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## **Title: Agents from the inside: marriage migrants lived experiences in Taiwan**

### **Abstract**

The term marriage migration refers to the migration and mobility of people as a consequence or with the purpose of marrying, a phenomenon that has become increasingly common in the contemporary globalised world. When referring to the East-Asian region, this concept acquires specific gender and geographical connotations, since it is often attached to the migration and mobility of women from poorer to richer countries. Within the region Taiwan is one of the receiving countries with the highest rate of cross-border marriages.

This paper will focus on a special group within the broader category of marriage migrants in Taiwan, namely spouses coming from mainland China. The tattered diplomatic relation existing between China and Taiwan has shaped the special status of this group of migrants: they have been recognized neither as Taiwanese citizens nor as foreign citizens and, as a consequence, they have been regulated by a different law system. This law has hampered their access to citizenship rights by positioning these immigrant spouses inside their families and understanding them as mothers and wives, rarely as independent individuals with their own identity, skills, and interests. On top of it, the unresolved Taiwan's sovereignty issue has contributed to amplify the hatred towards this category of immigrants at social level too.

How have cross-strait marriage migrants negotiated their every-day lives and identities in this unfriendly context? By exploring the lived experiences of my respondents in the gendered sphere of their families, this paper will shed light on the constant negotiation between resistance and acceptance, change and compromise that may characterize the lives of cross-strait marriage migrants in Taiwan but that can also be useful to understand the lives of other migrants in dissimilar contexts.

This paper is part of a PhD project that delves into the issue of marriage migration in Taiwan and it is based on original ethnographic data collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with Chinese spouses and their partners during ten months of fieldwork in Taiwan (2010-2011).