

**Report on the Field trip “Asian Minorities in European Metropolises”, February 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> and from February 25<sup>th</sup> to March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010**

In February and March 2010 a group of students of the Diploma Program East Asian Studies (Human Geography) undertook a field trip to four European metropolises, including Düsseldorf, Berlin, Paris and Amsterdam, to explore and compare the living and working conditions of Asian minorities in these cities. In each city one minority group was selected, which is of special importance and interest among the Asian minority: The Japanese in Düsseldorf, the Vietnamese in Berlin, the Chinese in Paris and the Malays from Indonesia in Amsterdam. Besides own explorations and observations the field trip program included discussions with experts in the field of politics and research as well as with members of the selected Asian communities. The situation of the four groups is quite different due to different migration histories and a different political and legal context. **Düsseldorf** is one of the main centers of Japanese economic activities in Europe. The vast majority of the Japanese community belongs to the group of status high migrants staying in Germany only for a short period of time. Because of this the pressure and necessity to integrate with the German society is only limited. The Japanese mostly live in the status high quarters of the city and there seem to be no problems with the German neighborhood. A differentiated Japanese infrastructure of shops, restaurants, clubs, schools, cultural and religious institutions allows to stay in Düsseldorf without having much contact with the German society and even without learning the German language. Quite different is the situation of the Vietnamese in **Berlin**. Although a few origin from the group of boat people refugees in the 1970ies (mainly living in West Berlin), the majority came to the former DDR as (North-Vietnamese) contract workers and after the reunification of Germany part of them decided to stay. Spatially they concentrate mainly in East Berlin but without forming a Vietnamese quarter in a strict sense. After a difficult beginning (mainly due to their unclear legal status) the members of the Vietnamese community seem to be quite successful in terms of economic performance and education. They, for example, control a significant portion in wholesale and retail trade of consumer goods, with networks extending far into Eastern Europe. In **Paris** the focus was on the Chinese community. Chinese immigration to Paris already started during WW I, in China mainly originating from the southeastern and southern parts (Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong) but recently also from the northeast. But a large proportion of Chinese migrants to Paris also comes from several Chinese diaspora groups in other European countries or in Southeast Asia. Very different from the other minority groups which were in the focus of the field trip, the Chinese community itself seems to be highly segmented in terms of the regional and cultural origin of its members in China. This segmentation has a strong influence on everyday life. Belleville, an inner city quarter near the famous cemetery Père Lachaise may be termed a Chinese quarter with shop signs and menus of restaurants only written in Chinese language. Another spatial concentration mainly of shops and restaurants (“China Town”) is to be found in the southwestern part of central Paris (parts of Avenue d'Ivry and Avenue de Choisy). **Amsterdam**, the final station of the field trip, an intergal part of the Randstad agglomeration of the Netherlands, always was a focal point of immigration. Unlike the other three examples the situation of the Malay immigration to the Netherlands and especially to Amsterdam cannot be understood without taking into account the colonial history of the Netherlands in Southeast Asia. When Indonesia gained its independence after WW II a group of Indonesians, affiliated with the former colonial power in one way or another, coming from different parts of the archipelago, but mainly from christianised communities, were allowed to follow the Dutch to the Netherlands. During the postwar economic growth period in the 1950ies and 1960ies the Netherlands were able to make the integration of the Indonesian-Malay migrants a success story. Even in the official population statistics they are not counted as foreign immigrants but as Dutch. Nowadays the Malay population lives all across the city of Amsterdam. But with Zeeburg, a quarter at the eastern margins of the inner city of Amsterdam, a center of the first Indonesian migrants still remains with street names remembering Indonesian islands and urban places (e.g. Bali Straat, Palembang Straat).