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The Mobility Intentions of Privileged and Middling Migrant Professionals in Singapore: A Cross-Cultural Comparison, and the Effects of the “Singaporeans First” Strategy

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Summary

Research on highly skilled migrants, transnational elites, and expatriates has often portrayed these groups as displaying an exceptional readiness for mobility, moving through a frictionless world, and belonging to an elite or privileged class in their host countries. Also, it has mostly focused on the migration of professionals from the West to low- or middle-income countries elsewhere. This article challenges and amends existing research through an analysis of the variability and temporality of the mobility intentions of professionals, including their aspirations to fixity, stay, and settlement. It seeks to fill a few lacunas in the literature, among them professionals' aspirations to stay and settlement, the various constraints that they face in remaining stationary or pursuing an envisaged onward mobility, medium- and long-term-oriented mobility intentions in addition to more short-term ones and the recognition that professionals occupy various class positions in their migration destination. The argument is based on a qualitative and cross-cultural study on Filipino, German, and People's Republic of China professionals in Singapore. It sheds light on the impact of socioeconomic, social, and sociocultural factors, and of the biopolitics of space, identity, and belonging on mobility intentions. Special attention is paid to the influence of recent changes to the immigration and residency law in Singapore, referred to as the “Singaporeans First” measures.

Keywords: mobility, translocality, transnational migration, highly skilled migration, transnational elites, expatriates, migrant professionals, citizenship, temporary migration, permanent migration, residency law, citizenship, permanent residency

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