

these literary and historical trajectories suggests that the agency of early Korean immigrant women was neither exceptional nor accidental; rather, it constituted a broader pattern of women's self-positioning in a transitional modern world whereby education became not simply a means of advancement but a foundational condition for becoming a subject in history.

## 6 Conclusion

This article has examined the experiences and representations of early-twentieth-century Korean immigrant women by bringing together three distinct albeit complementary bodies of sources: historical documents, oral narratives of picture brides, and literary representation. With this comparative approach, the study has sought to illuminate how Korean women, often rendered marginal in migration historiography, actively constructed a sense of self while negotiating the intersecting constraints of colonial rule, gendered social order, and migration.

The historical records analysed in the study demonstrate that Korean immigrant women were neither passive dependents nor incidental participants in the formation of the early Korean diaspora in Hawai'i. From the earliest phase of labour migration, women appeared not only as accompanying family members but also as politically informed subjects who followed developments in Korea, participated in nationalist movements, and assumed responsibility for their family's survival and the community's continuity. The silence surrounding women in contemporary press coverage, rather than reflecting their absence, reveals the gendered limits of public recognition under late Joseon and colonial social hierarchies.

The oral narratives of picture brides further complicate the prevailing stereotypes by foregrounding women's deliberate and often risky choices to migrate under conditions of profound uncertainty. These narratives show that migration decisions were frequently shaped by women's own assessments of dignity, safety and possibility, instead of romantic aspiration alone. For many, picture marriage functioned as a strategic route out of colonial suffocation and into a space imagined – however imperfectly – as one of freedom. Across these life histories, education emerges as a central and enduring value: first as a personal aspiration, and later, when circumstances closed off women's own educational opportunities, as a moral obligation directed to their children. Women's willingness to prioritise education even at the cost of social stigma, marital dissolution, or intensified labour underscores their active engagement in shaping intergenerational mobility.

The literary analysis of *The Calligrapher's Daughter* reinforces and refracts these historical findings. Through the character of Najin Han, Eugenia Kim's novel

makes visible the same processes of desire, adaptation, and identity construction evident in historical sources. Najin's pursuit of education, her flexibility in responding to disrupted plans, and her eventual self-definition beyond inherited roles offer a literary articulation of strategies that many immigrant women employed in lived experience. The motif of namelessness, in particular, functions as a powerful metaphor for self-determination under constraint, highlighting how identity was not simply inherited but actively negotiated.

Taken together, these historical and literary trajectories suggest that the agency of early Korean immigrant women was neither exceptional nor accidental. Rather, it constituted a patterned response to a transitional modern world influenced by empire, migration, and gendered limitation. Education, mobility, and moral choice operated not merely as instruments of advancement but as foundational practices via which women asserted themselves as historical subjects.

By juxtaposing official records, oral narratives and literary representation, the presented research contributes to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to move beyond male-centred and institution-focused accounts of Korean migration. It shows that women's lives, decisions and aspirations are indispensable to understanding the formation of the Korean diaspora and the meanings of migration itself. In so doing, the study invites further research that continues to integrate women's voices – across genres and archives – into the historical narratives of transnational Korean modernity.

## Acknowledgement

This article is based solely on the authors' analysis of historical documents and literary sources referenced within the submitted materials.

## References

- Baik, Tae-Ung, and Murabayashi, Duk Hee Lee (2011): The Historical Development of Early Korean Immigration to Hawaii and Its Legal Structure. *Journal of Korean Law*, 11: 77–99.
- Bae, Jin Suk (2024): A Korean Picture Bride as an Immigrant Woman Entrepreneur: Gender, Mobility, and Hawaii's Lodging Businesses. *Pacific Focus*, 39 (1): 60–82.
- Chai, Alice Yun (1988): Women's History in Public: "Picture Brides" of Hawaii. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 16 (1/2): 51–62.
- Chun, Yun-hee (1971-1984): Autograph Notes of Picture Bride Ch'ön Yŏn-hŭi, 1971–1984. (Unpublished Manuscript; Held in the Academy of Korean Studies).
- Fan, Carol C. (1996): Asian Women in Hawai'i: Migration, Family, Work, and Identity. *NWSA Journal*, 8 (1): 70–84.

- Fujii, Marie Park (2012): *Growing Up American in Papa's World: Stories of a Korean Immigrant Family*. Belknap Publishing & Design.
- Gravdahl, Evan (2025): Korean Pioneers: The History, Identity, and Legacy of the First Korean Americans. *Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal*, 6 (2): 18–35.
- Kim, Eugenia (2010): *The Calligrapher's Daughter*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Kim, Jiwon (2020): Korean Pioneer Women: Picture Brides and the Formation of Upwardly Mobile Korean Families in California, 1910s-1930s. *Korea Journal*, 60 (1): 207–238.
- Lee, Tök-hüi (2003): *Hawai imin paengnyön: küdürün ottök'e saratna?* [One Hundred Years of Korean Immigration in Hawai'i]. Seoul: JoongAng M&B.
- Lee, Kyöng-wön, Kim, Ik-ch'ang, and Kim, Grace (2016): *Oeroun yöjöng: yuksöng üro tünün Miju Hanin ch'ogi iminsa, Hawaiiesö Yuk'atan, K'uba kkaji* [Lonesome Journey: Early Korean Immigration History Heard Through Oral Testimony]. Translated by Chang, T'ae-han. Seoul: Korea University Press.
- Lee, Mary Paik (1990): *Quiet Odyssey: A Pioneer Korean Woman in America*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
- Lee, Sun-joo, and Chang, Roberta (2014): *Growth of Hawaiian Korean Society, 1903–1940*. Seoul: Ewha Womans University Publishing.
- Mun, Ok-p'yo, Lee, Tök-hüi, Ham, Hanhee, Kim, Chöm-suk, and Kim, Sunjoo (2017): *Hawai sajin sinbu Ch'ön Yön-hüi üi iyagi* [The Story of Hawaiian Picture Bride Ch'ön Yön-hüi]. Seoul: Iljogak.
- Oh, Younho (2017): Korean Picture Brides in Hawaii: Historical and Literary Narratives. *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, 7 (12): 1632–1644.
- Park, Alyssa (2024): Marie and Mary: Early 20th Century Korean American Womanhood. *The Macksey Journal*, 5 (41): 1–11.
- Patterson, Wayne (1988): *The Korean Frontier in America: Immigration to Hawaii, 1896–1910*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Sunoo, Sonia Shinn (2002): *Korean Picture Brides: 1903–1920: A Collection of Oral Histories*. Philadelphia, PA: Xlibris.

## Sources

- Chekuk Sinmun (1907, 26. 6.): "Kamru sönin: Mikuk P'owa Kaimuk'i nongjang-e innün Son Ch'ang-hüi-üi puin-i miküm i-wön-ül kibu [Choked with tears of emotion: A letter and \$2 donation from the wife of Son Chang-hui at Kaimuki Plantation, Hawaii]." Seoul.
- Hwangsoöng Sinmun (1902, 27. 12.): "Chappo [Miscellaneous News]: 'P'owa imin' [Emigration to Hawai'i]." Seoul.
- University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Center for Korean Studies (2024): Korean Immigration Databank. Available from: <https://manoa.hawaii.edu/koreanstudies/library/korean-immigration-databank/> (Accessed 29. 11. 2025).

Young, Peter T (2022): Koreans in Hawai'i. Images of Old Hawai'i. Available from:  
<https://imagesofoldhawaii.com/koreans-in-hawaii/> (Accessed 29. 11. 2025).

### **Authors' info**

Dr. **Boram Han**, Lecturer in Korean history  
Daejeon University, Faculty of the Department of History & Culture,  
62 Daehak-ro, Dong-gu, Daejeon, South Korea  
E-mail: hanboram0924@gmail.com

Dr. **Yesul Han**, Lecturer in Korean  
University of Virginia, Faculty of the Department of East Asian Languages, Literatures and  
Cultures  
1605 Jefferson Park Avenue, Charlottesville, Virginia, USA  
E-mail: puc5st@virginia.edu



# RECENZIJE KNJIG

## BOOK REVIEWS







Anna Lavizzari

**Judith Butler: Who's Afraid of Gender?**  
**United Kingdom: Penguin Random House, 2024.**  
**308 p., (978-0-241-5982-4)**

Judith Butler's *Who's Afraid of Gender?* makes a significant contribution to contemporary scholarship about the current backlash against gender equality and the sociology of knowledge. The book examines the recent global proliferation of anti-gender mobilisations, arguing that 'gender' has become a phantasmatic object that condenses various anxieties and redirects them toward sexual and gender minorities. Butler does not treat anti-gender discourse simply as misinformation or ideological error, and instead analyses it as a fantasy structure. Here, she draws on Laplanche's theorisation of fantasy as an organising scene of desire and anxiety, one that operates by way of projection and displacement. This conceptual framing allows Butler to show how 'gender' is made to function as a repository for fears which stem from elsewhere: economic insecurity, ecological crisis, or perceived threats to patriarchal authority. The book may thus be seen as an intervention in gender studies and a study of the way knowledge and meaning are collectively produced in conditions of precarity.

A central insight is the inflammatory rhetoric by which 'gender' acquires a quasi-mythical status. Across political and religious discourses, 'gender ideology' is described as an invasive force, viewed variously as a totalitarian project, a form of colonisation, a mass-destruction threat, or a viral contaminant. Butler shows that such hyperbolic framings construct 'gender' as a monolithic and omnipotent agent endowed with the capacity to destabilise cultural norms and undermine the integrity of the social order. Such discursive amplification, Butler claims, is not incidental; it is a technique of governance which externalises a range of anxieties and channels them toward identifiable targets.

In the process, minority groups become the objects of what Butler describes as a form of 'moral sadism', a structure in which punitive actions are reframed as ethically necessary. This dynamic rests on the idea of *anticipated harm*, referring to the claim that minorities could pose a threat to the social order, children's innocence, or the continuity of a normative way of life. The fact that the danger is projected into the future means there is no need to empirically prove it, and just raising it as an issue suffices. With this logic, measures that restrict rights, censor knowledge or criminalise gender variance appear to be pre-emptive acts of self-defence. Butler shows this inversion – where those accused of causing destruction end up themselves being destroyed – is central to the contemporary anti-gender apparatus. The infliction of suffering is justified not only as containment, but as neutralising a claimed danger. This mechanism produces what Butler labels a "moral alibi": an ethical cover beneath which coercive laws and regulatory practices are given legitimacy. By claiming to protect children, families or the nation's continuity, authorities can frame repressive legislation as a defensive response to an

existential threat. The violence directed at minorities – whether through legal restrictions, administrative exclusion or public vilification – is thereby recoded as a morally sanctioned form of protection.

The book's global analytic lens highlights the adaptability and portability of anti-gender narratives. Butler documents how 'gender' is becoming a flexible signifier capable of representing whatever a particular society perceives to be its most pressing threat: communism, neoliberalism, foreign influence, or unwanted migration. Far from making anti-gender movements less coherent, such variability reveals their ability to articulate local anxieties using a transnational vocabulary. Butler convincingly argues that many of these discourses exhibit a distinctly fascist logic wherein minority groups are seen as agents of societal destruction and political leaders promise to neutralise them. Quite an illuminating discussion concerns the reframing of 'religious freedom' as the right to discriminate. With this inversion, antidiscrimination norms are viewed as encroaching on liberty parallel to exclusionary practices taking on the status of fundamental rights. Butler interprets this dynamic not as a contradiction but as an effect of the fantasy structure in which threats are redefined so as to legitimate coercive measures.

The chapter on the Vatican is a particularly incisive case study. Butler traces how Church authorities have linked 'gender ideology' to paedophilia, in turn creating a narrative that positions sexual and gender minorities as threats to the safety of children. This association, Butler states, enables the institution to externalise its own history of sexual abuse by projecting its anxieties onto an imagined external danger. Drawing on Lacan's notion of *glissement*, Butler analyses the rhetorical operations by which the mere acknowledgment of queer existence is construed as a form of contagion, as if recognition itself were capable of producing identification.

The US context is treated as another important site of convergence between anti-gender rhetoric and broader right-wing mobilisations. Butler reveals how attacks on gender variance are closely intertwined with campaigns against 'wokeness' and the demonising of critical race theory. Her examination of recent Supreme Court decisions illustrates how state power expands via restrictions on reproductive rights and limits on anti-discrimination protections. Butler's account underscores how such developments are part of a wider authoritarian drift where the state is assuming an increasingly interventionist role in regulating bodies, identities, and kinship relations. In response, Butler calls for the articulation of alternative political passions – forms of solidarity based not on fear but shared vulnerability and interdependence.

One of the book's richest analytical chapters regards the emergence of 'gender-critical feminisms' and their alignment (intentional or not) with right-wing agendas. Butler outlines how these positions assert a form of proprietary authority over the category "woman" and construe gender variability as an illegitimate exercise of freedom. The claim to an immutable, biologically grounded notion of sex is shown to operate as a political strategy that excludes trans people while presenting itself as being in defence of feminist principles. Butler's analysis situates these debates within a broader sociology of categorisation, clarifying how social categories become objects of contestation and instruments of regulation. The convergence between gender-critical discourse and anti-

gender rhetoric reveals how appeals to harm and keeping children safe recur across disparate ideological formations.

Later chapters extend Butler's recent work on materiality by interrogating the distinction between sex as natural and gender as cultural. Butler claims the "materiality of sex" is not negated by social construction and has instead been constituted via historically specific modes of power. Materialism, in this account, is not equivalent to positivism, and biological determinism offers an incomplete framework for understanding how bodies acquire meaning. Butler analyses the social mandate embedded in sex assignment and the ways in which gender saturates perception, embodiment, and social interaction. The last few chapters examine the colonial genealogy of sexual dimorphism, the violence of gender-assigning practices, and the interdependence of nature and culture. Even though these chapters are synthetic, they are conceptually precise and provide readers with a robust vocabulary for reconsidering entrenched assumptions about embodiment.

*Who's Afraid of Gender?* stands out for its theoretical clarity, attention to the psycho-social dimensions of political life, and capacity to shed light on the manner in which fantasies shape public discourse and institutional practice. Butler provides sustained analysis of how fear, projection and moralisation coalesce to produce powerful forms of ignorance and justification. The book contributes to sociology by demonstrating that struggles over gender are simultaneously struggles over knowledge: what is recognised as reality, how social threats are named, and who is authorised to define the terms of collective life. Butler sets out a valuable framework for analysing today's political landscape and the contested meanings of gender found within it.

Mojca Šebart Kovač

**Zdenko Kodelja: Vednost o nevednosti: premišljevanja o šolstvu v času pandemije.**

**Ljubljana: Krtina, 2024.**

**254 str., (ISBN 978-961-166-9), 30 EUR**

Monografija prinaša niz razmislekov o družbenih vidikih pandemije in z njo povezanih etičnih dilem, ki so ključne tudi za razumevanje dogajanja v šolstvu. V njej sledimo iskanju odgovorov na vprašanja o odgovornosti, odnosu med politiko in stroko, solidarnosti in sebičnosti, zaupanju in izgubi zaupanja v znanost in politiko, državljansem aktivizmu in nepokorščini, zapiranju družbe in šol ter vplivu izobraževanja na daljavo na znanje in dobrobit generacije šolajočih.

Pandemija covida-19 je razkrila obstoječe in manj vidne neenakosti v družbah ter jih še poglobila: v večini držav so proporcionalno bolj zbolevali revni, zaradi pogostejših zdravstvenih težav je okužba zanje pomenila večjo življenjsko nevarnost, pa tudi zdravstvena oskrba jim ni bila enako dostopna. Medtem ko so se nekateri lahko izolirali, so karantene povsem drugače preživljali tisti, ki dela niso mogli opravljati od doma niti se niso mogli umakniti na vikende v naravo, o čemer piše Renata Salecl (2021) v knjižici *Človek človeku virus*. Tudi v izobraževanju so ukrepi za omejevanje širjenja okužbe na globalni in lokalni ravni povečali neenakosti v dostopu do znanja.

Pandemija, piše uvodoma Kodelja (str. 11), je šolstvo, s predšolsko vzgojo vred, postavila v položaj, kakršnega do takrat še ni poznalo, predvsem zaradi množičnega in dolgotrajnega zapiranja šol in vrtcev po vsem svetu ter uvažanja izobraževanja na daljavo, ki ga je omogočila sodobna informacijsko-komunikacijska tehnologija. Ta tehnologija – in s tem tudi izobraževanje na daljavo – pa ni bila enako dostopna vsem. Po podatkih Združenih narodov in Unesca je spomladi 2020 šole zaprlo 191 držav s kar 1,5 milijarde šolarjev; več kot 800 milijonov jih doma sploh ni imelo računalnika, nekoliko manj pa ne interneta (str. 132).

Pandemija je sovpadla z vednostjo o tem, da tisti, za katere smo predpostavljali, da vedo, o virusu niso vedeli dovolj. Avtor ocenjuje (str. 23–28), da je za razumevanje časa bistveno prav spoznanje človeštva, da smo trčili ob meje znanosti. Vednost o tem, da znanost v določenem času na številna vprašanja (še) nima odgovorov, je med ljudmi povzročala negotovost, dvom v strokovne in politične odločitve ter nezaupanje v cepiva, vse to pa je vodilo tudi v večjo dojemljivost za lažne novice in teorije zarote. V povezavi s sporočili, ki so zaznamovala prostor pretoka informacij, da znanosti in stroki ne kaže zaupati, saj nekatere utemeljitve čez čas sami ovržeta, avtor opozarja, da lahko znanost napreduje samo zato, ker so njeni izsledki odprti za zavrnitev ob novih dokazih. Navaja Karla Popperja, da je cilj znanosti iskanje resnice, ne pa nezmotljivost in dogmatična gotovost, da resnico poznamo (str. 26). Ob tem pa dodaja, da si ljudje z vednostjo, da bo znanost nekoč imela odgovore na določena vprašanja, na katera jih zdaj še nima, ne morejo pomagati pri odločitvah o ravnanju v kriznih razmerah. Zato je prav vednost o omejeni vednosti znanosti in stroke vir negotovosti in strahu ljudi, da

se bodo napačno odločali. Kodelja ocenjuje, da je to tudi eden od razlogov za padec zaupanja v znanost v času pandemije, seveda ob obilju lažnih novic in teorij zarote (str. 27). Še posebej, če se bo uresničila napoved Laurie Garrett (1995), da bo zgodovina naše dobe zaznamovana z epidemijami in novimi boleznimi zaradi uničenja, ki ga človek povzroča v naravnem okolju, je avtorjev razmislek o tem produktiven.

Družbeno ozračje, v katerem so imela že pred pandemijo odločilno vlogo mnenja, se je med njo okrepilo. Kodelja (str. 28–46) z oporo na Hannah Arendt in Vittoria Bufacchija predstavi vzpostavljanje novega »konteksta resničnosti«, v katerem resnica ni več pomembna in je povsem delegitimizirana. Piše o namernem ustvarjanju okolja, v katerem objektivna dejstva izgubljajo pomen in nimajo večjega vpliva na oblikovanje javnega mnenja, vse z namenom onemogočanja racionalne, na dokazih in argumentih temelječe razprave, ki sledi cilju odkrivanja resnice. V takem okolju nimamo več opravka s spodkopavanjem določene resnice, temveč s spodkopavanjem resnice same, tako da se jo razvrednoti in naredi za nepomembno, piše Lee McIntyre v delu *Post-Truth*. To povezuje tudi z vlogo vodilnih politikov, saj v političnem prostoru, v katerem so dejstva zoperstavljena »post dejstvom«, ki so nezdružljiva s tistimi, odkritimi med znanstvenim raziskovanjem, nobena izjava o dejstvih ne more nikoli ostati zunaj slehernega dvoma.

Potrošniki informacij bi sicer morali nositi odgovornost in dolžnost, da preverijo tiste informacije, ki jih sprejemajo in širijo. To pa predpostavlja, da znajo razlikovati med resnico, neresnico in lažjo, med dejstvi in verovanji, med dejanskimi zarotami in neverodostojnimi teorijami zarote, kar je povezano z zmožnostjo kritičnega mišljenja. To je sicer eden od ciljev splošne izobrazbe že v programu splošnoizobraževalne osnovne šole, a je, ugotavlja Kodelja (str. 39), problem z njegovim udejanjanjem. Očitno je namreč, da imamo v družbi težavo s kritičnim mišljenjem, ki je vedno argumentativne narave ter se opira na znanstvena spoznanja in abstraktno vednost.

Avtor se v monografiji posebej posveti dilemi odločanja o zapiranju šol med pandemijo (str. 115–179). Odpira vrsto vprašanj v zvezi s tem, med njimi tudi tista, ki se nanašajo na sprejemanje političnih odločitev. Obravnava razmere, v katerih prihaja do kolizije pravic do zdravja, do svobode gibanja in miroljubnega zbiranja ter do omejevanja pravice do izobraževanja. Dilema o zapiranju šol se namreč ne izčrpa v tehnični zamenjavi učilnice z zaslonom, tudi ne z dostopnostjo do sodobne informacijsko-komunikacijske tehnologije in (ne)znanjem njene uporabe. Odgovori nanjo zahtevajo razmislek o razmerju med pravico do izobraževanja in pravico do varovanja zdravja, odločitve pa morajo vključevati tudi odgovore o dejanskih posledicah dolgotrajnega zaprtja šol in izobraževanja na daljavo, med katerimi so najpogostejše izpostavljene poslabšanje duševnega zdravja otrok in mladih, povečanje neenakosti, izguba socialnega učenja in erozija učiteljskega poklica.

V zvezi z izobraževanjem na daljavo Kodelja (str. 129) zapiše, da se je že pred pandemijo uresničevala napoved Jean-Françoisa Lyotarda, da postaja v postmoderni zastarela ideja izobrazbe, katere bistvo je v tem, da je pridobivanje znanja neločljivo od formiranja (*Bildung*) duha in osebe. Na to opozarja spremenjen status znanja, ki se od trenutka, ko nima več svojega cilja v samem sebi kot realizaciji ideje o izobrazbi posameznika in je ob tem prenehalo tudi v raziskovanju biti namen samemu sebi,

spreminja v nekaj, kar se proizvaja za prodajo. Razsvetljenstvo (v Kantovem smislu izhoda iz »nedoletnosti«) tako postaja zgodovinska epizoda, saj prakse in institucije, ki naj bi spodbujale samostojno rabo uma, izgubljajo legitimnost. Znanje postaja uporabno blago, katerega vrednost meri trg, in ni več obravnavano kot temelj celostnega oblikovanja človeka (str. 182). Ob tem pa Kodelja ugotavlja, da teze Lyotarda o »smrti profesorja« – idejo, da računalniške baze in platforme nadomestijo učitelja kot prenašalca vednosti, ni potrdila niti pandemija, saj digitalna orodja in umetna inteligenca učiteljev niso mogla nadomestiti (str. 130). Zlasti pri oblikovanju osebnosti obstoječa digitalna tehnologija ne more zapolniti praznine, nastale z zaprtjem šol, saj prava vzgoja (*paideia*, *Bildung*) zahteva živo, telesno in odnosno prisotnost učitelja in skupnosti, navaja avtor Umberta Curija (str. 128).

Monografija ne ponuja enostavnih receptov, temveč etično orientacijo: zaupati znanosti pomeni graditi na znanstvenih spoznanjih in ob tem priznati negotovost, ko ta trčijo ob svoje meje; digitalizacija sama po sebi ni zlo ali odrešitev, je orodje, ki ga je treba upravljati odgovorno, a terja znanje, ki to upravljanje šele omogoča. Naloga šole je, da pri pouku dosledno spoštuje načela objektivnosti (prenos akumuliranega znanja, ki temelji na znanstvenih spoznanjih), kritičnosti (tudi do neresnic, predsodkov, stereotipov, verovanj) in pluralnosti (različni odgovori na vprašanja, ki temeljijo na znanstvenih spoznanjih in argumentaciji) ter vodi nove generacije k samostojni rabi uma, česar ljudje tudi v izrednih razmerah ne bi smeli opustiti.

## Literatura

Garrett Laurie (1995): *The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance*. London: Penguin.

Salecl Renata (2021): *Človek človeku virus*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga.

Tina Kogovšek

**Zdravko Mlinar: Družboslovno raziskovanje med profesionalizacijo in podružbljanjem, drugi zvezek, občanska znanost.**

**Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2024.**

**466 str., (ISBN 978-961-268-108-1), 20 EUR**

Akademik Zdravko Mlinar se v drugem zvezku monografije *Družboslovno raziskovanje med profesionalizacijo in podružbljanjem*, kot kaže tudi podnaslov, osredotoča predvsem na pojem občanske znanosti (angl. *citizen science*), ki se nanaša ukvarjanje laikov z raziskovanjem in njihovim sodelovanjem s profesionalnimi znanstveniki. Avtor pri tem kritično tematizira tako pozitivne kot potencialno negativne plati tovrstnega udejstvovanja. Kot velik in neutruden podpornik in promotor občanske znanosti (sam je tudi utemeljil slovenski termin) izpostavlja njene številne pozitivne vidike tako za profesionalno in akademsko znanost ter posameznike, ki se ukvarjajo z občansko znanostjo, kot tudi za širšo družbo. V kontekstu profesionalne znanosti občanska znanost na neki način pomaga presegati polje znanstvenega udejstvovanja kot vzvišene elitne dejavnosti za izbrance, ki se s tega vidika lahko pogosto znajde v pregovornem slonokoščnem stolpu, popolnoma odtujena od realnih problemov posameznikov in družb. S tem lahko povečuje zaupanje v znanost in poveča možnosti vključevanja znanstvenih izsledkov v širše okolje ter njihovo večjo in hitrejšo uporabo v dobrobit tako družbe kot naravnega okolja. Občanska znanost v tem smislu pripomore k demokratizaciji in njeni tesnejši vključenosti v širšo družbo. V tem delu lahko tudi pomaga presegati do neke mere precejšen razkorak med znanostjo in širšo družbo, ki v sodobnem času vsesplošne razširjenosti spletnih medijev neredko preraste v širjenje teorij zarot. Občanska znanost prinaša korist tudi za lokalno in posledično širšo družbeno raven, saj pogosto opozarja na pomembne teme in probleme, ki jih uradna znanost iz različnih razlogov prezre, ne tematizira ali pa ne pride do njih. Občanska znanost pa predstavlja tudi veliko dobrobit za sodelujoče posameznike same kot okvir njihove večje vključenosti, osebne rasti in zadovoljstva. Ti so iz različnih notranjih vzgibov, radovednosti in veselja lahko zelo motivirani za raziskovanje določenega področja, za katerega sicer niso nujno formalno šolani in usposobljeni strokovnjaki. Raziskovanje tako postane sestavina vsakdanjega življenja. Pri tem avtor v monografiji navaja številne uspešne primere povezovanja profesionalnih raziskovalcev in laikov, tako iz lastne raziskovalne prakse (npr. raziskava v Žireh) kot drugih raziskovalcev v našem (npr. DOPPS in Atlas ptic, Eko krog v Zasavju, Hiša eksperimentov itd.) in mednarodnem prostoru (npr. Wikipedia).

Lahko bi tudi rekli, da na neki način ta tradicija v sociologiji obstaja že dolgo skozi bolj aktivistične raziskovalne pristope, kot je npr. akcijsko raziskovanje, ki briše praviloma precej strogo hierarhično postavljene meje med profesionalci in laiki, kjer so prvi eksperti, »tisti, ki vejo«, drugi pa so lahko le pasivni raziskovalni objekti. V tem lahko vidimo preseganje koncepta občanske znanosti kot zgolj zbiranja podatkov ter tendenco k bolj poglobljeni vključitvi laikov tudi skozi definiranje raziskovalnih vprašanj, analizo in interpretacijo podatkov. V lokalnih skupnostih poleg tega pogosto obstaja veliko

laične in praktične vednosti, ki ob ustreznem vodstvu profesionalnih znanstvenikov zelo pripomorejo k znanstvenemu in s tem družbenemu napredku. Po drugi strani pa avtor posvari pred idealizacijo občanske znanosti, ki ima lahko elemente šarlatanstva.

Tematizacija v monografiji presega povezavo zgolj na ravni znanost – občani; možnost sodelovanja širi tudi na druga področja, kjer lahko usposobljeni in motivirani laiki pomagajo drugim (npr. prvi posredovalci), kar lahko pripomore k večji kohezivnosti družbe, depasivizaciji ljudi in spodbujanju aktivnega državljanstva. V tem predstavlja koncept opolnomočenja, torej tudi demokratizacijo širše družbe, ne le znanosti.

Mlinar samo znanstveno dejavnost ves čas kritično preizprašuje. Opozarja na stranpoti sodobne znanosti, ki je pogosto preveč zbirokratizirana in skomercializirana, ostaja v okvirih varnega ter je na distanci do »navadnega« prebivalstva, kar lahko vodi v že omenjeni večji razkorak in obojestransko nezaupanje med njima. Kritizira pogosto enosmerno komunikacijo in disciplinarni imperializem (npr. medicina, ki se ne ozira na družbene vidike zdravja in zdravstva). Pri tem se opira na svoje dolgoletno sociološko raziskovanje skozi pojme individua(liza)cije, globalizacije, glocalizacije. Vsaj deloma (obsežnejši pregled bi seveda zahteval posebno monografijo, obenem pa to niti ni cilj pričujoče) je širše predstavljen razvoj sociologije (deloma tudi drugih družbenih ved, kot sta politologija in komunikologija), in sicer tako v slovenskem kot tudi jugoslovanskem prostoru, ter tematizira širše, globalne dileme in izzive sociologije kot znanosti. Pri tem je vidno, da je avtor že v svojih zgodnejših tekstih pred nekaj desetletji kritično in poglobljeno razmišljal o problemih – oziroma jih tako rekoč anticipiral –, ki v tistem času še niso bili tako izpostavljeni, danes pa so stalnica naslovnih tradicionalnih in novih medijev (npr. energetika, ekologija, varnostna vprašanja, informatizacija, pasti informacijsko-komunikacijskih tehnologij, zasebnost, intima, t. i. informacijski mehurčki, vprašanja prihodnosti dela in izgube delovnih mest s tehnološkim razvojem itd.), kar kaže na agilnost in neke vrste vnaprejšnjo aktualnost slovenske sociologije že pred desetletji. Še vedno je aktualno vprašanje prihodnosti lokalnih skupnosti, kjer so vidni tako pozitivni kot negativni trendi tako diverzifikacije in povezovanja kot uniformiranja in drobljenja.

Monografijo v zadnjem delu odlično dopolnjujejo krajši esejski razmisleki avtorjevih kolegov sociologov in sociologinj, kot tudi raziskovalcev in raziskovalk ter drugih strokovnjakov in strokovnjakinj z zelo raznolikih področij, kot so jezikoslovje, literarna zgodovina, antropologija, arhitektura, agronomija, umetnost, zgodovina, pravo, socialno delo in področje varnosti. V zaključku dodaten vpogled tako v sociološko znanost kot tudi bolj osebne poglede ponudita dva intervjuja z avtorjem.

Lahko bi torej rekli, da je monografija do neke mere dvodelna, kjer je en fokus občanska znanost, drugi pa širša tematizacija slovenskega in globalnega družboslovja. Na prvi pogled se zdi, da gre za dve ločeni, nepovezani tematiki, a natančnejše branje razkrije očitne, pa tudi bolj subtilne povezave, ki zajemajo kritičen, zgodovinski vpogled v razvoj znanosti in znotraj tega (predvsem) sociološke vede, razpiranje pomembnih tem in dilem tako v družboslovju kot naravoslovju ter kako se v to vpenja pojem in praksa občanske znanosti. Lahko sklenemo, da gre za dragocen pogled t. i. velike slike (angl. *big picture*), ki povezuje tako mikro kot srednjo in makro raven, ki pravzaprav predstavlja avtorjev vseživljenjski znanstveno raziskovalni credo.



Blaž Lenarčič

**Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela in Andrej Kohont (ur.): Digitalizacija dela in življenja.**

**Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, Založba FDV, 2024.  
322 str., (ISBN 978-961-295-097-2), 29 EUR**

Digitalne tehnologije so temeljito posegle v razumevanje medosebnih odnosov, družabne navade, dojemanje zasebnosti, načine komuniciranja, dela in vsakdanjega življenja. Na splošni ravni to preoblikovanje imenujemo digitalizacija, pri čemer gre za proces, v katerem uporaba digitalnih tehnologij preoblikuje medosebne, ekonomske, politične in kulturne odnose. O procesu digitalizacije je bilo z družboslovnega vidika v slovenskem prostoru objavljenih precej znanstvenih del, ki ta proces osvetljujejo in pojasnjujejo (zgolj) s posameznih vidikov. Ravno zaradi slednjega se kaže potreba po interdisciplinarnih obravnavah, v katerih se digitalizacijo razume kot kompleksen, večdimenzionalen in politično pogojen proces. Ravno v to kategorijo sodi monografija *Digitalizacija dela in življenja*, ki sta jo uredila Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela in Andrej Kohont. Gre namreč za delo, v katerem je združenih štirinajst prispevkov dvajsetih raziskovalcev in raziskovalk različnih disciplin, ki prinašajo sistematično in kritično refleksijo o digitalizaciji dela, komuniciranja, izobraževanja, državljskih pravic in zdravstva ter odpirajo kritično razpravo o tem, kako digitalizacija vpliva na navedena področja.

V svojih analizah in razpravah avtorji in avtorice procesa digitalizacije ne razumejo kot tehnično nevtralen pojav, temveč kot globoko politično in družbeno posredovan proces, ki neizogibno odpira vprašanja moči, neenakosti in pravičnosti. S takšnim pristopom se izognejo tehnološkemu determinizmu in poskušajo digitalno tehnologijo umestiti v kontekst širših družbenih in ekonomskih struktur. Pri tem izhajajo iz tradicije kritičnih študij digitalne transformacije, ki združuje politično ekonomijo, feministične teorije, kritične teorije kapitalizma ter sodobne študije znanosti in tehnologije. Obenem je prispevkom skupna zavest, da digitalizacija ni naraven, temveč zgodovinsko in politično pogojen proces, v ospredju katerega je vprašanje, kako digitalne tehnologije sooblikujejo družbene odnose in kako ti odnosi določajo načine, na katere se tehnologija razvija, uporablja in legitimira. Pri tem se avtorji in avtorice ne ustavijo pri opisovanju tehničnih novosti, temveč odpirajo vprašanja o njihovem vplivu na razmerja moči, demokratične procese ter kakovost vsakdanjega življenja posameznikov in posameznic. Skratka, gre za pristop, ki kaže, da je razvoj digitalne tehnologije mogoče regulirati in usmerjati k služenju človeku ter skupnosti, ne zgolj k logiki kapitala in profita.

Kot omenjeno, je monografija *Digitalizacija dela in življenja* sestavljena iz štirih vsebinskih sklopov, v katerih avtorji in avtorice prepoznavajo in analizirajo zelo izražene posledice preobrazbe obravnavanih področij, ki so rezultat trenutne stopnje procesa digitalizacije. V prvem, najboljšežnejšem sklopu z naslovom *Digitalizacija dela in ekonomije* avtorji in avtorice obravnavajo spremembe, ki jih uporaba digitalnih tehnologij prinaša na področja dela (Kanjuo Mrčela in Kohont), enakosti spolov v kontekstu platformne ekonomije (Mikić Ljubi), podjetij (Domadenik Muren, Koman in Redek), druž-

bene odgovornosti podjetij (Erznožnik, Golob in Podnar) in kulture lastništva podjetij (Gonza in Lucu). Drugi sklop z naslovom *Umetna inteligenca: teoretski in praktični vidiki* obravnava razmerje med človeško in umetno inteligenco (UI) (Krašovec), negativne učinke UI na okolje in marginalizirane populacije (Vrečko Ilc), UI v kontekstu marketinga (Lednicki, Podnar in Golob) ter pravne vidike uporabe UI pri zaposlovanju (Rajgelj). Sklop z naslovom *Digitalizacija političnega življenja* vsebuje obsežnejši prispevek, ki se ukvarja z vplivom digitalizacije na demokratične procese (Vodovnik). V zadnjem sklopu z naslovom *Digitalizacija zdravstva in skrbi* pa se avtorice posvečajo vplivu spletnih informacij na odnose med bolniki z rakom in onkologi (Atanasova), razmerju med digitalnimi platformami in delovnimi razmerami feminiziranega skrbstvenega dela (Markelj) ter preučevanju dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na sprejemanje tehnologije med oskrbovalci starejših ljudi (Dolničar in Hvalič Touzery). Na tem mestu je treba izpostaviti, da prispevki izražajo distanco do tehnološkega determinizma in nekritičnega optimizma, ki digitalne tehnologije pogosto prikazujeta kot samoumevne in pozitivne. Namesto slednjega avtorji in avtorice pokažejo, da proces digitalizacije ni tehnično nevtralen, temveč globoko prepleten z dinamikami moči, neenakosti in pravičnosti. Pri tem digitalizacijo razumejo kot družbeni in politični proces, ki ga ni mogoče ločiti od širšega konteksta kapitalistične ekonomije, demokratičnih praks ter vprašanj dostopa do virov in pravic. Prispevki tako izpostavljajo, da proces digitalizacije ne prinaša le priložnosti za inovacije in napredek, temveč tudi tveganja, kot so poglobljanje družbenih razlik, ožene zasebnosti, prekarizacija dela itd. In prav ta kritična drža daje monografiji posebno vrednost, saj spodbuja k razmisleku, na kakšen način je mogoče proces digitalizacije usmerjati h krepitvi javnega dobrega in kako lahko prispeva k pravičnejši družbi.

Dodatna vrednost monografije je tudi v tem, da digitalne tehnologije (ChatGPT) niso zgolj predmet njene obravnave, ampak so bile tudi na razne načine uporabljene pri nastajanju prispevkov. In sicer kot del raziskovalnega načrta, za urejanje virov, ustvarjanje ilustracij in celo kot soavtor (Uvod in Pojmovnik). S tem avtorji in avtorice digitalizacije ne le analizirajo, temveč jo tudi aktivno vključujejo v samo strukturo lastnega dela. Takšno kombinacijo človeške in umetne inteligence urednika imenujeta hibridna inteligenca. S tem ko monografija vključuje UI v proces pisanja, presega tradicionalne oblike znanstvenega dela in vstopa v prostor eksperimentiranja, kjer je meja med orodjem in avtorjem vse bolj zabrisana. Obenem pa ta pristop kaže, kako lahko z vključevanjem digitalnih tehnologij znanstveno delo odgovori na izzive sodobnega časa. Nenazadnje pa s tem načinom opozarja, da tudi znanost ni imuna na transformacije, ki jih prinaša digitalizacija. V tem smislu je monografija ne le refleksija družbenih sprememb, temveč tudi njihova manifestacija, saj v določeni meri kaže spremembo načina znanstvene produkcije.

Nedvomno monografija *Digitalizacija dela in življenja* v slovenski znanstveni prostor prinaša pravočasno in celovito refleksijo procesa digitalizacije, ki se odvija v vseh segmentih družbenega življenja. Njena prednost sta interdisciplinarna obravnava in metodološka raznolikost, saj gre za preplet socioloških, politoloških, pravnih, ekonomskih in komunikoloških pristopov, kar omogoča večplastno in poglobljeno razumevanje digitalizacije. Posebej dragoceno je, da avtorji in avtorice v svojih prispevkih zavračajo

nekritični tehnološki optimizem in vztrajajo pri kritični analizi, s katero opozarjajo na tveganja, asimetrije moči, reprodukcijo neenakosti in nevarnosti erozije demokratičnih procesov v kontekstu digitalne preobrazbe. Obenem monografija odpira prostor za razmislek o možnostih regulacije in usmerjanja razvoja digitalnih tehnologij na način, ki bo prispeval k večji pravičnosti, solidarnosti in humanizaciji dela ter življenja. Skratka, v slovenskem prostoru gre za referenčno delo, ki bo pomembno vplivalo na razvoj kritičnih študij digitalizacije, hkrati pa bo služilo tudi kot dragocen vir za oblikovalce politik, gospodarstvenike, raziskovalce in širšo javnost. Največja vrednost monografije je prav v tem, da ne ponuja enoznačnih odgovorov, temveč spodbuja k nenehnemu kritičnemu premisleku o družbenih posledicah tehnološkega razvoja in o tem, kako ta razvoj usmerjati v korist ljudi in skupnosti.



## Instructions

1. Submissions for Papers and Short Scientific Articles should be sent to the following e-mail address: **editorDR\_SSF@sociolosko-drustvo.si**. Submissions for Reviews should be sent to: **anamarija.sisa@fdv.uni-lj.si**. Papers can be written in either the Slovenian or English language.
2. Papers should be double spaced with Times New Roman letter font size 12 and aligned to the left-hand margin. The pages should be numbered consecutively.
3. Articles can be submitted in short and standard form. Short scientific articles (see guidelines below) should not be longer than 4,000 words, and should be structured like standard articles. Standard articles should range from 5,000 to 8,000 words in length, including notes, a list of references and a list of graphic images; the length of book reviews/presentations should be between 1,000 and 1,200 words. Graphic images should also be included in the word count – see instruction 12 below.
4. The Editorial Board reserves the right not to commence the review procedure of a paper which fails to meet the standards of formal written language. British English is requested (with e.g. -ise, -sation and -yse spellings, no Oxford comma) is requested.
5. An author will be informed about the results of the reviewing procedure within 2 months of submitting a paper. Unpublished papers will not be returned to the authors. Book reviews and revisions will not be double-blind reviewed.
6. Any past or simultaneous publication of a submitted paper in another journal should be explicitly noted.
7. The author's name and surname, academic title and/or professional title, e-mail address and phone number, along with the title of the scientific paper should appear on a separate sheet. Authors should suggest the classification of their paper in one of three categories: original scientific article, review scientific article or short scientific contribution.
8. The first page of the paper should only contain the title or a possible subtitle of the paper without any designation of authorship.
9. Subtitles should not exceed two levels of numbers, use decimal numbering and be aligned to the left-hand side. The introduction should be numbered as the first chapter.
10. Papers should include an abstract written in both Slovenian and English that should include four elements: aim of the article, methods, findings, and conclusions of the paper. The abstract should not include comments and proposals, and should appear on a separate page before the Introduction. The total length of both versions of the abstract should not exceed 250 words (i.e. the length of each abstract should not exceed 125 words). Five key words should be added in Slovenian as well as English. The English title of the article must be added to the English abstract. When an article is written in English, the Slovenian title of the article should be added to the Slovenian abstract. Authors who do not speak Slovenian may ask the journal's editors for assistance to prepare an abstract and a title in Slovenian.
11. Papers written in Slovenian should also have an English summary attached, ranging from 600 to 800 words. The summary should include a description of the aim of the article, the methods and summarise the analysis or interpretation of the results. It should only contain information that is included in the article. An author must take care of the linguistic appropriateness of the summary. British English (with e.g. -ise, -sation and -yse spellings, no Oxford comma) is requested. The Summary should be placed after the "Conclusion" and before "References" and "Sources".
12. An author should mark the most convenient spaces for graphic images (tables, figures, diagrams etc.) following this example: [Table 1 approx. here]. The final form of the manuscript should have graphic images added at the end of the text. The title of a table or a graph should be written above the graphic image. Titles of tables, graphs and other graphic images should end with a full-stop. The space occupied by graphic images in the article should be added to the length of the paper, either equal to 250 words (half a page) or 500 words (a full page). The Editorial Board reserves the right to place graphic images in the text according to the most appropriate page break in the text. An article should not include more than 8 graphic images.
13. The number and length of notes should be kept to a minimum. They should be written in the text as footnotes and listed consecutively. The final version of the paper may include a short acknowledgement, to appear at the end of the paper before the Bibliography.
14. References to sources in the text should follow this example: (Sztompka 1993). The page of the cited text should be stated after a colon (Wallace 1988: 577). If there are two authors, both should be stated (Adorno and Horkheimer 1990), if there are more than two authors, give the surname of the first author followed by et al. (Stankovič et al. 1999). If two or more references by the same author published in the same year are cited, distinguish them by adding lower-case letters consecutively (a, b, c etc.) and right after the year of publication (Bourdieu 1996a). Cite works from different authors referring to the same content alphabetically and separate them with a semi-colon (D'Andrade 1995; DiMaggio 1997; Zerubavel 1997).
15. Books, articles, scientific materials, research reports or databases used in the paper should be listed alphabetically at the end, under the headings "References" (for books, articles, etc.) and "Sources" (for databases etc.). When providing the webpage, write the date of access in brackets. DOI links should be written in the following format: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5772/35098>. Each unit in this list should end with a full-stop. The units should be presented as follows:
  - Rus, Veljko (1999): Vrednote zaposlenih do dela in do družbe. Družboslovne razprave, XV (30–31): 113–133.
  - D'Andrade, Roy (1995): A Folk Model of the Mind. In D. Holland and N. Quinn (eds.): Cultural Models in Language and Thought: 112–151. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  - Lamont, Michele, and Fournier, Marcel (eds.) (1992): Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.
  - Le Goff, Jacques (1999): Medieval Civilization. Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell.
  - Garton, Luis, et al. (1997): Studying Online Social Networks. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 3 (1). Available from: <http://jcmc.huji.ac.il/vol3/issue1/> (Accessed 20.5.2001).
  - Laurenti, Jeffery (1998): The New U. N. Assessment Scale and Analysis of the Rate Revisions Adopted by the 52nd United Nations General Assembly. Available from: <http://www.unaosa.org/newindex.asp?place=http://www.unaosa.org/programs/scale.asp> (Accessed 9. 12. 2004).
  - Aratani, Lauren (2020): "Tsunami of Untruths": Trump Has Made 20,000 False or Misleading Claims. Report. The Guardian, 13. 7. 2020. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jul/13/donald-trump-20000-false-or-misleading-claims> (Accessed 10. 10. 2020).
  - United Nations peacekeeping. Available from: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp> (Accessed 28. 2. 2006).
  - Colbert, Stephen (2005): The Word - Truthiness. The Colbert Report. Comedy Central, 17. 10. 2005. Available from: <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/63ite2/the-colbert-report-the-word---truthiness> (Accessed 13. 10. 2020).
  - McAuliffe, Cameron (2015): Graffiti Sessions: The Art and Justice of Sociable Cities. Graffiti Dialogues. YouTube, 15. 1. 2015. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dufgmQrNya8&list=PLAUgzWv9lVnZ2teo0Tq7JSjD3b68Fyg1> (Accessed 10. 10. 2020).
  - If a reference has more than two authors, only the first author is mentioned in the text, e.g. (Stankovič et al. 1999). In the section "Bibliography and Sources", list all authors if the work has up to and including 5 authors. If the work has more than 5 authors, state only the first one, e.g.: Hlebec, Valentina, et al. (2012): Medgeneracijska solidarnost v Sloveniji. Ljubljana: FDV.
16. Authors should explicitly state whether their paper is based on research or archival data.
17. When writing in English and citing, use "double quotation marks" (not "these", not »these«, not „these“), and 'single quotation marks' when there is a quote within a quote or a 'scare' quote.
18. Longer quotations (more than 40 words) should be written in a separate indented paragraph in a smaller size font and without quotation marks.
19. The author should obtain permission to use any copyright materials in the article. The permission should be properly acknowledged in the article.
20. Short scientific articles are original scientific articles, in which some of the elements of the IMRAD scheme may be omitted. They briefly summarise the findings of a completed original research work or a research work in progress. Also included in this category are mini reviews and preliminary publications, if they have the characteristics of a scientific article. More detailed instructions on how to write short scientific articles for Social Science Forum are available here: <https://www.sociolosko-drustvo.si/for-authors/>.
21. Published papers become the material copyright of the Journal's publisher.
22. The author does not have to pay for the publishing of accepted articles. Upon publishing, each author and each reviewer receive one copy of the Social Science Forum. No fee is paid for papers; a fee for translations and reviews is paid if previously agreed.

Please also read the **Publication ethics and publication malpractice statement**.



**DISKRIMINACIJA PREK POVEZAVE NA PODLAGI OVIRANOSTI:  
NEENAKA OBRAVNAVA IN STIGMATIZACIJA NEFORMALNIH  
DRUŽINSKIH OSKRBOVALK PRI DELU IN ZAPOSLOVANJU**

Zdenka Šadl

**BIOPOLITICAL DIASPORIC HUMAN FIGURES: DYSTOPIAN  
NARRATIVES IN THE WORKS OF KAZUO ISHIGURO AND  
CHANG-RAE LEE**

Kang Byoung Yoong

**THE STORY OF KIMCHI: IDENTITY AND DIASPORA OF ZAINICHI  
KOREANS IN JAPAN**

Nataša Visočnik Gerželj

**DIASPORA AS HORROR IN PENINSULA: A PSYCHOANALYTIC  
PERSPECTIVE**

EuiJin Hur

**SINGING BELONGING: A KOREAN DIASPORA WOMEN'S CHOIR  
AS A CULTURAL PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING IN  
AUSTRIA**

Sun Young Yun

**THE REALITY AND SELF-IDENTITY OF KOREAN IMMIGRANT  
WOMEN IN AMERICA IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY:  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL RECORDS AND  
LITERARY WORKS**

Boram Han & Yesul Han

16,00 €

ISSN 0352 3608



9 770352 360015

ISSN 0352-3608 UDK 3

**Slovensko sociološko društvo**  
**Fakulteta za družbene vede Univerze v Ljubljani**  
Slovene Sociological Association  
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana

