

Recent (Young) Taiwanese Movers to Hong Kong: Challenges and Opportunities in a Global City^{*}

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Abstract

Using Hong Kong as a case study, this article presents findings regarding the transnational migration of highly educated young Taiwanese to global cities in recent years. Three issues are discussed: (1) migration process and patterns, (2) cultural adaptation and challenges, and (3) returning. The data were obtained via face-to-face interviews with 35 young Taiwanese in Hong Kong and Taiwan from 2012 to 2015, utilizing a semi-structured questionnaire. Other than career develop-

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ment and financial incentive, our analysis took into account the challenges of dialect and unfamiliar culture, social adaptation, the high cost of housing, a crowded and polluted environment, and the fast pace of life. Close to 70 percent of the young migrants expressed a desire to move back to Taiwan for a variety of reasons. Although it is difficult to generate immediate economic incentives to attract emigrants back to Taiwan, the lower cost of living, less crowded environment, cleaner air, comfortable pace of life, better medical care, education for children, and sense of belonging to Taiwan are incentives to potentially lure young people back to Taiwan. Upon returning, their cosmopolitan training in Hong Kong and abroad would help Taiwan's economic development in the short run and contribute to a Taiwan identity in the long run. Private industries can take the lead in recharging their human resources by providing reasonable salaries and bonuses to attract the best and brightest back. Most importantly, the Taiwan government needs to speed up the amendment of laws and relevant strategies to compete for young, highly skilled migrants from abroad.

1. Introduction

Transnational migration has taken place in a south to north direction involving long distances, as observed by the International Organization for Migration,¹ and has generated a plethora of literature in the past three decades. The pattern of emigration from Taiwan has changed over the years owing to political, economic, and social factors. Research on international emigration started in Taiwan, when it became an open system demographically, with more emigrants than immigrants at one point in the late 1980s when citizens were seeking opportunities to move abroad for political stability, social security, Western education for children, and better quality of life. Moving to "more developed countries" such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand,² whether participants are middle-class families, successful entrepreneurs, or former civil servants, similar consequences might be the result, such as permanent settlement, transnational families,³ and return migration of the 1.5 generation.⁴ Several compendiums have compared the three political entities of China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, which share a Confucian tradition of patrilineal family formation,⁵ to highlight the numerous challenges and familial responses at local and regional levels. The neoclassical economic approach to migration, though popular in the past, has not incorporated the impermanent dimension of international migration, and the