

# The multi-scalar embeddedness of support policies for migrant entrepreneurship in Japan

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## Abstract

Contextual entrepreneurship and mixed embeddedness approach alike emphasize the importance of the political-institutional embeddedness next to social embeddedness along with further contexts for migrant entrepreneurship, yet the aspect of international migration policies as an important institutional framework has been somewhat neglected. This paper introduces the case of political-institutional embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship in Japan from an international migration policy perspective, discussing embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs and their support institutions from a multi-scalar perspective. By analysing the migration policy context of migrant entrepreneurship at different policy levels, that is, national, regional and urban scales, it demonstrates the analytical value of differentiating policies along these scales and also their inter-connectedness, conceptually proposing the inter- and trans-scalar of these policy contexts. By bringing issues of migration regimes and particularly the East Asian developmental state as a lens to analyse migrant entrepreneurship, it brings further approaches in comparatively analysing different entrepreneurial contexts for future research.

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## INTRODUCTION

Diversity has become a novel phenomenon much discussed in society and research, but is also becoming increasingly an important paradigm in policy-making. Such diversification can be also observed in recent changes in migration policies in Japan, a country which was known for its reluctance to international migration. Admitting the need for foreign workers due to the severe labour shortage in the ageing and shrinking society, the Japanese government has begun diversifying migration schemes beyond their focus on highly-skilled. In such historical shift, migrant entrepreneurs have also come into focus as important economic potentials. Changes have been made to allow immigration of entrepreneurs by revising visa schemes, but also introducing directives supporting them at further policy levels beyond immigration.

Though migrant entrepreneurship scholars have stressed the importance of research-informed policy recommendation pointing at the crucial policy-nexus (Ram et al., 2013), the political-institutional side of migrant entrepreneurs' embeddedness in the entrepreneurial environment has not yet found sufficient attention. The analytical framework of mixed-embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001), which has become the main perspective in analysing migrant entrepreneurship, conceptualizes the dual embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurs in their social networks and the political-institutional contexts. However, the political-institutional context is first an under-researched part in migrant entrepreneurship, and second, these policy contexts primarily focus on the economic integration of migrants through support of their entrepreneurial endeavours rather than on issues of international migration per se (cf. Desiderio & Mestres-Domènech, 2011; OECD, 2010).

This raises the question whether the contextuality of migrant entrepreneurship with its national-level migration policies, but also local-level implementation of support policies in forms of information dissemination and accessibility for the migrant population, has been sufficiently considered in the contextual approaches so far. Research point out that different reasons can inhibit migrant entrepreneur to access institutional support, such as the lack of trust in institutions particularly found in Eastern European migrants, but also linguistic barriers for the access (cf. Lassalle & McElwee, 2016). The latter prominent role of linguistic accessibility, which has also been identified as key for the functioning of migrant-led diversity (Vertovec, 2007), is evidently an issue to further look into in case of Japan.

Moreover, although different analytical levels have been discussed in mixed-embeddedness, research on the interrelations of these levels and those that might be crossing borders are still scarce (Rath, 2002; Rath & Swagerman, 2016). Third, there is also a tendency in migrant entrepreneurship to focus on North American and European contexts, opening further avenues of research to reconsider elements of the entrepreneurial contexts that might be accounted for in other world regions, such as Asia.

Taking these issues together, this paper addresses the lack in the integration of migration policies as part of the mixed-embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship and concretizes the contextual approach regarding the relations between such migration policy and its implementation at different levels of policies aimed at supporting migrant entrepreneurship. Bringing a novel empirical case of recently introduced start-up schemes in Japan, this paper aims at answering the research question on: what are the implications of the political-institutional embeddedness for migrant entrepreneurs in terms of the novel context of the national migration policy in Japan, and how are the interrelations among the different levels of policies, where possible entrepreneurial ventures of migrants are embedded?

The theoretical contributions of this paper are threefold. First, building on the mixed-embeddedness perspective, it brings national-level migration policies into the political-institutional context of migrant entrepreneurship. It points at Japanese government's novel policy approaches to foster migrant entrepreneurship as one of the recently diversified channels of international migration. This paper calls for a theoretical reconsideration of the contextual approach to migrant entrepreneurship which goes beyond the analysis of institutional environment of entrepreneurship itself and extends to migration-related policies. Second, by discussing not only the macro-level policies on international migration, but also the regional and metropolitan levels of policies targeted at supporting

migrant entrepreneurs, including also the accessibility of entrepreneurial support for potential migrants, this paper contributes to the concept of multi-scalar of institutional contexts, thus, theoretically concretizing the policy context of migrant entrepreneurship. It empirically demonstrates the inter-connectedness of different policy levels in which migrant entrepreneurs are embedded, and introduces a novel theoretical concept of inter- and trans-scalar into the approach of mixed-embeddedness. Finally, by bringing the Asian developmental state as a policy context, this paper extends migrant entrepreneurship beyond the North-American and European lens and brings debates on migration regimes and types of national governmental strategies into the picture.

The structure of the paper is as follows: It starts with a brief literature review on the paradigm shift on diversity in society and policy, the contextual entrepreneurship and mixed-embeddedness concerning migrant entrepreneurship, the scalar approach from more geographical sciences and then on the connection of migration regimes and Asian developmental state. It continues with introducing the Japanese case and the methodology, and presenting the findings according to the different policy levels from national level, regional and urban level, as well as the linguistic accessibility to entrepreneurial support, which then are contextualized back to the larger discourse on Asian developmental states, proposing the inter- and trans-scalar connectedness of policy levels in the discussion. This paper concludes with a brief summary and an outlook for further approaches in the research of migrant entrepreneurship.

## PARADIGM SHIFT TO DIVERSITY IN SOCIETY

Contemporary societies are characterized increasingly by migration-led diversity (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore, 2018), bringing challenges to policy-makers in accommodating different aspects and social groups in such complexifying societal contexts. Migration scholars have been discussing this trend as diversifications of diversity (Glick-Schiller et al., 2006; Vertovec, 2007), and the superdiversity paradigm has also found resonance in recent entrepreneurship literature (Ram et al., 2013; Sepulveda et al., 2011; Yamamura & Lassalle, 2020). What is diversifying is not only the constellation of the population (composed of migrants and non-migrants) concerning their ethnicity, nationalities, or religious and linguistic backgrounds. The crucial diversification also applies to the diverse legal regulations by and through which individuals migrate. Indeed, the changing opportunities to different legal statutes and the availability of specific migration channels are crucial for migrant entrepreneurs, as the EU enlargement in 2004 has well demonstrated (Brzozowski et al., 2021; Drinkwater et al., 2009; Lassalle et al., 2020). Depending on the embeddedness into specific legal frameworks and accordingly different migration-related social networks, migrant entrepreneurs can then economically operate differently (Yamamura & Lassalle, 2020). Apart from the economic contexts, the diversity in migration policies and regimes can be regarded as one of the most relevant contexts from which to analyse aspects of the increasingly complexifying conditions of migrants, including migrant entrepreneurs.

### Contextual entrepreneurship and mixed embeddedness

Contextual entrepreneurship has become a viable perspective in analysing entrepreneurial embeddedness (McKeever et al., 2015; Welter, 2011; Zahra et al., 2014). Richer understanding of entrepreneurs' opportunities and limitations can be achieved when entrepreneurship is analysed in each of their historical, institutional, social and spatial contexts (Welter, 2011). Though such contexts had been much researched previously, researchers on super-/diversity in entrepreneurship have primarily focused on the urban lens to migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurship (Sepulveda, et al., 2011; Yamamura & Lassalle, 2020). The debate on the spatial aspect of entrepreneurial context going beyond specific urban context as an analytical unit has only recently found attention in entrepreneurship (McKeever et al., 2015; Müller & Korsgaard, 2018; Wang, 2013) and yet still tends to miss the

perspective that the entrepreneurial 'context is not only multi-faceted, but it also cuts across levels of analysis' (Welter, 2011: 167).

The importance of this spatial context, which bridges 'between social and institutional context' (ibid: 170) can be also inferred from the related approach of mixed-embeddedness, which has become the most established analytical framework for the study of migrant entrepreneurship. This approach allows to analyse ethnic minority and migrant entrepreneurship in their duality of embeddedness in social networks and political-institutional contexts. The mixed-embeddedness allows migrant entrepreneurs to find resources and explore markets (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al., 1999; Ram et al., 2011) and the contexts can be differentiated between levels of analysis (Jones et al., 2014; Kloosterman, 2010; Lassalle & McElwee, 2016). Migrant entrepreneurship has extensively researched the social side of mixed-embeddedness. Yet scholars, such as Ram et al. (2013) have emphasized the importance for research-informed policy recommendation in this field and pointed at the crucial policy-nexus. As different levels of institutional conditions and structures are crucial for migrant entrepreneurs' success (Engelen, 2001), conceptual debates on this political-institutional embeddedness require further development. In fact, discussions on institutional conditions focus on the entrepreneurial supports aimed at migrants, that is, support for migrants becoming entrepreneurs, but neglect the idea of attracting and supporting migrant entrepreneurship as part of international migration policies. Migrant entrepreneurs are, however, embedded not only in the entrepreneurial contexts existent upon arrival in the destination country, but also in migration policies and the accompanying legal statuses that allow migration in the first place. For such step into migrant entrepreneurship, the accessibility to entrepreneurial support needs to also be considered from the political-institutional side.

## Multi-scalarity of policies

Following Trettin and Welter's call to consider the impact of the spatial context (2011), this paper scrutinizes the policy contexts of migrant entrepreneurs at different spatial contextual levels, or geographical scales (cf. Brenner, 2001). The scale of the policies refers to the spatial context in its view of administrative governance (ibid.; Affolderbach & Carr, 2016), in which migrant entrepreneurs are differently embedded. Bringing in the idea of mixed-embeddedness, policies related to migrant entrepreneurship can be distinguished at different levels of decisions taken in the policy-making (Lassalle et al., 2021). In this scalar notion of the spatial context, I distinguish the urban, regional and the national macro-level scales of policies that are relevant for the entrepreneurial embedding.

The *urban scale* has become the dominant spatial unit of analysis for migrant entrepreneurship (Ram et al., 2002; Sepulveda et al., 2011). Migrant entrepreneurs become active in their business ventures in specific urban contexts (Lassalle & McElwee, 2016; Storti, 2014). Though many studies on migrant entrepreneurs are conducted at this urban level (Solano, 2020; Verzhinina et al., 2019) and pay particular attention to the particularity of the ethnic market in urban settings as in Ram et al. (2002), Rusinovic (2006) or Sepulveda et al. (2011), the policy context at this urban scale is not further discussed in terms of specific municipal policies and conditions in which entrepreneurial activities are embedded. Recent research has gone further in scaling down to the neighbourhood level within cities for looking into migrant entrepreneurship (Hall, 2011; Yamamura & Lassalle, 2020), yet neglect the policy-making side of such context.

Particularly regional science literature on entrepreneurship have discussed the importance of *regional level* policies for migrant entrepreneurship, scrutinizing the role of support institution and regional policy (Saxenian, 2006). The prominent case of Silicon Valley demonstrates how different policies have actively fostered and promoted networks and innovation systems at the regional scale (Huggins et al., 2018; McKeever et al., 2015; Sternberg, 2009). Though such research discuss entrepreneurship more in general terms, not specifically migrants, what the Silicon Valley as one of the most innovative regions for information technology and start-up scene demonstrate, is that the specific region is crucial for the entrepreneurial environment with its support institutions and regional policy (MacKinnon et al., 2009; Urbano et al., 2019). Most policies targeting migrant and ethnic minority

entrepreneurs are usually introduced and monitored at the regional government level, with support institutions and policy actors responsible for that specific regions.

Finally, the macro level, the *national scale* of policies makes up the 'architecture of the state' (Roberts, 2020) as this is where national governments can adapt to changing circumstances. In the context of migrant entrepreneurship, studies at this nexus between entrepreneurship research and policy (Jones et al., 2014) explore national policy measures which support ethnic minority entrepreneurship (Högberg et al., 2016), particularly in relation to their embeddedness in the broader institutional contexts (Engelen, 2001) as well as supranational contexts (Rath, 2002; Solano, 2020). What has been out of scope, however, is the larger context of international migration policies. Migration policies however play a significant role in managing the streams of migrant entrepreneurs and those migrants with the potential to become entrepreneurs upon settlement. Different countries have started introducing policies aiming specifically at business owners and investors, giving opportunities to migrate on the basis of entrepreneurial activities via specific visa status, thus targeting the migration of entrepreneurs (OECD, 2010).

## Migration regimes and the Asian developmental state

As much as entrepreneurship is embedded 'in each of their historical, institutional, social and spatial contexts' (Welter, 2011), policies and political-institutional contexts crucial for migrant entrepreneurship are themselves embedded immigration regimes and types of governance. The macro-scale debates on policies for migrant entrepreneurship has focused on entrepreneurial policies, which is the core of entrepreneurship research. Yet, the political-institutional and the social contexts in which economic activities of migrant entrepreneurs are embedded, are substantially dependent on national migration policies, too, as these are the framework for the mobility of people in first place. As policy changes on international migration can define the constellation of society, and depending on the schemes offered for different migrant population, these policies can or (from the perspective of law-makers) should impact the economy of a country. In fact, many countries regard migrants as primarily important labour force, using migration schemes as reaction to, for example, labour shortages. With different strategies of how and which migrants to attract and retain, different types of migration regimes have emerged (cf. Rass & Wolff, 2018). Points-based systems for the acquisition of residential statuses focus on the specific demands of the labour market (e.g. Canada, UK and Australia), whereas EU countries allow labour migration from third-countries only upon the exhaustion of the EU-internal labour market or fast-track highly skilled migration through specific schemes (e.g. Blue card). Though the variety of migration channels are broader and not necessarily focus solely on the labour market (e.g. family or humanitarian migration) investor and business owner schemes, which are usually bound to the requirement to bring in specific amount of financial capital and/or create specific numbers of workplaces, are migration policies used clearly as labour market strategy.

Japan also shares such economist view on migration, where the narrative in official documents are clearly 'foreign human resources' or 'foreign workforce' rather than 'migrants'. This is also where the clear distinction of the Japanese, or even broadly Asian migration regimes might be contextualized in a different policy background. The model of East Asian developmental states (Haggard, 2018; Leftwich, 1995), where strong interventions of the national government with extensive regulations and planning have contributed to the economic development in these countries, might be indeed a crucial context from which to also analyse migrant entrepreneurship. As Tonami (2018) argues, the context of a developmental state is still prevalent in Japan, where 'the state guides and oversees economic development, and the strong bureaucracy and businesses in turn complement each other in leading and shaping policies to achieve developmental goals' (1211). Contextualizing migrant entrepreneurship into such governance perspective could provide better understanding the overall entrepreneurial environment because the involvement of macro-level politics in the local level such as in urban development and politics, is a typical characteristic of East Asian governmental states (Hill & Fujita, 2000; Saito, 2003).

This paper aims to analyse the different levels on which such novel approach to international migration by the national government, including the revision of schemes for migrant entrepreneurs, is reflected in the overall entrepreneurial environment. Based on a multi-scalar approach, it analyses recent developments of Japanese policies in promoting migrant entrepreneurship. It contextualizes migrant entrepreneurship into the national-level migration policies, and how these are then implemented on the regional and also even urban levels. By doing so, it illustrates the vertical interlinkages of policies along the different scales, but also the horizontal connectedness of policy-making to other entrepreneurial contexts outside of Japan.

## CONTEXT OF CASE AND METHODOLOGY

Recent endeavours of the Japanese national government to combat the severe labour shortage by economically reactivating the elderly and enhancing the labour market participation of female workforce (Abenomics) as well as using technical innovation to raise productivity has not reached the desired easing (Hausman & Wieland, 2014; Miwa, 2016). When Japan faced labour shortage in times of the post-war era of economic growth, instead of opening its borders to lower skilled migration, Japan opted in for a specific type of ethnic migration, that is, migrants of Japanese descents from South American and Asian countries (Higuchi, 2002; Yamanaka, 1996). Furthermore, reluctant to introducing proper labour migration schemes, lower skilled migrants were recruited in different trainee schemes from East and Southeast Asian countries. Highly skilled migration had been possible to Japan (Oishi, 2012, 2014), whereas a more granular scheme was introduced in 2012 to allow more targeted migration through a points-based system. The government's recent admission of its need for foreign workforce, opening its borders also to semi-skilled migration<sup>1</sup>: in April 2019 caused much awe worldwide. Along with these changes in the restrictive migration policies, the scheme for migrant entrepreneurs has also been revised to facilitate this type of international migration.

Methodologically, this paper bases on mixed qualitative research with different data of the novel development in migration and migrant entrepreneurial policies in Japan and specifically also in regions, such as Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka from multiple sources. As the migration policy and the start-up scheme, which are the objective of research, have only recently been introduced, comprehensive analyses and evaluations of these policies are not yet available. However, as the main aim of this paper was to understand and analyse the contextualization and implementation of the policies aimed at migrant entrepreneurship at different policy levels, document analysis of policy documents has been chosen as the most adequate method. Focusing on the institutional context of entrepreneurship (Engelen, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010; Welter, 2011), the study requires such analysis of existing support policies. The main part thus encompasses the analysis of primarily publicly available documents and white papers of governmental agencies and other institutional bodies as well as information leaflets and online presentations aimed at migrants and migrant entrepreneurs. This policy analysis was conducted through qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009) of publicly available white papers and information materials on the novel start-up scheme introduced by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). Documents encompassed macro-level policies and regulations by the METI as well as the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) regarding the migration policy issues. Furthermore, documents relating to the start-up scheme for migrant or foreign entrepreneurs were reviewed in all 10 regions and municipalities that have been designated by the METI. The review of the policy data was thus exhaustive and avoids biased selectivity (Yin, 1994; cf. Appendix).

The assessment of the accessibility of information for foreign entrepreneurs who would consider the scheme as an option for starting up conducted by the bilingual researcher was cross-checked independently by a non-Japanese speaker to follow the sources to reflect the accessibility for migrants with limited or no Japanese languages skills, avoiding methodological issues of forward and backward translations common in multilingual qualitative research (Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018). This ensures inter-rater reliability (Armstrong et al., 1997) regarding the accessibility of resources for migrant entrepreneurs and single investigator's bias (Patton, 1990). The other

objective was to thematically and content-wise analyse the requirements of the start-up schemes which depend on each regional or even local-level administration. By doing so, the implementation of the policies set up by the macro-/national-level policy-makers was assessed. For the analysis, the contents of the documents found through online resources were selectively coded according to Mayring's (1994) qualitative content analysis, reflecting the inductive process of discovery.

As suggested by Bowen (2009), the document analysis was additionally triangulated by expert interviews with support institutions, that is, three governmental actors at regional and local levels, a one-stop-shop support institution and one support network for migrant entrepreneurs, complemented by extensive participatory observation over one year of panel discussions and events of start-up communities offered virtually during the corona pandemic based on methods of digital ethnography (Horst & Miller, 2012; Pink et al., 2015). Examples for such events are panel discussions between innovation hubs and governmental agencies on the entrepreneurial support for migrant entrepreneurs, networking events among migrant entrepreneurs aimed at recruiting new members for start-ups, community events at innovation networks to exchange issues of start-up difficulties as well as informational events for migrant entrepreneurs about how to access and receive information from support institutions. Interviews were problem-centred (Witzel & Reiter, 2012) on the general issue of integration measures for foreign residents, yet also covered particularities of support policies for migrant entrepreneurship in order to 'seek convergence and corroboration [to the policy analysis] through the use of different data sources and methods' (Bowen, 2009: 28). The accounts on the policy implementation by practitioners and issues addressed by support networks complement the assessment of the policy documents.

Despite this mixed-method approach in triangulating the document analysis of all designated regions with further qualitative materials, certainly limitations can occur as not all information might be available or updated. Moreover, regarding the cases of support institutions and governmental actors, the raised issues may contain specificities of local entrepreneurial environments differing from other regions. Lastly, the actual experience of migrant entrepreneurs with this relatively novel scheme is not well reflected due to its recency. In the near future, qualitative interviews with entrepreneurs who have undergone the actual process could bring new nuances to the overall question on the contextuality of migrant entrepreneurship in Japan.

## NATIONAL-LEVEL POLICY

Observing the growing mobility of people at the global level and also pressurized to embrace the diversification of society happening on the local level, the Japanese government has recently shifted to a diversity oriented, (cautious) pro-migration policy. In a post-growth society, with a tremendous labour shortage and a rapidly ageing population to cope with, Japan is seeing a historical change in the migration policy. For the first time in its history, the Japanese government has admitted the urgent need for labour force and opened its doors to lower skilled migration in April 2019. Apart from the diversification of migration types for the labour market, the Japanese national government has realized the potential also of migrant entrepreneurs for the domestic economy. Whereas the original 'business manager' visa required migrants to register a company in Japan with at least 5 million yen as capital or provide positions for two full-time employees as well as a physical office in Japan, that is, a scheme comparable to other countries' entrepreneur visas based on investments (enforced by MoJ), the new start-up visa introduced in 2015 encompasses facilitations of starting a business, basically requiring only a clear business plan in Japanese and proof of adequate academic qualification to receive a 6 months limited residency for starting up. During its initial introduction, limited to six months and also locally to specific 'national strategic special zones' designated by its council at the Prime Minister's (PM) Office, METI extended the scheme in 2019 to maximum one-year residence and included further regions in Japan (Table 1). As can be inferred from the Table 1 (p. 16), the novel start-up visa shifted from solely allowing business managers, that is, already sufficiently financed businesspersons usually entering as fully employed

TABLE 1 Three-step enhancement of migrant entrepreneurship by specific visa schemes

Visa type	Business manager	Start-up visa (2015)	Start-up Visa (2019)
Aims of scheme & revisions	Main obstacle: visa criteria difficult to meet from above language barrier	Visa to start-up rather than entering as business manager and then changing into entrepreneurship upon approval of New Business Implementation Plan to <b>local government</b>	Status change from Student, Researchers or Professor status is possible without need to leave for application ( <b>national level</b> )
Required investment	5 Mio Yen	Same requirements to be cleared with support from <b>local government</b> in coordination with local support institutions (one stop shop, including Japanese language support, living support, etc.)	co-working spaces permitted, dependent on respective <b>local government</b>
Company registration			
Physical office	Required		
Employee	2+ full time positions		
Duration		6 months	1 year
Renewal of visa	Yes	No → required to change successfully to Business Manager visa ( <b>national level</b> )	Yes, facilitated (6 months + 6 months) re-examined by <b>local government</b> ; followed by Business Manager visa ( <b>national level</b> )
Locational limitation	None	<b>National strategic special zones:</b> Tokyo Pref., Aichi Pref., Hiroshima Pref., Fukuoka City, Sendai City, Niigata City, Imabari City, Ehime Pref.	<b>Further municipalities &amp; prefectures</b> added in agreement with METI, e.g. Hokkaido, Kobe City, Kitakyushu City, etc.
Other limitations		Eligibility of business fields dependent on <b>local government</b> , in agreement with the <b>national Ministry</b> of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI)	

persons, to allowing genuinely entrepreneurial migrants into the country. This was further developed to target also students, researchers and professor status persons, that is, highly-skilled graduates or academics, to become entrepreneurs in the policy change in 2019.

## INTER-TWINED NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

The interesting issue in this scheme introduced by METI, backed by MoJ with regards to the actual visa approval, is the interwoven roles of national and local, that is prefectural, respectively municipal governments. Though nationally coordinated by deciding on the national strategic special zones, the local level at which the start-up scheme finds implementation can be either the prefecture (regional) or a specific city (municipal). The overall structural framework is decided on the national level by the METI in coordination with the PM's Office and the regions which is requesting the permission for the scheme for the regional development. In fact, the business fields of



entrepreneurship are fully dependent on the regional economic policy of the designated regions, thus, depending on the business plan, the migrant entrepreneur only has the option to either start up elsewhere (where the business field matches with the economic policy) or is required to aim for the conventional direct application for the Business Manager visa and then to start up. As an example, whereas Kyoto's target and also METI-approved industries are broad, ranging from manufacturing, over environment/energy field and social business, to wellness, culture and tourism, Aichi prefecture only allows business ventures in high-growth IT and innovation technologies. Yet, in Fukuoka, logistics-related industries are allowed, too, whereas Hokkaido also targets food-related industries or agriculture. Furthermore, whereas responsibility to support migrants from the initial application with the business plan, the approval of it and the progress consultation during the start-up phase, that is, regular controlling and consulting of the entrepreneurs with different support institutions, lies in the hands of the prefectural or municipal government, the final approval to the residential permission as both a start-up entrepreneur and as eventually Business Manager is fully in the realms of the national Immigration Services Agency (Figure 1).

With regard of this imbalance of the start-up scheme, local governmental agents pointed out the 'no guarantee' that they could give to migrant entrepreneurs regarding the success of attaining the business manager visa after the start-up phase despite supporting them with their services. Also, the regulations regarding the extension of the stay during the start-up phase may differ from one municipality to another, so that one agent from a city-level support institution even admitted to recommending migrant entrepreneurs to apply for the scheme in another city as the chances of receiving the full term of one year is more likely elsewhere. The novel scheme of allowing maximum one year has been actually introduced as the inspection of the first start-up visa would already take six to eight months, going beyond the initial residential term.

Moreover, interestingly, the case of the Tokyo metropolitan region also shows that on an even more local level, specific wards of Tokyo, such as Shibuya special ward functioning in its autonomy as a municipality, is active in attracting migrant entrepreneurs for their district. This means that the inter-scalarity, that is, the interconnectedness of policies at different scales, goes beyond the prefectural or metropolitan level. Furthermore, when asked about the very specific approach this governmental agent had for its wards, it was accounted that the inspiration came from previous stays in California and the idea was to 'bring a Silicon Valley style entrepreneurial ecosystem' to Tokyo, respectively to the special ward. The proactive involvement of the ward-level government with the entrepreneurial support networks is thus a uniquely local decision rather than a coordinated act of the Tokyo metropolitan government, that is, the regional level.

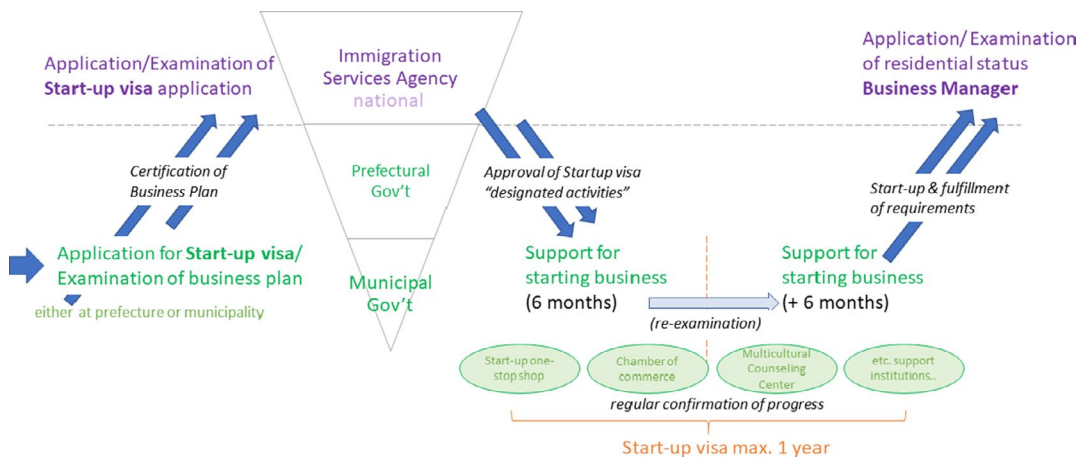


FIGURE 1 Multi-scalar process of migrant entrepreneurship from start-up visa to business manager  
Source: by Author.

## LOCAL-LEVEL ISSUES

As support networks account on the migrant entrepreneurial experiences, this complicated process of multi-scalar political-institutional embeddedness has not much facilitated the business start-up. As migrants have reported in the dialogues with support networks, one of the core issues that migrant entrepreneurs face, thus one of the main obstacles that require improvement on the side of the regional administrations, is the dependency of language supports from their social networks, as all required documentations had to be submitted in Japanese. Indeed, the language barrier is particularly high in Japan, with the local one-stop shops providing full support with English translations of the documents for reference, but official information from the governmental policy side still scarce. As it has been assessed through the document analysis (Appendix), the accessibility of information without Japanese language proficiency are very different depending on each local-level administration. Whereas cities, such as Kyoto, Tokyo or Kobe, clearly have set out an agenda to attract foreign entrepreneurs with fully accessible information and support in English, other municipalities and regions, such as Osaka or Oita, either only limitedly offer English language information, or only integrate automatic Google Translate pages, which make contents incomprehensible and leave figures with important information on the processes untranslated.

Such language barriers also become crucial for the financial aspect of the start-up. Opening a corporate bank account is required and highly important to track business transactions, yet processes at banks are not accommodating the entrepreneurial endeavours of migrants, especially as their residential permits are limited in its duration and language abilities of migrants often limited. In fact, such business environment issues heavily depend on the location of the start-up. Whereas an entrepreneur in Tokyo in the special ward Minato with one of the highest populations of affluent foreigners would have little problems finding a bank to accommodate the business needs, such environment would not be given for an entrepreneur at the outskirts of the metropolitan region or even worse in more remote regions. Indeed, as a governmental official noted, in his ward, there were communications with the local economy and institutions so that information that supported their foreign residents to navigate through the daily life and integrate them locally would be provided multilingually, but in other wards this would not be done, depending on the local administration. Also, the openness to international customers, thus the accommodation of foreign-language services of service-providers essential for the start-up would be a matter of the local economy itself so that the location of a neighbourhood with an economically viable foreign customer base would expedite the overall process of starting up.

Such issues related to the differences in the regional policies but also each local entrepreneurial environment have also been raised by migrant entrepreneurs and support networks. As mentioned above, local support institutions might even go so far as to give an informal (or 'off-the-record') advice to apply for the start-up scheme in a different municipality or region. Due to the dependence of the permitted business field for the entrepreneurial endeavours but also differences in the strictness of requirements of the region where the start-up is applied for, migrant entrepreneurs consider even a relocation within Japan after the initial application. Such uneven provision of entrepreneurial support, especially connected to linguistic barriers, appears to be a fundamental reason for the differences in the successful implementation of the macro-level policy at the regional levels.

## DISCUSSION

Though very unique in the global perspective, the case of Japan illustrates at least the clear necessity to analyse migrant entrepreneurship policies from not only local entrepreneurial policy perspective, but also from an international migration policy perspective. Migration regimes have begun to consider migrant entrepreneurship as specific scheme to bring in migrant entrepreneurs and do not only see migrant entrepreneurs as the reaction to better activating or accommodating migrants on the labour market and thus supporting already residing migrants to become entrepreneurs (Desiderio & Mestres-Domènech, 2011; OECD, 2010). The contextualization

of migrant entrepreneurship in accordance with different approaches to international migration policy of different migration regimes could bring interesting comparative approaches in understanding the contextual entrepreneurship. Theoretically, this means that the contextual approach to migrant entrepreneurship (Trettin & Welter, 2011; Welter, 2011) as well as the political-institutional side of the mixed-embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001) needs to be further extended beyond the solely entrepreneurial policies to issues of migration policies that enable such entrepreneurial ventures as migrants in the first place. The context of migrant entrepreneurship can be conceptually differentiated between the policies for migrants (or ethnic minorities) to become entrepreneurs and those that aim to the migration of entrepreneurs. The latter is the case of such start-up visa schemes as they are aimed at the actual international migration of entrepreneurs as novel resources on the domestic market rather than supporting those already migrated to succeed in their entrepreneurial ventures. These are theoretically distinct yet interconnected aspects of migrant entrepreneurship which needs to be more explored. Especially since governments worldwide are focused on attracting talents and are experiencing a superdiversity turn in society (Vertovec, 2007), thus are increasingly also introducing different types of start-up visa schemes for migrant entrepreneurs, the track of migrant entrepreneurs within the migration policies is an important context to further look into in entrepreneurship.

The multi-scalar approach in analysing Japan's migration policy-driven migrant entrepreneurship also clearly points at the specificity of East Asian countries as developmental states (Haggard, 2018; Leftwich, 1995), being involved in the local provision of favourable entrepreneurial environments from a political-institutional embeddedness perspective (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). By bringing novel empirics on the implementation of national-level policies for the support of migrant entrepreneurship at regional and local levels, this case illustrates how mixed-embeddedness as a well-established and viable concept could be further concretized in view of the policy levels. The inter-scalarity, that is, the interconnectedness of policies aimed at promoting and supporting migrant entrepreneurship at different scales of policy-making, is presumably much stronger in the case of Japan and in other Eastern Asian developmental states. Yet this approach to analyse the connection of these policy levels brings an improved understanding of the much-discussed policy-entrepreneurship nexus (Ram et al., 2013) in different parts of the world. Such approach could become crucial in comparing political-institutional embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship. In fact, the locational restriction of migrant entrepreneurs in setting up their business depending on the needs of regional economic policy means that there can be impairments in the social embeddedness as the backside of the coin of such migration policy scheme which is restrictive on the political-institutional side. This idea of the mixed-ness or interrelatedness between the social and the political-institutional embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman & Rath, 2001) could be indeed a further interesting perspective in understanding the contexts of migrant entrepreneurship in other countries.

Two concepts can be inferred from these findings, as depicted in Figure 2: the inter-scalarity and the trans-scalarity. The inter-scalarity is the interconnectedness of policies at different levels going beyond simple embeddedness of frameworks (Brenner, 2001). Different from the cross-level effects of the contexts (Johns, 2006; Welter, 2011), these levels do not refer to the organizational side of entrepreneurial context, but the scale in which respective policies are implemented. As shown above, the different aspects of decisions on policies are made in coordination with the national and regional governments, the implementations in view of the support system for the migrant entrepreneurship then transferred to the regional or municipal government. Interestingly, whereas the re-examination for the extension of the start-up is in the hands of the local government, the overall approval of the migrant entrepreneurship as such lies in the national immigration agency. The inter-scalarity is thus a vertical embeddedness of policies for migrant entrepreneurship.

The trans-scalarity, which indeed requires further cases to develop it more substantially, is the horizontal interconnectedness between policies of different entrepreneurial environments. This was the interesting case of the Shibuya ward-level (so sub-municipal level) governmental agent developing the policies for the entrepreneurial environment on the basis of the Silicon Valley, which is, as discussed in the literature review, a rather typical case of regional scale entrepreneurial environment. This trans-scalarity of political-institutional embeddedness,

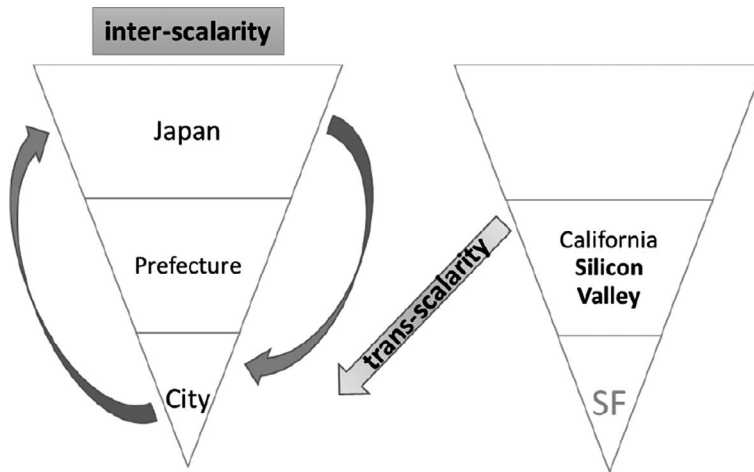


FIGURE 2 Inter- and trans-scalarly of political-institutional embeddedness

Source: by Author.

if further explored with more detailed case studies, could contribute to a better understanding and theoretical extension of not only the migrant entrepreneurs as being embedded in different social and political-institutional contexts, but also the policy-making itself as a trans-nationally and, in such case, also trans-scalarly connected embeddedness of knowledge and policy exchanges. These two proposed approaches together would allow a more comprehensive and granular analytical framework for the embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship in its mixed-embeddedness on both social and political-institutional contexts.

The phenomenon of trans-scalarly might indeed be fairly unique to the case of Japan. There is a specificity of the administrative and political-institutional structure of its special wards, which have the autonomy as municipalities. Additionally, Tokyo as a metropolitan region has an economic and political primacy as the capital city, which leads to special treatment in political decisions. However, taking an inter- and trans-scalar perspective to the analysis of mixed-embeddedness (Figure 2), particularly in the context of transnational migrant entrepreneurship could be an important theoretical approach for the increasingly complexifying multiple embeddednesses (in plural) of highly mobile and superdiversifying migrant entrepreneurs. Better understanding of the complex interplay of policy levels in the introduction of specific migration policies and the implementations on the support of migrant entrepreneurship can inform back policy-makers better to adjust the communication or even the policies themselves to succeed in attracting valuable human resources. Moreover, support institutions could also be informed better to also enhance their supports for migrant entrepreneurs, reacting to the issues arising in the application process.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed neglected issues in the contextual discussion on the political-institutional embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship from different angles. It has first brought national-level migration policies as such into the political-institutional context of migrant entrepreneurship. It has identified the novel policy approaches of the Japanese government to foster migrant entrepreneurship as one of the recently diversified channels of international migration. Such macro-level policies target migrant entrepreneurship from a migration regimes' perspective, rather than building on policies that support migrants already in the country to become entrepreneurs, which has a stronger labour market integration perspective. These political-institutional contexts allow not only the targeted immigration of entrepreneurs, but also allow the mixed-embeddedness in the first place as migrant entrepreneurs can only develop their social networks if once admitted to the country. It has shown how international migration

policies are directly connected to the fostering of entrepreneurial environments for migrant entrepreneurs beyond the provision of local measures to accommodate migrants becoming entrepreneurs.

Second, by discussing the embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship not only with regard to the macro-level policies on international migration, but also the regional and metropolitan level of policies targeted at supporting migrant entrepreneurs, this paper conceptually calls for analysing the multi-scalarity of institutional contexts. Such multi-scalar approach can better identify the different political-institutional contexts in which migrant entrepreneurs are embedded, and moreover the closer analysis of the interconnectedness between these scales to the vertical and also horizontal order also demonstrate the clear interwoven policy contexts. Finally, by bringing the Asian developmental state as a policy context to migrant entrepreneurship, this paper extends cases of migrant entrepreneurship beyond North American and European contexts and considers issues of migration regimes and types of national governmental strategies as contexts. This approach could bring further discourses on the larger political systems, in which different types of migrant entrepreneurship environments could be better conceptualized.

With the new scheme for migrant entrepreneurs having been only introduced recently, it is still to be observed how the inter-scalar embeddedness effect on the success of migrant entrepreneurship itself. Thus, as a future agenda, interviews and surveys with migrant entrepreneurs and those who have attempted to reach the business visa status for entrepreneurship should be conducted to shed lights on the entrepreneurial perspective on the political-institutional context. Furthermore, the other theoretical contribution of the trans-scalarity is indeed also an avenue for research to be further explored. Comparative analyses where different patterns of such trans-scalarity are tracked could also bring crucial insights into the global connectedness of entrepreneurial ecosystems.

As to policy recommendations that arise from the study, following aspects can be noted: The bilingual document analysis strongly points at the difficulty or even inaccessibility of the startup scheme for prospective migrant entrepreneurs without language abilities in Japanese. As language proficiency is an aspect that usually develops upon the migration event itself and can also be attained until the application for the final business scheme, this study calls for a more diversity-oriented, thus, also multi-lingual support and information provision for enhancing the success of the scheme. Moreover, as the regional conditions for the start-up scheme remains very diverse among the regions, migrant entrepreneurs would be supported more efficiently if the involved governmental bodies provided a more comprehensive and comparative overview of the regional differences in the regions designated for the start-up scheme.

The policy implications for such an approach to differentiate contextual embeddedness of migrant entrepreneurship according to these scales, is the possibility to better identify the obstacles faces by migrant entrepreneurs to access support institutions and to better inform policy-makers in modifying their policies to better accommodate the needs of migrant entrepreneurs. Especially the vertical interconnectedness (inter-scalarity) appears to be crucial in pinpointing administrative mismatches of the local support institutions and higher-level policies. The approach to also look into the horizontal interconnectedness (trans-scalarity) between different countries can help to promote knowledge exchanges of transnational or transregional nature and to find best practices that can be adapted and implemented in the local entrepreneurial environment. By bringing migration regimes and particularly the lens of developmental states into the picture of migrant entrepreneurship, this paper also contributes to the embedding of different national governmental policies for migrant entrepreneurship into a global comparative perspective.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding Statement: Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data available on request from the authors.

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## ENDNOTE

1. The categorization of migrants, such as in skill-based categories, has recently emerged as a key issue within migration research (Moret et al., 2021; Vertovec, 2021). Whereas media and migration policy related organizations have been pointing out the 'specified skilled workers' as low or unskilled workers, the narrative in Japanese policies focuses on the skilled (Oishi, 2021). However, as much as low skilled workers have been recruited in the embellished term of 'traineeship' in the Japanese migration history, these migrants are indeed, inter alia, in food service industry, building cleaning management or construction industry, which would normally be perceived as low skilled migration. However, to accommodate this discrepancy in the perception of skills and the debates surrounding the categorization of migration, the Author has opted in to use the term 'semi-skilled' as used in documents of OECD (2020).

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**How to cite this article:** Yamamura, S. (2022) The multi-scalar embeddedness of support policies for migrant entrepreneurship in Japan. *International Migration*, 00, 1–20. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.13000>



## APPENDIX

## OVERVIEW OF AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION ON START-UP SCHEME BY REGIONS AND CITIES DESIGNATED BY METI (AS OF FEB 2021)

Prefecture and/or City	Main administrative contact for start-up application	support institutions during start-up phase	English info accessibility
Hokkaido Prefecture	Application: Small and Medium Enterprise Division, Bureau of Regional Economy, Department of Economic Affairs, Hokkaido Government	Hokkaido Small Business Support Center (support for startup); Hokkaido International Exchange and Cooperation Centre (support for livelihood); Sapporo International Communication Plaza Foundation; Hokkaido Certified Administrative Procedures Legal Specialist Association	Yes: Page Prefecture Hokkaido + files No: Hokkaido Business Support Centre; Hokkaido Certified Administrative Procedures Legal Specialist Association Offer to translate: Hokkaido International Exchange and Cooperation Centre; Sapporo International Communication on Plaza Foundation
<a href="http://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/kz/csk/startup-visa/toppage_english.htm">http://www.pref.hokkaido.lg.jp/kz/csk/startup-visa/toppage_english.htm</a>			
Kyoto Prefecture	Application: JETRO Kyoto Trade Information Center (Kyoto overseas Business Center)		Yes: Page Kyoto Prefecture + files + Facebook link, etc.
<a href="https://www.kyoto-obc.jp/en/kigyoushien/">https://www.kyoto-obc.jp/en/kigyoushien/</a>			
Osaka City	Application: Foreigner Flotation Promotion Support Desk / Business Innovation Centre "Osaka Sangyo Sozokan"		Yes, but only Google Translate; files not in English
<a href="https://www.city.osaka.lg.jp/keizaisenryaku/page/0000468842.html">https://www.city.osaka.lg.jp/keizaisenryaku/page/0000468842.html</a>			
Kobe City	Application: Kobe City – Medical and New Industry Headquarters, New Industry Section		Yes + files
<a href="https://kobestartup.com/ecosystem/startup-visa/">https://kobestartup.com/ecosystem/startup-visa/</a>			
Fukuoka City	Application: Global Startup Center (Fukuoka city startup café)	Unclear (due to automatic incomprehensible translation)	Yes, but only Google Translate; files & figures not translated Start Up Café in English
<a href="https://translate-city-fukuoka-lg-jp.j-server.com/LUCFOC/ns/w4/jaen/">https://translate-city-fukuoka-lg-jp.j-server.com/LUCFOC/ns/w4/jaen/</a>			

Prefecture and/or City	Main administrative contact for start-up application	support institutions during start-up phase	English info accessibility
Oita Prefecture	Application: Oita Prefecture Commerce, Industry, Tourism and Labor Department Management	Entrepreneurship support, financial support: Oita Startup Center; Oita International Student Business Center (SPARKLE); Japan Finance Corporation Livelihood support: Oita Foreigner General Counseling Center; University Consortium Oita	No (Offers Google Translate, but then leads to wrong page) No: Oita Startup Center; Oita International Student Business Center; University Consortium Oita Offers translation: Japan Finance Corporation; Oita Foreigner General Counseling Center
<a href="https://www.pref.oita.jp/soshiki/14040/startupvisa.html">https://www.pref.oita.jp/soshiki/14040/startupvisa.html</a>			
Mie Prefecture	Mie Prefecture – Employment Economy Department, Founding Support/ ICT Promotion Division	Entrepreneurial support, financial planning, etc.: Foundation Mie Prefecture Industrial Support Center; the Japan Finance Corporation; Mie Prefecture Credit Guarantee Association Living support: Mie Prefecture Residence Support Liaison Committee; Mie Foreigner Consultation Support Center “MieCo”	No (Offers translation, but leads you to the wrong page); files are not translated No: Foundation Mie Prefecture Industrial Support Center; Mie Credit Guarantee Association Offers translation: Japan Finance Corporation (MieCo) Yes: Japan Finance Corporation
<a href="https://www.pref.mie.lg.jp/SHINSAN/HP/000227069.htm">https://www.pref.mie.lg.jp/SHINSAN/HP/000227069.htm</a>			
Aichi Prefecture	Application: Aichi Prefecture Bureau of Economy, Trade and Industry SME Department SME Finance Division	Unclear (due to missing translations of flow charts and figures)	Offers Google Translate, files not translated
<a href="https://www.pref.aichi.jp/soshiki/kinyu/gaikokujinkigyo.html">https://www.pref.aichi.jp/soshiki/kinyu/gaikokujinkigyo.html</a>			
Ibaraki Prefecture	Application: Global Business Support Team, Management Strategy Department of Ibaraki Prefecture	Support from Ibaraki Prefecture or Tsukuba City (start-up support & Living support)	Yes
<a href="https://www.pref.ibaraki.jp/soshiki/eigyoglobal/documents/en.pdf">https://www.pref.ibaraki.jp/soshiki/eigyoglobal/documents/en.pdf</a>			

Prefecture and/or City	Main administrative contact for start-up application	support institutions during start-up phase	English info accessibility
Gifu Prefecture	Application: Foreigner Employment Promotion, Commerce and Industry Policy Division Department of Commerce, Labor and Industry		Yes, files not translated
<a href="https://www.pref.gifu.lg.jp/page/26400.html">https://www.pref.gifu.lg.jp/page/26400.html</a>			
Hyogo Prefecture	Application: Startup Plaza Hyogo		No (offers translation, but leads to wrong page)
<a href="https://web.pref.hyogo.lg.jp/sr10/statupvi-sa/startupvi-sa.html">https://web.pref.hyogo.lg.jp/sr10/statupvi-sa/startupvi-sa.html</a>			
Sendai City	Application: Sendai City Economic Affairs Bureau Industrial Promotion Division Founding Support Section		Yes PDFs also translated
<a href="http://www.city.sendai.jp/kikakushien/jigyosha/kezai/jigyosho/joho/startupvisa-english.html">http://www.city.sendai.jp/kikakushien/jigyosha/kezai/jigyosho/joho/startupvisa-english.html</a>			
Kitakyushu City	Planning and Coordination Bureau, City of Kitakyushu		Yes (machine translation; not the best translation)
<a href="https://www.city.kitakyushu.lg.jp/english/e20100231.html">https://www.city.kitakyushu.lg.jp/english/e20100231.html</a>			
Niigata City	Application: Industrial Policy Division, City of Niigata		Yes PDFs not translated
<a href="http://www.city.niigata.lg.jp/business/boeki/kokukei_jigyosho/startupvisa.html">http://www.city.niigata.lg.jp/business/boeki/kokukei_jigyosho/startupvisa.html</a>			
Hiroshima Prefecture	Application: Innovation Promotion Team, Hiroshima Prefectural Government	Support by supporting organizations for business startup in Hiroshima Prefecture	Yes
<a href="https://www.pref.hiroshima.lg.jp/site/innovation/gaikokujinsougyo.html">https://www.pref.hiroshima.lg.jp/site/innovation/gaikokujinsougyo.html</a>			
Imabari City	Application: Imabari City National Strategic Special Zone Foreigner Founding Activity Promotion Project		No
<a href="https://www.city.imabari.ehime.jp/eigyosha-s/gaikokujin/">https://www.city.imabari.ehime.jp/eigyosha-s/gaikokujin/</a>			
Yabu City	Application: National Strategic Special Zone/ Regional Revitalization Division		No Mostly explained in PDFs → not translated
<a href="https://www.city.yabu.hyogo.jp/jigyosha/koyo_shugyo/senrya-kutok-ku/index.html">https://www.city.yabu.hyogo.jp/jigyosha/koyo_shugyo/senrya-kutok-ku/index.html</a>			
Okinawa Prefecture	Application: Planning Department Planning and Coordination Division		No Mostly explained in PDFs → not translates
<a href="https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/kikaku/chosei/staff/kokkasenryakutokku.html">https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/kikaku/chosei/staff/kokkasenryakutokku.html</a>			

Prefecture and/or City	Main administrative contact for start-up application	support institutions during start-up phase	English info accessibility
Semboku City	Application: Semboku City General Affairs Department Regional Revitalization and Comprehensive Strategy Office		No
<a href="https://www.city.sem-boku.akita.jp/senrya-ku/index.html">https://www.city.sem-boku.akita.jp/senrya-ku/index.html</a>			
Tokyo	Application: Tokyo Metropolitan Government/Business Development Centre Tokyo	Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) sponsors free support services: Access to Tokyo (A2T); Free Consulting Service; Tokyo one stop business establishment centre (tosbec); Partnership support; Business development centre Tokyo (BDCT); Tokyo Innovation & Startup Ecosystem (Tokyo Consortium); Tokyo Financial Award Consultation desks "Access to Tokyo" (in London, Paris, San Francisco, Singapore)	Yes Somehow confusing, but if you click through the pages there is a lot of English information, including a chat bot, etc.
<a href="https://www.investto-kyo.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/en/about/nssz/">https://www.investto-kyo.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/en/about/nssz/</a>			
Kanagawa Prefecture	Application: Industry Promotion Division, K.P.G.		Yes Some of the PDFs/ links are translated
<a href="http://www.pref.kanaga-wa.jp/docs/sr4/startup-vi-sa/startup-visa.html">http://www.pref.kanaga-wa.jp/docs/sr4/startup-vi-sa/startup-visa.html</a>			