

Consequences of globalisation: A case study of youth from Kinmen, Taiwan

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Abstract

Young people are sensitive to rapid social transformations. The process of transition for Kinmen youth is bonded with decision-making processes of migration, employment and education. Located in the southwest of the main island of Taiwan and only six kilometres to the east of Xiamen, China, Kinman County was placed under War Zone Administration (WZA) during the Cold War and experienced a state of siege for forty-three years. After 1992, Kinmen has quickly transformed from being a war frontier to become a frontline borderland for business and politics between Taiwan and China. The reshaping of borders has reconstructed life paths for youth. Through an ethnographic study of 30 Kinmanese youth from 2016 to 2018, I examine how competing factors of economic power and cultural flows affect young people's migration decisions and risk management. Using a geopolitical lens to understand globalization, neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism, four types of youth can be identified: home-staying observer, cosmopolitan pursuer, great-power dreamer, and cross-border travellers.