

Moore, Fiona, 2021. *Global Taiwanese. Asian Skilled Labour Migrants in a Changing World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fiona Moore's book *Global Taiwanese. Asian Skilled Labour Migrants in a Changing World*, explores the different ways in which Taiwanese skilled migrants, living in global cities in North America, Europe and Asia, use their shared Taiwanese identity as a means for building connections and pursuing business activities. In a time of unprecedented migration, mobility, and changing workplace demographics, this is a much-awaited book not only because it problematizes our understanding of culture and identity in today's network societies, but also because it sheds light on features that have not received much attention in academic literature on Asian migrations so far.

Indeed, with a few exceptions (i.e., Aihwa Ong's *Flexible Citizenship. The Cultural Logic of Transnationality*), whenever the theme of migration is explored in the context of Asian societies, the focus is usually on low skilled workers and the problems they face in light of legal discrimination, social stigmatization and economic marginalization in the receiving country. This is even truer with regard to Taiwan: we know extensively about the low skilled migrant workers who arrived in the island in the last decades (e.g., see Lan 2006; Cheng 2006), yet, much less is known about the experiences of Taiwanese professionals, especially when they cross the boundaries of the greater China hemisphere. Moore's book also reminds us that, what we commonly refer to as Asian and Chinese communities around the world, may comprise a variety of distinctive sub-groups embodying identities with unique cultural, linguistic and symbolic traits. The forty-eight individuals interviewed by Moore, professionals living in London, Toronto and Taipei, display the complexity of Taiwanese identity when it incorporates Chinese, pan-Asian and local symbols of belonging.

The book is structured along nine main chapters. In the first chapter, Moore attempts to contextualize the nuances of Taiwanese identity in light of the last five hundred years of history of Taiwan. In chapters two and three, the author introduces the main working concepts, such as network society, diaspora and identity. The transnational Taiwanese of this study could be seen as a network society because they represent a "group of skilled people, sharing a common national origin and ethnicity, maintaining connections with one another around the globe" (p. 16). They can also be framed as diaspora because they maintain connections with their homeland and construct networks based on ethnic and national identities. In this picture, identity is also crucial as an important means for the dispersed group to maintain cohesion. Building on these concepts, the following three chapters explore the three research sites: London, Toronto and Taipei. . These three sites were selected not only for convenience (the author was born in Toronto and works in London), but also on the different characteristics that each could offer to understand the experiences of Taiwanese transnational professionals. While they are all global cities, each is located differently in the hierarchy of "global cities": London offers the perspective of Europe and as one of the main global cities in the world; Toronto is located in North America and, despite being a global city, it is less frequently considered as such; finally, Taipei offers a point of comparison as the city in the homeland. Clearly, the different nature of these three cities and their different positioning in the global order also lead to distinct experiences for the informants of this study. Hence, London emerges as a sojourning place, Toronto as a place to settle down, and Taipei as the city of origin, with which most respondents had a symbolic, emotional and social link. In the last three chapters Moore offers an in-depth analysis of the data and some conclusive reflections, also suggesting ideas for future directions.

Despite the fluid narrative and rich data, a few weaknesses can be identified in the first part of the book. For instance, although the author argues that to understand the nuances of Taiwanese identity it is important to look back at the last five hundred years of history of the island, a greater effort could have been made to go beyond mainstream narratives that emphasize the island's connections with China. What about the impact of earlier exchanges with various Asia Pacific and Southeast

Asian societies? What about the impact of European colonial projects? If it is well known that centuries of Han Chinese presence had shaped the demographic composition and, more recently, identity issues of the island, it is also important to acknowledge that other actors have also contributed to shape certain nuances of contemporary Taiwanese identity. These reflections would have perfectly fit the author's main point that Taiwanese identity should be seen as a distinct ethnic identity and not as a surrogate of China.

Another point of concern is the inconsistency between conceptualization and analysis. In the first chapters, the author builds on concepts such as diaspora and high skilled migration or transnational professional migration. While the cases of Taiwanese professionals in London and Toronto offer two compelling accounts to discuss the presence of transnational migrants in global cities, the case of Taiwanese professionals in Taipei may appear less clear. Some of the respondents who lived in Taiwan never lived abroad in their life. More so, one of the interviewees in Taipei is a Swiss national who arrived in Taiwan at a young age to learn Mandarin. The reader may end up wondering how the account of the informants in Taipei fit into an investigation of Taiwanese transnational migrants. A clearer rationale should have been offered in relation to the case study of Taipei to help the reader navigate the methodological choice of the author.

Definitely, the most compelling and interesting part of this book can be found in the final three chapters, where Moore's complex reasoning and analytical depth emerges clearly. In this part, the author develops three main points.

Firstly, the author criticizes mainstream debates on ethnic networks overemphasising ethnic homogeneity and neglecting internal differences. Along this point, Moore argues that Chinese identity is a global identity that spans multiple locations and includes a multitude of different and sometimes contradictory ways of constructing and expressing that identity. Secondly, Moore departs from mainstream debates seeing Taiwanese identity as a surrogate of Chinese identity. As she argues, Chineseness could be intrinsic to Taiwanese identity, but this should not lead to the conclusion that Taiwanese identity is a sub-category of Chinese identity. Instead, Taiwanese identity should be viewed as a distinct ethnic identity that may be associated with Chinese identities, Asian identities as well as global identities. This reasoning leads to the conclusion that the construction of ethnic networks between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese, usually depicted in the literature as two different expressions of "Chineseness," instead focus more on economic opportunities rather than on similar ethnic and cultural features. Finally, the author departs from ideas of globalization as a unified and homogenous phenomenon and shows how globalization can manifest in different forms at dissimilar times and places. As Moore argues, if different globalizing and localizing opportunities influence migration and ethnic networks, it is important to look both at similarities and differences in the phenomena of globalization. This means that globalization is a condition that constantly changes and that may manifest **to a greater or lesser extent**, depending on the circumstances.

Overall, this monograph is an important contribution to existing debates on network societies, globalization, professional migration, Taiwanese transnational elites and Taiwanese identity issues. It is of great value both for specialists and students alike in the field of migration studies, international business studies, identity studies and with an interest in Chinese, Taiwanese and Asian societies.

References

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