

Ethnic Proximity, (Un)Belonging and Migration Circulations Bridging China and Singapore

This paper investigates how ageing is shaped by transnational mobility along the China–Singapore migration corridor. It brings together two studies: one of 14 Mainland Chinese migrants aged 55 and above who moved to Singapore from the 1990s onwards (informed by longer-term ethnographic research), and another of 35 Singaporean Chinese migrants aged 50–76 who lived and worked in Mainland China. Reading these cohorts together, rather than as separate migration streams, enables an analysis of how older co-ethnic Chinese experience contrasting opportunities and constraints across the same corridor. The paper considers how citizenship and residency status, access to welfare and care, family arrangements, and perceived ethnic proximity influence decisions about remaining, returning, or moving again in later life. It argues that ageing reveals the uneven consequences of migration regimes and social protection systems: some mobility trajectories are supported, while others become increasingly difficult to sustain. By foregrounding movement in both directions, the paper offers a comparative account of how migration shapes where—and under what conditions—people can grow old.