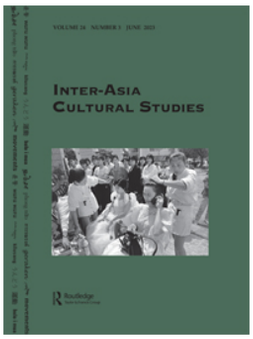

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Multiculturalism through a lens: migrants' voice in Taiwanese documentaries

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to research into multiculturalism and Taiwan's public discourse on marriage migrants, arguing for the everyday as a site for inquiry into cultural negotiations, hybridity and homemaking in multicultural societies. It analyses two documentaries—*My Imported Bride* (2003) and *Out/Marriage* (2012) from the perspective of voice, defined as the filmmaker's way of seeing the world. It explores migrants' ownership of their narratives and inhabited spaces and assesses whether the documentaries grant a voice to migrants, speaking *with* rather than *for* them. These films show that migrants have already gained a formalized representational space in Taiwan's public discourse. The narrative power remains with the directors, and their framing of migrants accommodates Taiwanese audiences' expectations, but in different ways. The earlier documentary successfully showcases typical problems underlying brokered marriages and obstacles in adapting to a new living environment. The more recent film employs discursive categories established by official multiculturalism policies, NGO-led activism, and previous media representations, which echo existing migrant-related stereotypes. Nevertheless, this film, directed by a migrant, also uses visual and auditory strategies that open a window onto migrants' intimate physical and social home spaces in Vietnam. Thus, it builds potential for alternative representations that can counteract the risk of othering migrants and solidifying ethnic and cultural boundaries, posed by representational categories coming from hegemonic sources.

KEYWORDS

Taiwan; marriage migration; documentaries; multiculturalism; voice; homemaking

Introduction and aims

The December 2019 issue of *Taiwan Panorama*, a promotional magazine issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlights the centrality of new immigrants to Taiwan's self-definition. A long article on migrants' life in Taiwan (Xie 2019) carves out physical space for them in Taipei by describing locations such as a Thai restaurant or a Vietnamese charity guesthouse. Migrants are ascribed linguistic ownership over places through names such as "Indonesia Street" and "Thailand Street," and photographs of street signs in their languages. Other photos make migrants' cultures (religions, everyday objects, and customs) visible in the spatial arrangement of homes or shops. The article also states the need for Taiwanese people to engage in actual dialogues with migrants and to

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acknowledge their personal stories (and thus, their voices). It also highlights the active involvement of Taiwanese people in helping immigrants: the owner of a mobile library and a bookstore volunteer act as guides to migrants' spaces across the island for both reporter and readers, thus underscoring cooperation between locals and migrant communities. Apart from reflecting major positive changes compared to the late 1980s and 1990s, when migrants were discursively constructed as ethnic "others" (Lin 2004), this issue also seems to express interest in migrants' everyday performances of cultural identity in their own terms, and to encourage such interest from mainstream society.

However, a closer look reveals an ideological framework underpinning this apparently progressive portrayal, which subsumes migrants to existing state-led narratives. The *Taiwan Panorama* articles display an awareness of diversity by considering both work and marriage migrants, but make no mention of immigrants from the PRC, who constitute the majority of marriage migrants (Cheng and Fell 2014, 81). Instead of including all migrants into Taiwan's national community, it selectively focuses on people from Southeast Asian countries targeted by the New Southbound Policy since 2016, which reflects the ROC government's foreign policy agenda.

It can be argued that *Taiwan Panorama* is inherently biased as government channel for public diplomacy. This study looks at representations of marriage migrants in documentaries, a kind of texts that do not need to conform to state agendas, and therefore may develop different narratives. It contributes to existing research into multiculturalism and Taiwan's public discourse on marriage migrants. Our choice of such migrants is motivated by a focus on them in the public debate on multiculturalism in Taiwan. They are among the few categories of foreign-born residents entitled to naturalization, hence long-term residence and citizenship rights. This unique position as potential members of the national community engenders political concerns not fully applicable to other migrant categories. Central to our inquiry are themes also present in *Taiwan Panorama*: voice, space, and migrants' ownership thereof.

Changing discourses of cultural diversity in Taiwan

Arriving in Taiwan since the 1980s, workers and spouses from Southeast Asia and mainland China were commonly perceived as inferior "others"; their civil, political, social and economic rights in Taiwan were greatly restricted by immigration policies (Friedman 2010). Currently exceeding one million (MOI 2022; MOL 2022), they have outnumbered Taiwan's aboriginal population. Migrants' lasting and increasing social presence, their economic, political and cultural contribution to Taiwanese society, have caused significant improvements in their access to citizenship rights (Hsia 2009; Liao 2009). Legal reforms were paralleled by shifts in their public and media representations. Despite this overall positive trend, existing research on migrants has also signalled problematic aspects related to various stages in the development of Taiwan's discourse of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism entered public debates in 1997, when the government included this theme into its narrative of a new Taiwanese nation (Rudolph 2004). The emergence of this discursive trope was propelled by a need to forge unity within a new definition of the nation conceived by opposition with the People's Republic of China. Despite celebrating multiplicity, the core idea it advocated was homogeneity. The newly defined national community included four main ethnic groups (the native Taiwanese, the Mainlanders, the Hakka, and indigenous peoples), each shaped by specific historical factors and having its own cultural characteristics, but all assumed to equally "love Taiwan" (Chao 2006, 173).

A few years later, Allen Chun (2002) signalled the insufficiency of this model of inward-looking multiculturalism, which aimed at strengthening cohesion between the various ethnic groups already on the island, while ignoring the growing inflow of marriage and labour migrants. The latter's presence was embraced by Taiwan's democratic government as an opportunity and caused a revision of the multiculturalism discourse in the early 2000s. Its scope was extended to include migrants (particularly marriage migrants) as the "fifth ethnic group" building Taiwan's national community. Nevertheless, the new conceptualization of migrants as a homogeneous community failed to accommodate the interests, identities, and voices of different ethnic groups (Cheng and Fell 2014) and single individuals who do not fall within established assumptions related to group characteristics (Momesso 2016).

Marriage migrants access Taiwanese society from a special position—that of an insider to the family, a key social unit according to Confucian ideology (still prevalent in Taiwan, Lee and Sun 1995; Lan 2019). Despite its advantages in terms of acquiring local citizenship, this status also contributes to freezing migrants' identity into mothers and wives of Taiwanese citizens confined to the reproductive sphere of their homes, thus erasing migrants' other identities (Hsia 2007; Wang and Bélanger 2008; Sandel and Liang 2010; Momesso 2016).

The new multiculturalism-related policies also came under criticism for their assimilationist approach. Wang and Bélanger (2008, 103) argue that the government, NGOs, and academia converged in constructing marriage immigrants as "inferior, helpless and underclass 'Others'" whose proper national integration required Taiwanization: acquisition of local cultural, social, and linguistic traits. Cheng and Fell (2014) also show that the acknowledgement of recent migrants in state legislation and electoral campaigns is accompanied by prioritizing national cohesion over recognition of migrants' cultural rights, which legitimates their assimilation. More recent government-endorsed initiatives testify of an opposite turn, towards maintaining rather than assimilating migrants' cultures. Examples include the Grandmother's Bridge Project initiated in 2013, also featured in *Taiwan Panorama* (Teng 2016), under which Southeast Asian immigrants were sponsored to visit their families with their children and children's schoolteachers, in order for children to meet mothers' relatives and experience their original cultures. In 2019, Southeast Asian languages were introduced to the primary education curriculum alongside local indigenous languages, Hoklo and Hakka. These measures also reflect a key aspect of present-day multiculturalism: a generational change. Marriage migrants' children reaching adulthood have started to reflect on and voice their complex, hybrid cultural identities through media forms such as literature, films, popular music and arts, a process supported by government awards. No longer regarded as "others," they are "reimagining Taiwan through their own stories" (Wang 2016, 47).

However, this shift towards showcasing instead of assimilating diversity, combined with an emphasis on second-generation identities, can also be seen as evidence for a turn towards a state-led "neoliberal multiculturalism"—"cultivating the multicultural capital of immigrant children as transnational market assets for the benefit of national development" (Lan 2019, 321) as well as viewing "immigrant mothers' linguistic and cultural heritage as a form of multicultural capital that can be converted into a market asset for their children" (327). Thus, the above-mentioned initiatives pertaining to cultures, languages and family ties of Southeast Asian migrants and their children are part of a broader set of funding and cultural exchange projects under the state's New Southbound Policy targeting ASEAN countries. Apart from objectifying migrants and their children, such policies framing cultural difference as an asset also set additional expectations as they encourage patterns of behaviour and cultural identities that go counter to those already entrenched by earlier, long-lasting policies of homogenization.

The existing discourses of multiculturalism discussed above have been formulated by powerful, hegemonic sources rather than migrants themselves. Iwabuchi, Kim and Hsia point out that multiculturalism-related policy programmes were implemented in a top-down manner as well, without being consulted with migrants (2016, 8). Academic studies of marriage migration in Taiwan tend to mirror this macro perspective or to remain within established frameworks, such as: state policies and legislation (Friedman 2010); state, party discourse and the discourse of public education (Cheng and Fell 2014); migrants' rights, empowerment, and related activism (Hsia 2009; Liao 2009; Momesso and Cheng 2017). An area that has received less attention is that of migrants' own practices of cultural identity and (self-) representation in discursive forms that offer a thick description of cultural complexity on an everyday level. Although public activities are organized in Taiwan for showcasing and preserving migrants' cultures, critical academic studies reveal their reductionist character: they often consist of public performances of an established, essentialized set of cultural forms deemed traditional such as attire or food (Cheng and Fell 2014, 86). Taiwanese people face difficulties in understanding the cultural complexities of Southeast Asian migrants as well. For this reason, Wang advocates two processes likely to lead to real inclusivity: attentiveness to the voices and experiences of migrants, which should be allowed to blend into national narratives on the one hand, and on the other—opening a space for dialogue and deep understanding of migrants' personal histories, experiences, dilemmas, and perceptions of themselves as Taiwanese (2016, 45, 49–50). Our study aims to reveal to what extent the analysed documentaries create a space for migrants to voice their own narratives and perform cultural identities.

From multicultural policies to everyday multiculturalism

The previous section mainly discussed Taiwan's official discourse of multiculturalism. In its normative aspect, multiculturalism is a political model, a set of strategies adopted to govern and manage ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity in multicultural societies (Hall 2019, 96). It is based on liberal democratic principles promoting equal opportunities, social justice, and access to political power to all cultural communities, open-mindedness towards cultural difference and inclusive national identity. It also assumes that state institutions should be impartial, insulated from ethnic and religious pressure (Parekh 1998). East Asian countries have adopted such policies to address increasing diversity in their societies. Taiwan was among the first to do so, with the initial aim of levelling internal inequalities, and later for better inclusion of newly arrived immigrants.

Kymlicka (1995, 5) advanced an early theory of minority rights in the political context of a multicultural state, postulating universal rights to all individuals regardless of group membership and group-differentiated rights. Subsequent empirical studies denounced simplistic celebrations of cultural hybridity, which lack a critical perspective of how specific structural constraints shape multicultural discourses and policies (May and Sleeter 2019; Werbner 2013). Kincheloe and Steinberg named this approach "benevolent multiculturalism" (1997, 7). It offers a "deracialized" discourse that reifies and depoliticizes culture and cultural difference without addressing material issues of racism and disadvantage, an artificial, propagandistic narrative that risks engendering cultural separateness. Such approaches fail to acknowledge that those outside the dominant group are often powerless, subjected to violence and poverty. Consequently, they are often voiceless as well, and hence unable to respond or contribute to top-down discourses of multiculturalism.

Other scholars such as Werbner argue that these debates offer a partial picture of cultural diversity from the perspective of state governance, reflecting a "conspiracy of top-down state engineering" (2012, 97). They search for agency and resistance within alternative sites—migrant communities themselves and the broader grassroots society. Multiculturalism is a "politically and bureaucratically negotiated order" (200), an "achievement" rather than just a narrative, a "cohesive, normative, moral force which resists and transcends fragmentation and division, while allowing for many different identities to be sustained and nourished beneath the surface" (416). This latter approach is "multiculturalism from below." Werbner underscores the dynamics of everyday multiculturalism, the non-official, spontaneous, intimate practices, the "routine, unreflective inter-ethnic encounters and interactions occurring daily amongst immigrants" (2013, 402). Wise and Velayutham also call for attention to how social actors experience, talk about and negotiate cultural diversity within actual everyday interactions, practices and shared spaces (2009, 2–3).

Verhage (2014) showcases the sensorial intimacy of being in the world and of connections with other people. It is through bodily affects, experiences, and habits that we encounter others and give them meaning, which engenders particular, intersubjective rhythms of encounter. She also speaks of intertwining between the subject and the world. The permeability of the body makes it possible for dominant narratives to encroach upon marginal others in a physical manner, and for difference to become solidified as divisive habits and impermeable, embodied boundaries. However, the constant re-enactment of attitudes, behaviours and forms of common sense that may engender boundaries also provides a resource for their dismantling. Therefore, the everyday is a key realm for the (re)production of difference, but also for resistance and transformation, generating new political forms. Ben Highmore discusses de Certeau's view on a "colonial encounter" whereby "the cultures of everyday life are erased by the professional bodies that attend to them, [and …] therefore submerged below the level of a social and textual authority." Despite being invisible and unrepresentable, these cultures provide practical forms of resistance from below (2001, 31). He calls for attention to the minutiae of everyday life—semiotic material that goes beyond the visual and verbal to include more aspects of its sensory realm: the aural, olfactory, haptic, activities such as cooking and eating, walking or body posture.

Stuart Hall defines hybridity in modern multicultural societies as an ongoing process of cultural translation. It requires continuous revision of systems of reference, meanings, values, and norms, revealed as insufficient through negotiations with the difference of the other (2019, 113–114). At the centre of this process is *différance* (in Jacques Derrida's terms), a characteristic of semiotic systems based not on binary differences, but on continuous play and interweaving of similarities and differences, where every concept refers to and overlaps with others. Strategies of *différance* do not inaugurate radically different forms of life but incorporate existing traditions (2019, 102–103, 122). They prevent any system from becoming stabilized, and draw attention to in-between, liminal states and sites of resistance, intervention and translation, new kinds of localism that arise within the global or mainstream but are not simulacra thereof.

The everyday is, therefore, a key site for studying cultural diversity and difference. It is impacted by top-down policies, but also shaped by individual negotiations aligned with people's intimate realities. Media representations of the everyday (films, soap operas or tabloid newspapers) often manufacture it as a spectacle, and thus alienate and depoliticize it as something to be looked at but not interacted with (Sheringham 2006, 18). With their claim to truth, documentaries can offer representations of everyday life that are political—they may encourage patterns of viewing the world that take account of the critical potential inherent in the everyday as a field of resistance.

Documentaries and voices

Our choice of documentaries is motivated by the claim of truthfulness underlying this genre. As Bill Nichols indicates (2010, 7–8), unlike fiction films that refer to the world obliquely and allegorically, documentaries derive from historical reality. They capture real people and verifiable events from the world we share. But although a documentary's perspective on situations, lives and events is plausible, it stems from the filmmaker's creative treatment of actuality. The story of a documentary is told in the filmmaker's voice, defined as "each film's specific way of expressing its way of seeing the world" (68), the filmmaker's manner of engaging with the subject, the argument they build and their social point of view. The concept of voice refers not only to a documentary's spoken aspect but to all the cinematic techniques available to the filmmaker, the organizing logic behind decisions pertaining to sound, image, time, space etc. (72). It includes, but is not limited to, the voices of authorities featured in the documentary, who reflect the filmmaker's point of view (and thus speak *for* the film), and those of social actors who present their own viewpoints (speaking *in* the film) (71-72).

Nichols raises ethical concerns related to the implications of speaking *for* or *on behalf of* someone in terms of the filmmaker's dual responsibility towards both subject and the audience; the unequal distribution of power inherent in the filmmaker's control over the camera, the rights of interviewees in negotiating interaction, or the management of space in which exchanges take place. So does Jay Ruby in his account of the documentary as "a social service and political act" intended to "give a voice to the voiceless"—groups hitherto deprived of the means to produce their own images, and thus of "the right to control [their] cultural identity in the world arena" (1991, 51). Thus, this genre's political mission would be to challenge the relations of power that contribute to the marginal position of documented subjects. Ruby explores strategies for speaking *with* subjects instead of speaking *for* and *about* them—blending insider and outsider's viewpoints into a new perspective in which neither voice is dominant, or subjects taking over the camera to speak for themselves.

Recent works add further complexity to the issue of voice. Pooja Rangan critically comments on the humanitarian ethic underlying participatory documentaries: while claiming to give a voice to the voiceless, they invent, enlist, and commodify disenfranchized humanity to sustain the documentary as a genre and "corroborate [its] privileged connection with the real" (2017, 2). She looks at "emergency thinking" as a mode of ethical imaginary that claims a sense of urgency to legitimate subsuming the aesthetics and politics of representation to action aimed at saving endangered humanity and explores "immediations"—"documentary tropes that […] exclude [disenfranchised] figures as other but do so through the seemingly inclusive gesture of inviting them to perform their humanity" (6). Rangan also calls for a reassessment, or audit that reveals the logocentrism behind the established voice-centred, textual viewpoint in documentaries. Such an approach frames voice as audibility, produced by the materiality of vocal sounds and auditory practices that inform specific practices of listening to the world, and explores the political potential thereof (2019, 29–30).

Taiwan has a well-established tradition of independent documentary filmmaking dating back to the 1980s, strongly connected with the development of civil society and countering state-sanctioned media representations with new narratives that conveyed perspectives from below, coming from marginalized groups. In the 1990s, independent documentaries displayed increasing critical awareness of their own discursive status. They problematized the extent to which the camera can give a voice to the powerless and the potential outcomes of its interventional presence in the depicted social situations. The participatory mode became dominant as a form of encounter with the other, thus providing space for alternative voices to speak outside the filmmaker's dominant

perspective, supplementing or contradicting it (Chiu 2005, 98; Chiu and Zhang 2015, 120–122). We will assess the extent to which documentaries, a field of cultural production that in Taiwan is explicitly committed to marginalized groups and has displayed a sustained ability to engage with them in a complex and self-reflexive manner, can play such roles for marriage migrants as well in deconstructing established discursive categories for representing migrants, circulated by powerful ideological apparatuses such as the state, NGOs, or the academia.

Filmmakers' attention turned towards migrants at the turn of the twenty-first century, a trend reflected in academic research only a decade later. Chen (2019) discusses feature films depicting labour migrants' negotiations of freedom, subjecthood and social participation through language, everyday performances and objects used in urban spaces. She argues that these films challenge the notion of a homogeneous, Han-dominated society and counter exclusion by establishing hybrid identities and acknowledging migrants' own languages, viewpoints, emotions and desires. Huang and Li (2012) reach different conclusions: despite sympathetic representations of female migrant labourers likening them to family members, films promoting the "just-like-family" rhetoric instrumentalize their lives. This rhetoric demands migrants' emotional investment legitimated in terms of family devotion, but not reciprocation by employers' families.

Two academic works on marriage migration (Chiu and Tsai 2014; Chiu and Zhang 2015) analyse Tsai Tsung-long's documentary *My Imported Wife* (2003). They discuss the psychological complex that creates a "double bind structure" excluding resistance by subjects: contradictory negative stereotypes of migrant wives as passive victims and aggressive pursuers of money, and of their husbands as frustrated losers and sexist oppressors. They argue that the film underscores "the agency of the underprivileged in claiming their rights to humanity" (Chiu and Zhang 2015, 158) and provides a "space of hospitality that welcomes the foreign" (Chiu and Tsai 2014, 121). It invites self-problematization through negotiating with cultural difference, as well as "recognition of the otherness of the other and the ethical responsibility of respecting that otherness" (Chiu and Zhang 2015, 166). These two studies also state that Tsai's film advances "a cosmopolitan outlook that presupposes openness towards the world" and agency in negotiating alternative life scenarios (Chiu and Tsai 2014, 117).

The two works quoted above reveal the unsettling potential of Tsai's documentary—that of creating a space of hospitality for the other by perceiving one's own culture from the other's perspective, thus also taking viewers out of their comfort zones and advocating unexpected, different productions of reality. However, this discussion is centred on negotiations related to claiming human status by the film's protagonists—in other words, it reflects an ontological rather than cultural preoccupation. We adopt this latter standpoint and look at the extent to which documentaries display attentiveness and reflexivity towards migrants' processes of homemaking both in their countries of origin and in Taiwan, as well as towards the portability of home in Boccagni's terms (2017, 50–55)—the cultural baggage that marriage migrants bring to Taiwan and incorporate into new cultural configurations during homemaking processes on the island.

Our analysis will begin with *My Imported Bride*, another film from Tsai Tsung-lung's 2003 "Migrant Brides" trilogy. It will continue with a more recent film—*Out/Marriage* (2012), produced by Nguyen Kim-Hong, a migrant also acting as a protagonist. This choice has two advantages: it reveals two standpoints (that of an established Taiwanese director specializing in migrant-related themes, and that of a migrant); it also allows for a comparison across a timespan of almost ten years. Both films depict Vietnamese migrants and have enjoyed prominent presence in the public discourse. The "Migrant Brides" trilogy was commissioned by Taiwan's Public Television Service (PTS), one of the key state-established institutions that build a social and cultural environment

for Taiwanese identity above political divisions (Fitera 2019, 188–189). Documentaries, a genre effective for promoting cultural values, have been central to PTS programming. *Out/Marriage* has been screened at migration-related festivals and promoted to international audiences since 2018 by the Ministry of Culture as part of the Taiwan Cinema Toolkit. As it is the released films that become integrated into the public discourse of marriage migration, our analysis is a textual one and does not attempt to establish directors' intentions, the conditions of production that led to the films' ultimate form, or audience reception of the films.

Space is a key component of voice as defined in our study. Lefebvre (1991) explored the potential of space (rather than language and discourse) for investigating subjectivity. Starting from the assumption that people engage in place-making activities within the space they occupy, and thus both "have a space and […] are in this space" (294), he suggested that spatiality is central to the analysis of social relations. As "a set of relations and forms" (116), space is shaped by the hierarchies of power that characterize those relations and generate ever-shifting "social geometries of power" (Massey 1994, 3). Thus, representations of space are not neutral, but reflect the power relations defining that space and strategies for challenging or reproducing these relationships. Apart from migrants' ownership over their narratives, we will also explore these documentaries' strategies for representing space: as fully lived and experienced by migrants, or as scripted, controlled by the director's voice. Drawing on Soja's (1999) idea of "third space," we inquire whether spaces remain mere material containers ("first space"), imagined conceptualizations in the narrative of the documented subjects ("second space"), or sites for actual, everyday social interactions, for resistance and struggle through which social and cultural boundaries are negotiated by the documented subjects ("third space").

My Imported Bride

This documentary's migrant protagonist, A Luan, lacks ownership over both the events leading to her marriage and the documentary's narrative, which are shaped by men. Heizai, a Taiwanese cook, initiates the marriage-related process by deciding to set out for Vietnam in search for a bride. He also contributes to the film's story, expressing his thoughts, feelings, and marital conundrums. The director is the source of a voiceover and engages in direct dialogues with the protagonists. The integrity of the migrant's personhood is interrupted through a separation between body and voice. When introduced to the audience, she is othered by a male gaze that positions her as a spectacle. She is presented as a silent object of desire, a mediated persona without voice and agency—through a photograph seen by Heizai, which triggers his determination to find the actual person recorded in the image. After being found by her suitor, the migrant does obtain a body. However, for most of the film she lacks a voice as she cannot speak any of the linguistic varieties used in Taiwan. Thus, as Chiu and Zhang point out, the exclusion characterizing her life in Taiwan is not due to official policies but operates on an everyday level. It is language that constitutes the dividing line between two zones – the migrant's *zoē* ("bare life") and *bios* ("qualified/good life") in Giorgio Agamben's terms. She is thus living "in a state of suspension, neither the outside nor the inside" (Chiu and Zhang 2015, 157).

The documentary shows poignant awareness of this barrier and the migrant's inability to overcome it. It captures her emotions reflected in facial expressions, with several scenes depicting her frustrated and fully silent, or denying the filmmaking team access to her home in Taiwan—she turns away from the camera or leaves the room in distress. The lack of a Taiwanese voice engenders fundamental limitations—the migrant is reluctant to attend to basic bodily needs such as acquiring food.

This makes her dependent on the director's occasional lunch boxes and a neighbour's more regular cooking. It also deprives her of discursive ownership over the private space of her body. It is Heizai, the director and the Chinese-speaking audience who enjoy privileged access to knowledge on such intimate topics as the couple's reproductive abilities. The audience can see ultrasound scans of the migrant's uterus before and after a miscarriage, and images from a medical book with the gynaecologist's explanations directly targeting the camera. This scene defends the migrant: it shows that the husband's poor sperm quality induced by heavy smoking was the probable cause of the miscarriage, and not A Luan's carelessness as Heizai, their neighbour and she herself seem to assume.

By emphasizing A Luan's lack of a voice, the documentary reveals problematic cultural and representational mechanisms, which have often been targeted by criticism from feminist media scholars and discourses of social justice. On the one hand, as explained earlier, Tsai's documentary draws attention to a visual dynamic that propels a politics of racial and sexual objectification (Rangan 2015, 95). On the other hand, through consistent emphasis on the protagonist's inability to communicate with Taiwanese interlocutors, it echoes a preoccupation with speaking out as means for expressing the subject's interiority (ideas, opinions), thus achieving humanity, agency, or political participation (Rangan 2017, 105). Feminist documentaries also focus on speaking out as a strategy for countering a powerful, objectifying gaze (Rangan 2015, 96). Moreover, through scenes like the one described in the previous paragraph, the filmmaker seems to fulfil an ethical duty towards both viewers and his subject by educating the audiences on potential causes of infertility that lie on men's side (and not on women's, as often assumed). However, he does so while bypassing the subject (who cannot fully understand the conversation) and reproducing an emphasis on childbearing as key site for governance of marital citizenship. Thus, the film reinforces claims to Taiwanese (state) sovereignty in monitoring the intimate life of transnational couples (Lan 2019, 319).

Despite moments of frustration when she rejects the camera's presence, A Luan mostly displays a welcoming attitude, smiling on the doorstep on her home in Taiwan and beckoning the filmmaking team into this personal space. The director does not reciprocate the migrant's hospitality by reclaiming the visibility of her original linguistic and cultural identity, but instead suppresses it. Her name in the original Vietnamese pronunciation and script is never mentioned. The audiences only come to know its Taiwanized version in Chinese characters with the prefix "A-" (A-Luan), a colloquial Hoklo practice. Even this name is seldom employed—the protagonist is nameless for most of the film. Translation is occasionally performed by another Vietnamese immigrant, but it serves the filmmaker in building coherence for his story rather than the protagonist in constructing a complex image of herself for the audience by revealing details about her personal history, feelings, and opinions.

My Imported Bride also exposes social and political mechanisms that place the responsibility for effective communication solely on migrants' shoulders. An awareness of the need for husbands' contribution is expressed in a scene shot at the ROC consulate in Vietnam. A speech for newlywed couples by a consulate employee underscores the need for communication to mitigate cultural differences that may lead to marital disharmony; he exhorts husbands to show openness and active involvement. However, he offers no models of proactive approach to communication, or interest in establishing the exact nature of cultural difference: the speech is shot in Chinese only, without translation into Vietnamese. All Vietnamese spouses can do is yawn, and all Taiwanese husbands can gain from such exhortations is set formulae, which they employ to describe their interaction with the foreign wives. Back in Taiwan, Heizai uses such expressions while reporting the couple's problems to the director, without showing actual reflexivity concerning cultural dissimilarities. The director exposes the gap between normative statements and practice but does not attempt to bridge it by exploring cultural difference or questioning linguistic assimilation. The film does not

acknowledge the migrant's linguistic competence in Vietnamese, nor does it problematize her predicament given Taiwan's complex linguistic situation, despite framing this complexity by including both Mandarin (in the voiceover and the director's dialogues with A Luan) and Hoklo (spoken by Heizai and the director in their own conversations). Instead, it only promotes learning Mandarin as strategy for gaining unlimited access to knowledge and becoming known to others. The migrant-translator mentioned above is identified as "successful." Business entrepreneurship and language proficiency are her only traits shown to the audience, which implies that fluency in Chinese and economic productivity are the key measures of migrants' success in Taiwan. Reductively positioned as a child through her lack of linguistic skills, A Luan is given lessons in Mandarin by another child (Heizai's niece), her husband and the director himself, who repeatedly checks on her progress.

The documentary seems to represent Taiwan as a node in a dynamic, transnational mobility network connecting it to Vietnam. Thus, it may seem to construct the island as an "extroverted" place, "which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local" (Massey 1994, 147). However, Taiwan's salient image as a regionally connected country is not a measure for the migrant's personal mobility. Unlike the (male) filmmaker and her future husband who initiate travel to Vietnam or freely move between places while abroad, A Luan lacks the financial means that would entitle her to decision-making power in this respect. In Taipei, she is largely immobile, confined to Heizai's tiny apartment and reluctant to leave it on her own due to insufficient linguistic skills. Marital conflicts make her willing to return to Vietnam, which Heizai opposes. By the end of the film, A Luan has settled down in Taiwan and the couple's emotional balance has become sustainable. They are shown fishing together, but the camera lingers on the endless expanse of sea which thus becomes a boundary separating her from her native Vietnam, which for the time being remains unattainable.

As Heizai decides to find a Vietnamese bride, the camera follows him on his trip and depicts many places in this country: Ho Chi Minh City with a hotel where a procession of local women is displayed for Heizai's choice, markets where he shops for his fiancée, a restaurant where the wedding takes place, the ROC consulate where they apply for the visa and rural Vietnam, where A Luan's home is located. Given this multitude of locations, the film may appear to immerse its audience in A Luan's world as it is lived. However, a closer look reveals that such spaces are not lived, but scripted, and reflect a social geometry of power (in Massey's terms) that privileges Taiwanese men. The sequence of places and the kinds of actions performed therein conforms to the filmmaker's narrative showing typical stages of matchmaking for foreign brides (each introduced by captions). Just as A Luan herself is not individualized by her original name and personal traits, none of these spaces is made distinctive or localized through naming or mapping. This undifferentiated depiction of hotels, villages or cities contributes to a de-valuation of Vietnam, its people and culture. This is also emphasized in the way Taiwanese persons interact with the Vietnamese and the surrounding environment. Heizai's behaviour is orchestrated by the Taiwanese marriage intermediaries, who instruct him on what and how to do. The intermediaries do not consider local betrothal and marriage customs that might need to be respected. They also flout Taiwanese customs and dismiss Heizai's attempts to follow them. For the envelope with the bridal money handed to A Luan's mother, the marriage intermediary chooses white (connoting mourning in Chinese cultures) instead of red (connoting propitiousness). He advises Heizai not to kneel before his bride's mother afterwards, as he would do for a Taiwanese mother-in-law; instead, Heizai awkwardly performs a salute (a foreign, incongruous gesture). Thus, A Luan's family is not shown respect in any country's terms.

Heizai's visits to his wife's home are chances for viewers to perceive how this intimate space is lived and "made" (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Recent studies of home conceptualize it as a process of

homemaking; "houses and homes are thus projects, emotional and economic investments, and activities that help to stabilise and sustain relationships over time and space" (Hentschke and Williams 2018, 5). They "are dynamic and complex spaces within and through which people work to secure and organise their lives, livelihoods, and relationships"; "invoking places, persons, objects, emotions, attachments, and aspirations" (1). The film only presents scripted sequences of actions and reactions in brief shots: A Luan's family welcoming guests at the dinner table, A Luan bringing food to the table and her female relatives preparing it in the kitchen, her mother accepting Heizai's gifts or waving goodbye to the departing couple. Any spontaneously performed activities, displays of emotions and bonds enacted in everyday life and essential for homemaking processes, are filtered out of these scenes. Part of the Vietnam footage is rendered in fast-forward motion: the pageant of women shown to Heizai at the hotel, the wedding reception, the numerous applicants conducting visa formalities at the ROC consulate. This visual strategy highlights the contrast between the lifetime commitment and responsibilities that marriage involves, and the speed at which brokered transnational marriages are contracted. Its other outcome, however, is showing Vietnam as an expedited space, a short-term project for both Taiwanese protagonists and viewers, the opposite of a long-term homemaking process. Instead of entering such intimate spaces as insiders (new family members), Heizai, the filmmaking team and the audience remain outside as spectators.

Taxi trips are another element that reinforces this idea. While scenes depicting specific places in Vietnam are heavily edited and artificially accelerated, much time is used for taxi trip scenes showing the director and Heizai moving between locations. The comfortable, silent interior of cars becomes a sanitized space capsule that contrasts with the blurry Ho Chi Minh City with busy, haphazard traffic on rainy days, the in-between, unidentified spaces which construct an image of Vietnam as abstract "other." Glass corridors as sanitizing space of "cultural quarantine" are also depicted at the Taipei airport, where Heizai greets A Luan five months after their marriage. A Luan walks through these corridors, emerges from behind glass doors at the arrival terminal and steps into the clean, silent, orderly space of Taipei where life unfolds at a leisurely pace, seemingly cleansed of her cultural baggage and family ties left behind in chaotic, fast-forward Vietnam. Vietnam is thus separated from the Taiwanese film characters and audience, kept behind glass walls which allow it to be seen but not directly experienced. It is not constructed as a place, endowed with value and meaning for those who relate to and get to know it, as opposed to space (an abstract, undifferentiated concept) (Tuan 1977, 6). The film privileges divisions, boundaries and cultural hierarchies over spontaneous cultural immersion and exchange. It is probably accurate in rendering the typical dismissal of Vietnam in brokered marriages. It thus encourages a critical view of such practices but does not challenge this status quo through highlighting the brides' home spaces and cultures.

Out/Marriage

In the opening scene, director Kim Hong Nguyen pronounces her name in both Chinese and Vietnamese, and emphatically positions herself in two locations connected by images of the sea: her native Vietnam, with which she identifies in national terms and emotionally as a home, and Taiwan, where she currently lives and has fulfilled her dreams (thus as a place for individual self-fulfilment). This double positioning sets the stage for her narrative based on connections and movement between the two locations, with most of the film shot in Vietnam. Unlike the protagonist of *My Imported Bride*, it is Nguyen who initiates and controls this mobility as successful applicant for a grant from Taiwan's National Culture and Arts Foundation, which enabled her to travel to Vietnam for the documentary project. She follows the trajectories of several women who decided to leave Taiwan

and tell their stories in their own social and cultural home space (Vietnam). Mobility is thus the central theme of the film and is markedly presented as owned by the migrant women. Two of them have secured financial means for returning to Vietnam from their Taiwanese husbands—they refuse to return to Taiwan after visiting their families. One of these women also leaves a relationship established after coming back to Vietnam, seeking work opportunities (thus economic independence) elsewhere in her native country. Another migrant, already a divorcee, finances travels between Taiwan and Vietnam through working in Taiwan. Yet another protagonist, a migrant from Indonesia, chooses to divorce and is shown leaving for another Taiwanese location.

Nguyen seems to join her protagonists on an equal footing: she is explicit about her marriage migrant status, steps in front of the camera and shows her family in Vietnam. Nevertheless, despite owning her narrative as the filmmaker, she remains the sole wielder of power over it, which she does not share or negotiate with her subjects. The other migrants in the film are subsumed to the logic of the director's narrative, which is essentially Taiwanese despite being set in Vietnam, as it reproduces many existing tropes employed for framing migrants in the Taiwanese political and state discourse, the academic discourse, and the discourse of NGO-led activism.

A salient established trope is the status of wives and mothers, which Nguyen employs both for herself and her protagonists. The object of migrants' quest in their transnational or local journeys is happiness, and the film asserts their right thereto. The director states self-fulfilment as main motivation for leaving Vietnam and starts the film with the assertion that she has accomplished her dreams in Taiwan, while leaving open the issue of what exactly these dreams had been. For the Indonesian migrant and the migrant seeking a job elsewhere in Vietnam, the issue of what exactly might ultimately bring happiness is also left open. Nevertheless, all migrants except the director are depicted within recently dissolved or ongoing relationships, and newly established marriages, both in Vietnam and in Taiwan—therefore, marriage remains the principal framework for happiness. All migrants, including the director, are portrayed as model mothers, striving to provide for their children in affective, economic, and educational terms, thus potentially countering authoritative discursive sources that frame migrants as insufficiently skilled for that role. The normalizing framing in this documentary is particularly salient with regard to education, an area where immigrants' children are often targeted by state-sponsored programmes addressing a perceived risk of underperformance (Lan 2019, 323–324).

Like *My Imported Bride*, this documentary also promotes the necessity of learning Mandarin. A scene that might be an anachronism (as learning Chinese likely preceded her becoming a filmmaker) shows the director as diligent student in a Mandarin class, while her voiceover associates linguistic skills in Mandarin with strengthening the abilities for promoting Vietnamese culture in Taiwan. For migrants' children, the stated necessity to learn Chinese echoes the neoliberal approach to multiculturalism explored by Lan (2019). The bilingual education (in Mandarin and Vietnamese) that the director offers her daughter is stated in the voiceover as a source of (multi)-cultural capital. For other migrants' children, skills in Mandarin are strongly associated with transnational economic capital as well—such education is depicted as an investment in children's future, securing better social standing and higher earnings in Taiwan. Both the filmmaker's voiceover and most of her dialogues with migrants' children are conducted in Chinese despite being shot in Vietnam. Special emphasis is placed on the necessity to practice Mandarin even in Vietnam in the filmmaker's explicit exhortations addressing other migrants' children, and through scenes showing Vietnamese mothers using Taiwanese textbooks to practice Chinese with their daughters.

The forms employed for promoting native cultures and migrants' experiences in Taiwan depicted in *Out/Marriage* conform to established tropes recurrent in NGO activism and state-

sponsored projects. Against the backdrop of the filmmaker's voiceover emphasizing the importance of local linguistic skills for promoting her native culture in Taiwan, the scene that shows Nguyen while learning Chinese is followed by images of her among other Vietnamese women during a public performance of traditional dance and song in colourful costumes, and during a rehearsal for an enactment of migrants' experiences as "theatre of the oppressed."

It would seem, therefore, that this documentary is reproducing established tropes related to migrants which originate in the state-led or academic discourse. Despite being an instance of "fourth cinema" in Barry Barclay's terms (i.e. films made by indigenous people and distributed or consumed according to their wishes), it may appear to remain within a Taiwanese national orthodoxy. Surprisingly, however, it has a certain dimension that emerges parallel to the main narrative—unfiltered traces of the everyday in both auditory and visual terms. Even when speaking Chinese, the director's voice is marked as non-Taiwanese through its accent. But more than this additional material marker in migrants' spoken Mandarin, this film recalls Rangan's concept of audibilities by the multitude of background noises included in its soundtrack. Typically filtered out, such auditory elements often dominate interviewed subjects' voices in Nguyen's documentary to the extent of making them barely comprehensive. This effect occurs throughout the film regardless of location. For scenes shot in Vietnam, it is compounded by visual images of unscripted spaces not always connected to the film's central narrative. The combination of these auditory and visual elements works to shift the audience's attention towards what is occurring rather than what is said in the scripted interviews, and grant viewers first-hand insight into migrants' experiences and native subjectivity. Some of these scenes depict affective bonds, such as an intimate shot of a mother playing with her daughter on the bed, suddenly interrupted by the daughter's cry of fear that her mother might leave her behind in Vietnam. Others depict spontaneous, even chaotic occurrences: a migrant's daughter inadvertently riding her bike into her grandfather while he is interviewed, with loud karaoke in the background, coming from an unidentified source. In other cases, audiences are presented with shots of regularly repeated everyday activities such as cooking, raising domestic fowl, casting or fixing fishing nets or processing fish, which do not contribute to the topic of the ongoing voiceover or conversation. As a result, apart from reflecting an established script, spaces in Vietnam are spontaneously lived, occupied, used. Within such spaces, subjects engage in increased relationality with the surrounding environment on their own terms. They embody ongoing processes of homemaking in the sense of "establishing connections with others and creating a sense of order and belonging as part of rather than separate from society" (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 14). Interestingly, these glimpses of everyday local culture and their mundane surroundings are very dissimilar to the scripted stage performances of Vietnamese culture mentioned above, with which the director illustrates her statements about promoting her native identity while in Taiwan.

Conclusion

Both documentaries successfully showcase immigrants and the problems they encounter, and depict Taiwan as a node in a regional migration network. They prove that instead of inhabiting an invisible "third space," marriage migrants have gained a space for formalized discursive representation, which parallels public policies informed by normative multiculturalism.

The political potential of Tsai's film lies in revealing mechanisms of objectification that often arise from brokered marriages and marriage migration, as well as the migrant's impossibility to cross the dividing line between a "bare" and a "good" life entailed by lack of a voice that she can

use to communicate in Taiwan. These factors impact A Luan in a fundamental, intimate, bodily manner and determine her inability to hold narrative ownership in the film. *My Imported Bride* also exposes common situations, processes and problems encountered by migrants: marriage transactions and interactions with professional matchmakers, official formalities, sudden dislocation from their native environment and difficulties in adapting to the new one. Such narrative strategies may reflect actual, shared experiences of migrants in Taiwan, with the potential effect of educating Taiwanese audiences and calling for individual and institutional intervention for change. By also showing the ever-changing, fragile equilibrium of Heizai and A Luan's relationship, the film attempts to take an ethical stance. It introduces a dimension of critical cosmopolitanism in Delanty's terms, in the sense of encouraging self-problematization and recognition of otherness through encounters between local and global, thus creating the "communicative models of world openness" (2006, 35), also discussed by Chiu, Tsai and Zhang in their studies (2014, 2015). Nevertheless, due to framing A Luan's situation through employing typical categories and the visual strategies of cultural cleansing captured in our analysis, the film channels the migrant's subjectivity into narratives significant for the dominant (Taiwanese) group, which conform to established epistemic categories. Tsai's documentary reinforces cultural hierarchies, incorporates A Luan into the "good" life of Taiwan and fails to underscore the richness and complexity of her individual history, emotions, identities, everyday practices of homemaking in both Vietnam and Taiwan, or negotiations between the two cultures she came to belong to.

Out/Marriage was produced by a migrant (Nguyen Kim-Hong), who thus holds full ownership over its story. Although other protagonists of her film do not share narrative ownership, they are depicted as owning the key asset of (transnational) mobility. The director's narrative power is deployed with the potential aim to convey a political message through borrowing mainstream discursive categories for framing migrants, a strategy discussed by other scholars such as Cheng and Fell (2014) or Wang and Bélanger (2008). She counters negative stereotypes and claims equal citizenship rights by framing herself and other migrants as good mothers nurturing their children in emotional, material, and educational terms, which include the learning and teaching of Mandarin. She asserts cultural otherness and the right to promote it in Taiwan through accepted forms such as performances in colourful, traditional costumes. She underscores bonds between migrants, their voice and empowerment by showing them engaged in NGO-led activities in Taiwan, within specifically delineated spaces often used for such purposes: foundation headquarters or public, sometimes theatrical stages. This strategy could be regarded as an instance of complicity to cultural colonization and construction of another safe version of multiculturalism, which tames and controls cultural difference by appropriating and framing it through categories that conform to normative multiculturalism, but do not disrupt existing comfort zones. It also resonates with the homogenizing discourse of a "fifth main ethnic group" encompassing all recent immigrants regardless of their origin. Thus, this documentary may seem to speak *for* migrants under the guise of speaking *with* them, displacing migrants' marginalized voices and rewriting their stories from a position aligned with the privileged, dominant centre without challenging or critically reflecting upon established power relations. Like *My Imported Bride*, it seems to invent and commodify disenfranchized humanity and to use "emergency thinking" (the need to counter existing migrant-related stereotypes) to justify erasure of migrants' individual identities (Rangan 2017). Because it shows migrants performing roles that fall within established, mainstream categories as part of their everyday life and within the intimacy of home spaces, it may run the risk of solidifying artificially constructed symbolic boundaries, making them impermeable and adhering to migrants as shared meanings,

sedimented habits that dictate particular rhythms of encounter in a physical, sensorial sense (Verhage 2014, 98, 101) not only for the dominant group, but also for migrants themselves.

However, Nguyen's film displays another, equally strong political potential by underscoring "audibilities" which almost overwhelm linguistic utterances in the soundtrack (Rangan 2019), and intimate, familiar spaces and activities that provide viewers with a thick description of everyday life and homemaking processes in Vietnam in all their chaos and messiness. Such depictions contrast to the rhythmic harmony of music and dance and the visual beauty of traditional costumes often performed by migrants in Taiwanese public spaces. They do not necessarily show a more "authentic" dimension of migrants but combine with practices of borrowing established categories for self-description into cultural hybridity as strategies of *différance* in Stuart Hall's terms. Thus, *Out/Marriage* offers a fuller, individualized image of everyday multiculturalism not as a finite product, but as a process of constant negotiation between existing and new categories, dominant groups and minorities. The film reveals both migrants' conformity with established discursive tropes which they use to attain their own political interests (at the risk of othering migrants, reproducing and solidifying ethnic borders), and depictions of "third space" that can dismantle these borders.

For this reason, we argue for the potential of the everyday as a site of inquiry into cultural hybridity and diversity in multicultural societies. Nguyen's film extends the boundaries of home to encompass Vietnam and reveals Vietnamese homes as lived spaces. Although subsumed to a state agenda, the new trend of "neoliberal multiculturalism" may highlight migrants' individual voices and everyday cultural performances and negotiations. Borders can be both made and unmade through reiteration, as they "rely on the constant re-enactment […] of the attitudes, behaviors, and 'common senses' that perpetuate them" (Verhage 2014, 103). Documentaries might join other media (such as the state-endorsed migrant literature or arts) in carving and progressively extending the space for alternative representations of migrants in Taiwan, showing them less as embodiments of general categories and cultural "others," and more as next-door neighbours. Such alternative accounts would explore migrants' individualized homemaking processes involving manifold connections between distant geographic locations. They would inquire into emotions, meaningful relationships, objects, spaces, and practices involved in migrants' understanding of home, their availability and degree of portability from migrants' countries of origin, strategies ensuring continuity in Taiwan-based homemaking processes, or disruptive factors thereof (Boccagni 2017). Consequently, they would perform self-reflexive deconstruction as "an effort to penetrate the world of lived experience […] to show the gap that separates the world of everyday meaning from the words that are inscribed about that world by various cultural authorities" (Denzin 2015, 196).

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