

The Settling Experience of Hongkongers in London: Another Case of Reluctant Migration in Fear of Beijing's Takeover

Wing Chung Ho

Abstract

The fear of losing one's original way of life has triggered an exodus of Hongkongers in the early 2020s, who saw Beijing's increasing crack down on civil liberties of its most economic vibrant Special Administrative Region. The majority of these migrants will leave for the U.K. as the British government has offered its former colony an easy emigration pathway since January 2021. This article first examines the contextual and theoretical backdrop of the current reluctant migration in comparison with the other outbound migration that the city witnessed three decades ago in fear of its handover to China in 1997. Then, the discussion focuses on the post-migration lives of dozens of Hongkongers who have been newly settled in London for 8–12 months during 2021–22. Based on participant observation and ethnographic interviews, empirical findings reveal the informants' unique experiences regarding their migratory process, livelihood strategies, and nostalgia for Hong Kong. Theoretical and political implications of the current case of reluctant migration are highlighted.

Wing Chung Ho is Associate Professor in the Department of Social and Behavioural Sciences, City University of Hong Kong. Correspondence should be sent to wingcho@cityu.edu.hk.