Migration as Class Consumption: The Outmigration of the Rich in Contemporary China
By Prof Gracia Liu-Farrer

Date :  2 Feb 2016
Time :  16:00 - 17:30
Venue : Asia Research Institute Seminar Room
        Tower Block Level 10, 469A Bukit Timah Road
        National University of Singapore @ BTC

CHAIRPERSON

Assoc Prof Ho Kong Chong, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore

ABSTRACT

Labeled as the third wave migration out of post-reform China, the recent emigration of the wealthy Chinese has attracted worldwide attention. Although this form of mobility involves primarily the richest 0.1% of Chinese population, the visibility of the people who move and the amount of wealth implied have made it a sensational social phenomenon. Through interviews, participant observation and media reports, this paper searches for the social meanings of this trend of emigration. Journalists generally attribute the exodus of the rich to a desire to secure their wealth, an aspiration for a different education for their children, or concerns with air pollution and food safety. What this paper argues is that underneath these stated motivations, emigration is in fact a form of class consumption, a strategy for class reproduction, and a way to convert economic resources into social status and prestige. “Emigration” (yimin), a form of mobility that may not entail settling abroad, is a path created by wealthy Chinese striving to be among the global elite.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Gracia Liu-Farrer is Professor of Sociology at the Graduate School of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University, Japan. She holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago, and leads the Migration and Citizenship Research Group at Waseda Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies. Her research compares different immigrant groups’ economic, social and political incorporation in Japan, as well as examines the identity and belonging issues of Chinese immigrants in different ethno-national social contexts. Her interests also include the global mobility of international students and wealthy Chinese. Her current research project is a sociological investigation of both immigrant and Japanese employees’ experiences of globalizing Japanese firms. Through this project, she hopes to understand how individuals define meanings of work and career in an age when social mobility is increasingly accompanied by global geographic mobility and, on the other hand, how changing modes of career mobility impact on Japanese organizations’ practices.

REGISTRATION

Admission is free. We would greatly appreciate if you RSVP to Ms Tay Minghua via email: minghua.tay@nus.edu.sg.