



## **CGHE 2020 ANNUAL CONFERENCE – PARALLEL SESSION**

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### **A life-course account of post-study trajectories in diverging contexts: Foregrounding the agency of student-migrants in the UK and Japan**

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While universities and students overwhelmingly support mobility rights for international students and the economic, educational and social cases for post-study work rights are strong, international student-migrants exist in a turbulent policy-space. In these uncertain times, how international students understand and interpret policy frameworks and subsequently negotiate their post-study trajectories is a topic of keen interest.

I will present the results of an 18-month longitudinal study of student-migrant transitions, drawing on the results of a policy trajectory analysis and biographical-narrative interviews with student-migrants in the UK and Japan. I identify the critical importance of policy frameworks' receptivity, stability and transparency in defining individuals' perceptions of opportunity in the post-study environment, revealing how such factors define the regulatory relationship between student-migrants and their host countries. Furthermore, I illustrate how individuals navigate their post-study transitions. In ongoing negotiation with their context, participants variably draw on existing models of success, creatively reconfigure new pathways, and seek to subvert and resist barriers they encounter in their post-study transition. I conclude with recommendations for policy and practice, arguing that universities' structural reliance on international student fees should be matched with institutional support for their mobile students throughout their post-study transitions, as well as continued advocacy for receptivity, stability and transparency at the level of policy.