Cross-border schooling and transnational topologies: the embodiment of migration in children's education

This paper explores the role played by children in emergent transnational topologies and reflects on the significance of this for understandings of ‘migration’. Foregrounding children’s mobilities evokes the idea of ‘embodied statecraft’, discussed recently by Mitchell and Kallio (2017) in relation to Jennifer Hyndman’s work on feminist geopolitics (2001), where states (and borders) are made through quotidian movements. In this paper, we argue that children are harbingers of future migration. They are migrants ‘in the making’ and their daily educational mobilities are crucial formative experiences with wider geo-social implications. Young people’s migration in search of educational opportunities is an increasingly prevalent facet of contemporary mobilities. Over the past decade, research in social science has paid more attention to the importance of ‘educational migrations,’ which encompass, but are not limited to, the movements of international students and other categories of migrants with the aim of securing different, or ‘better’ academic credentials. This paper examines contemporary educational migrations through the lens of young children, drawing on data from a research project (with Maggi Leung and YunYun Qin) exploring daily cross-border commuting (Hong Kong-Mainland China) for schooling. In our research, we have been interested in considering several aspects of these movements, including: why children undertake this sometimes difficult and onerous daily crossing; how children experience this mobility (particularly the materiality of the border and the commute as a whole); how this mobility relates to broader conceptualisations of migration (including future migration intentions); and the politics of these mobilities. In this paper, we will focus on the second two points, asking how children’s cross-border schooling is indicative of broader questions around transnational migration, global householding and the ‘geo-social’ (Ho, 2017). We will extrapolate from the experiences of children to consider the wider implications for understanding the relationship between migration, education and society, including the embodied politics of daily border crossing and how it intersects with other bordering migrations and wider political concerns.

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email fastr@nus.edu.sg by 3 March to register, light refreshments will be provided

Speaker's Profile

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