

The role of Quality of Place factors in expatriate international relocation decisions:

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Abstract

The role of 'quality of place' (QoP) in attracting and retaining workers has been a significant concern of urban related policy makers and research communities over the past decade. This paper aims to address the significance of QoP factors in attracting and/or retaining global talent by presenting the findings and implications of a study into the relocation decisions of expatriate workers in Suzhou, China. Findings from a survey questionnaire indicate that global talent moving to Suzhou have been driven primarily by career-related opportunities instead of QoP factors. However, binary logit analysis shows that QoP factors have contributed positively towards the retention of global talent in the city.

Keywords **Quality of Place; Liveability; Global Talent; Expatriate; Suzhou**

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To the editorial board,

I am writing to submit a revised manuscript titled 'The role of Quality of Place factors in expatriate international relocation decisions: A case study of Suzhou, a globally-focused Chinese city' for your consideration. The revised version added a paragraph to emphasise 'place' in the literature as the editor suggested.

Regards,

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Response to reviewers:

Editor:

<p>(1) A thorough edit</p> <p>(2) Also, to strengthen the paper, it needs a nod to specifically geographical literatures, on place, and migration. You do go some way with this but a paragraph that points to these geographies would set it apart. I hope you take this suggestion on board, and then we can proceed to publication.</p>	<p>(1) The entire manuscript has been proofread. Changes have been made in various pages.</p> <p>(2) A paragraph has been added to emphasise 'place' and 'migration' addressing key geography references (page. 6-7):</p> <p>The wider geographical literature has also considered the relation between place and migration more generally. This literature is rooted in the position that the concepts of 'space' and 'place' are distinct, with the former being more general, and the latter including specific particularities (Tuan, 1975, Massey, 1995, Rose, 1995). Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2013) provided an overview of empirical investigations which have sought to consider the relation of place to migration. Studies to date have included considerations of the impacts of the characteristics of place on human migration (Walters, 2000), the relevance of migration for people's 'sense of place' among immigrant groups living in settler societies (Armstrong, 2004) and the importance of a sense of place amongst highly skilled migrants (Fielding, 1992, Boyle et al., 2014). However, Mendoza and Morén-Alegret argue that whilst discussions of 'sense of place' have been widespread in geography since the mid-1970s, "<i>with few exceptions the analytical potential of this concept has yet to be fully achieved as far as the study of migratory movements is concerned</i>" (2013: p.777).</p>
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The role of Quality of Place factors in expatriate international relocation decisions: A case study of Suzhou, a globally-focused Chinese city

Abstract

The role of 'quality of place' (QoP) in attracting and retaining workers has been a significant concern of urban related policy makers and research communities over the past decade. This paper aims to address the significance of QoP factors in attracting and/or retaining global talent by presenting the findings and implications of a study into the relocation decisions of expatriate workers in Suzhou, China. Findings from a survey questionnaire indicate that global talent moving to Suzhou have been driven primarily by career-related opportunities instead of QoP factors. However, binary logit analysis shows that QoP factors have contributed positively towards the retention of global talent in the city.

Keywords: Quality of Place, Liveability, Global Talent, Expatriate, Suzhou

Introduction

The role of 'quality of place' (QoP) in attracting and retaining highly skilled and creative workers has been a significant concern of urban related policy makers and research communities in recent years. This has taken place on the back of claims that the development of creative and knowledge economies over recent decades has occasioned a reversal in the traditional economic logic where workers move to employment locations, to one where employment opportunities emerge in locations where certain types of workers are based. However, this area of study still remains under-researched, as Bound et al. suggest:

"While we know a fair amount about why talent is important to place, we know less about why place is important to talent (2008: p. 17)".

The implications of research findings in this area have obvious and certain implications for urban and regional planning policy, particularly in terms of the kinds of amenities, environments and life-style offers they seek to develop in individual locations. The bounded relation between place and economies has taken a new turn, but understanding of the implications of this turn in

theory and practice remain at best partial. A key author in this area, Richard Florida has stressed the existence of the globally mobile 'creative class' who are to drive future economic growth, and argues that where they decide to locate will determine the geographical loci of growth. However, his argument concerns only one specific cohort of the global workforce – that of young and mobile creative/knowledge-related workers in Western countries. Further, Florida's original empirical analysis, as well as subsequent studies, has tended to be focused within a Western context, primarily North America and Europe (Niedomysl and Hansen, 2010, Lawton et al., 2013). Little consideration has been given to the situation outside of these geographical areas.

This paper aims to address at least a portion of this research gap by presenting the findings and implications of a study into the role of QoP factors in the relocation decisions of expatriate workers moving to Suzhou, China. The Chinese case presents quite a different industrial context to that considered by Florida and the creative class discourse (Nifo and Vecchione, 2014). China's economic miracle has overwhelmingly been driven by foreign direct investment (FDI) seeking efficiency gains in the factors of production – primarily labour (Kim, 2015, Zhao and Zhang, 2007, He, 2002, He, 2003). Consequently, only limited attention has been paid to QoP considerations in the recent and contemporary development of Chinese cities. This is largely due to the vast majority of migrants to Chinese cities being low skilled and from the surrounding rural areas. In these cases, QoP considerations are generally limited to simply a basic sheltered bed, access to food and affordable transport back to their home location at certain times of year. However, in contrast, for the expatriate managers and employees who move to China to run or oversee factories, certain QoP factors are likely to have been considered when the personal (or household) decision was made to relocate. Further, the onset of mass manufacturing has been accompanied by an increasing service sector, much of which has been provided by foreign companies and individuals (Yeh et al., 2015), particularly in areas such as architecture, urban planning, English language instruction and financial/business services.

This paper presents the results of research that sought to identify the various QoP requirements and preferences of different categories of expatriate professionals in a rapidly globalising Chinese city, Suzhou. Over the past two decades Suzhou has emerged as one of China's major economic locations, and this has largely been based upon a growth strategy centred on attracting FDI. Consequently, there are many expatriate communities in the city from across the

world, but particularly from Taiwan, Korea, Japan, the US and Germany. The questions that the research seeks to answer are as follows:

- How significant have QoP factors been in attracting/retaining global talent in Suzhou?
- What QoP factors have global talent considered when relocating to Suzhou?
- How do expatriates perceive QoP factors in Suzhou?

By answering these questions, this paper aims to identify potential planning implications for Suzhou and other Chinese cities with respect to liveability and territorial competitiveness. Further, two theoretical arguments are made based upon the results of the research. Firstly, findings reinforce existing calls in the literature for a more nuanced understanding of the role of QoP in different geographical locations. This research focuses on an eastern Chinese conurbation which is not known well internationally for its QoP characteristics and finds that QoP factors play a minor role (when compared with career factors) in the attraction of workers. Secondly, the results of the research also reinforce a need to make a conceptual distinction of the role of QoP in retaining workers, rather than a one-sided focus on just its role in initially attracting them. The research found that QoP factors played a significant role in workers' decisions to remain in Suzhou. The paper will firstly consider existing research and commentary surrounding the attraction and retention of FDI and globally mobile knowledge/creative workers, including the role of QoP factors. The case study will then be introduced, with a discussion of both the Chinese context and Suzhou specifically. The research methodology will then be described before the results are presented. Finally, some concluding comments and implications will be drawn from the findings.

Investment, Growth, People and Place

Understanding of the relationship between mobile global talent and QoP remains under-developed. Perhaps the most prominent contribution comes from the creative class literature which has its emphasis upon people who can bring about dynamic changes to cities (Florida, 2002), considering the presence of individuals with knowledge, creativity and enthusiasm as a potential engine for economic growth. Florida (2002, p. 69) defines the creative class as made up of two groups: a 'super creative core' (scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society - non-fiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think tank

researchers, analysts and other opinion makers) and 'creative professionals' (working in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health care professions, and business management). Members of the creative class are thus typically well-educated and highly skilled. In the particular context under study (i.e., Suzhou), expatriates are a significant component of the labour force in these particular professions. Figure 1 displays a creative people-oriented framework and the relation described as Line A is commonly accepted. Therefore, city managers and policy makers are eager to enhance tertiary education sectors, invest in research and development (R&D), and attract many of the professional groups highlighted by Florida. Despite many critics (Berry, 2005, Glaeser, 2005, Peck, 2005), Florida's ideas have been highly influential, with a range of cities across the US and Europe gearing their growth strategies around the creative city model (TRIGAUX, 2003, IMPRESA-AND-COLETTA&COMPANY, 2004, Peck, 2005, CINCINNATI TOMORROW, 2003).

One of the controversial arguments raised by Florida (2002) is the relationship indicated by Line B in Figure 1 with respect to firms' location choice related to the question: 'do jobs follow people?' The location preferences of globally mobile companies have been a key consideration of academic and policy communities over the past three to four decades (Sassen, 2001, Friedmann, 1986, Dunning, 1998). Prior to the 1980s the location decisions of mobile firms was considered to be primarily related to a location's offer in terms of the traditional factors of production, particularly land (including proximity to markets) and labour (including skills) (Dunning, 1993, Dunning, 1998, Zhang, 2005, Kim and Choi, 2004, Kamo, 2000). Towards the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s a range of key publications were produced which began to seek new ways to understand location choices of FDI. Harvey (1990) pointed to the role of urban centres in this process and the competitive battle for investment between cities, taking form in a range of 'entrepreneurial' urban strategies. However, the more recent creative people-oriented approach has stressed the primary role of labour quality. Bound et al. (2008) have commented on this perspective in relation to the present global economic context, suggesting that *"highly skilled people have become the most critical factor of competitive advantage. Economic development has become less about creating and attracting firms and more about training, retaining and attracting skilled people. In a reversal of what seemed an economic law, jobs have begun to follow people"* (Bound et al., 2008: p.17). Although this argument regarding the causal relation has faced criticism due to a lack of empirical rigour (Berry, 2005), considerable numbers of policy makers and city managers have been developing

strategies designed to attract knowledge workers and the 'creative class' (Yigitcanlar et al., 2008).

In parallel with this new turn, the 2000s also began to see a number of research efforts to investigate the importance and role of the various factors previously outlined in attracting FDI companies. Parkinson et al. (2004) evaluated the competitiveness of European cities and suggested six factors which determine competitiveness:

- Economic diversity
- Skilled workforce
- Connectivity – internal and external
- Strategic capacity to mobilise and implement long term development strategies
- Innovation in firms and organisations
- Quality of life – social, cultural, environmental

The latter factor in this list is one which has particular relevance to the attraction of the creative class, and one which Florida emphasises repeatedly. With regard to this factor in relation to the employees of FDI companies, Parkinson et al. (2004, p.61) state that “*The quality of life for themselves and their families is an increasingly important factor.*”

Along this line, a typical strategy by city governments to attract the creative class has been to develop living environments which conform to their supposed preferences (as illustrated by Line C in Figure 1). However, whilst Florida emphasises a tolerant and open city with a range of social opportunities as one which is preferable to the creative class, the difficulty of defining the 'amenity' value of a location is highlighted by Storper and Manville: “*‘Amenity’ can mean many things, including good weather, a shoreline, ethnic diversity (or its absence), options for dining and entertainment, cultural offerings and aesthetically beautiful architecture. One person’s amenity is often the next person’s inconvenience.*” (2006: p.1252)

Even once a definition of amenity has been established in a particular case, a significant further consideration has been whether career factors, rather than QoP factors, are the lure or a more subtle interaction between the two. A number of scholars have questioned whether evidence is sufficient to indicate the relationship between amenities and the attraction of labour (Storper and Scott, 2009, Peck, 2005, Storper and Manville, 2006). In testing this relationship, some correlation has been found (Bound, 2008; Clifton, 2008). In a UK based study, Bound et al.

(2008, p. 105) found that “places which offer a strong identity, cultural openness and diversity, and the potential, not only to ‘plug and play’ in the society, but to own it, shape it and experience its development, attracted talented people.” Clifton (2008) also considered the impact of QoP upon the dispersion of the creative class in the UK, finding that the creative class in England and Wales showed a similar pattern of distribution with respect to QoP as observed in North American cities.

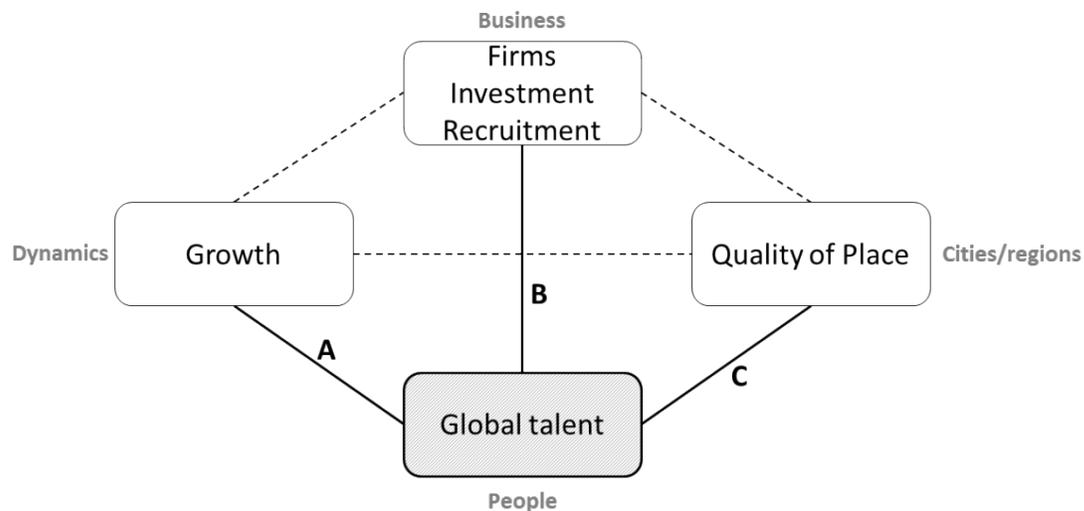


Figure 1 A creative class-oriented framework

A further distinction made in the literature is between the role of QoP factors in *attracting* talent and then *retaining* talent. Darchen and Tremblay (2010) compared the attractiveness of Montreal and Ottawa to students in science and technology finding that “*quality of life...in the case of Ottawa, has more impact on the retention of graduating students than in the case of Montreal*” (2010, p. 228).

The wider geographical literature has also considered the relation between place and migration more generally. This literature is rooted in the position that the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ are distinct, with the former being more general, and the latter including specific particularities (Tuan, 1975, Massey, 1995, Rose, 1995). Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2013) provided an overview of empirical investigations which have sought to consider the relation of place to migration. Studies to date have included considerations of the impacts of the characteristics of place on human migration (Walters, 2000), the relevance of migration for people’s ‘sense of place’ among immigrant groups living in settler societies (Armstrong, 2004) and the importance

of a sense of place amongst highly skilled migrants (Fielding, 1992, Boyle et al., 2014). However, Mendoza and Morén-Alegret argue that whilst discussions of 'sense of place' have been widespread in geography since the mid-1970s, "*with few exceptions the analytical potential of this concept has yet to be fully achieved as far as the study of migratory movements is concerned*" (2013: p.777).

This study focuses on expatriate professionals and considers their international relocation decisions at an individual or household level by identifying the weighting of QoP and salary/career-related factors in their decision process. Expatriate professionals represent a specific group within the global talent pool, but one which has been under-studied to date. A particular focus is on the role of QoP in retaining such professionals in the location they have moved to. Whilst the human resource management literature has addressed global talent management (Tarique and Schuler, 2010, Schuler et al., 2011), built-environmental factors have not been a focus to date. The study hypothesises that high QoP encourages global talent to be retained in the destination city.

This study also focuses on an area of the world currently under-studied in light of these debates, China. The research findings provide implications to policy makers who are seeking out a global talent-oriented economic growth model; particularly for cities which presently have a strong industrial base. In considering the Chinese case specifically, the research also attempts to evaluate current QoP offers in such contexts by analysing the perception of expatriates in Suzhou. A further focus of this research is in identifying the primary pre-conditions amongst a wide range of QoP factors when the decision on international relocation is made. This can further shed light on policy implications with regard to the potential priorities of public investment in contexts where a strategic goal is to attract/retain global talent. It is also an area which is yet to be considered in the literature. In the research presented here, the QoP factors represent the overall quality of life, living conditions or liveability, including amenities. These terms are used interchangeably in the paper.

FDI and foreign nationals in China

China's model of economic growth in many emerging growth areas and intermediate cities still places an important role on international direct investment. The pro-FDI policy has been accelerated by special economic zones and development zones (Chubarov and Brooker, 2013).

In 1978 the central government originally set four (now five) special economic zones, including Shenzhen (Airriess, 2008, Gu et al., 2015). Due to outstanding examples of economic growth in development zones across the country, other local governments have been keen to create development zones in search of inward FDI; this phenomenon has been referred to as the 'development zone fever' (Yang and Wang, 2008). In order to attract FDI in Chinese cities and encourage MNEs to establish production plants, the Chinese government loosened the residential registration system (called '*hukou*') in 1992 (Gu et al., 2015). The *hukou* reform provided abundant cheap labourers to metropolitan areas mostly located in coastal regions resulting in segmented residential, occupational status (Fan, 2002). The volume of inward FDI in China subsequently increased markedly to the extent that China was the second largest FDI recipient in the world in the mid-1990s after the US. In a single year, 2003, the scale of FDI into mainland China was even larger than the US (UNCTADstat, 2013). Inward FDI has been channelled via foreign invested enterprises (FIEs) that are jointly invested by Chinese and foreign investors or wholly by foreign investors. The number of FIEs was 84,000 in 1992; but it significantly increased to 440,000 in 2012, showing more than a 5-fold increase over the two decades (National Bureau of Statistics of China¹). Due to favourable government policy via development zones, better accessibility, and risk-aversion behaviour of foreign investors, coastal regions have been favoured by FDI projects (He, 2002, He, 2003). However, even within metropolitan areas, spatial patterns of FIEs are uneven. For Suzhou, spatial mismatches have been observed between local firms and FIEs (Wei et al., 2013). Whilst there has been a high concentration of global capital functions as a growth pole on the one hand, on the other hand the rest of regions have not economically benefited from global capital accumulation. International investment involves flows of people, too (Kim and Han, 2014). In line with increases in inward FDI and FIEs, foreign nationals are growing in size in Chinese cities (Kim, 2015). The number of international migrants was 686,000 in 2010, which was a 35% increase over the previous decade (IOM, 2013). By virtue of the manifest presence of foreign nationals, a body of literature has emerged describing expatriate life in Chinese cities (Lehmann, 2014) and analysing family issues amongst expatriates (Yeoh and Willis, 2005).

Suzhou, as a mega city-region with a population of 10.5 million on a land area of 8488km² is a fast urbanising and globalising Chinese city located in the southern part of Jiangsu Province,

¹ <http://data.stats.gov.cn/>

approximately 100km west from Shanghai (Figure 2). As discussed, Suzhou’s development has been driven by intensive inflows of FDI following collaboration between the Chinese and Singapore governments (Wang and Lee, 2007, Liu et al., 2016, Kim and Cocks, In press). This collaboration has been particularly focused on the construction of the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), begun in 1994 (Pereira, 2003, Pereira, 2004a, Wei et al., 2013). The park is located on the eastern side of the city’s old town and over the past 20 years the SIP has grown to the extent that it now hosts over 4,800 foreign companies (84 from the Fortune 500 list in 2010) and over 700,000 residents (SIP website). Possibly due to embedded Singaporean planning practices, the SIP has developed master-planned built environments equipped with modern urban amenity facilities such as waterfront parks and high-end shopping areas (see Kim and Cocks (in press) for details of institutional amenities in Suzhou).

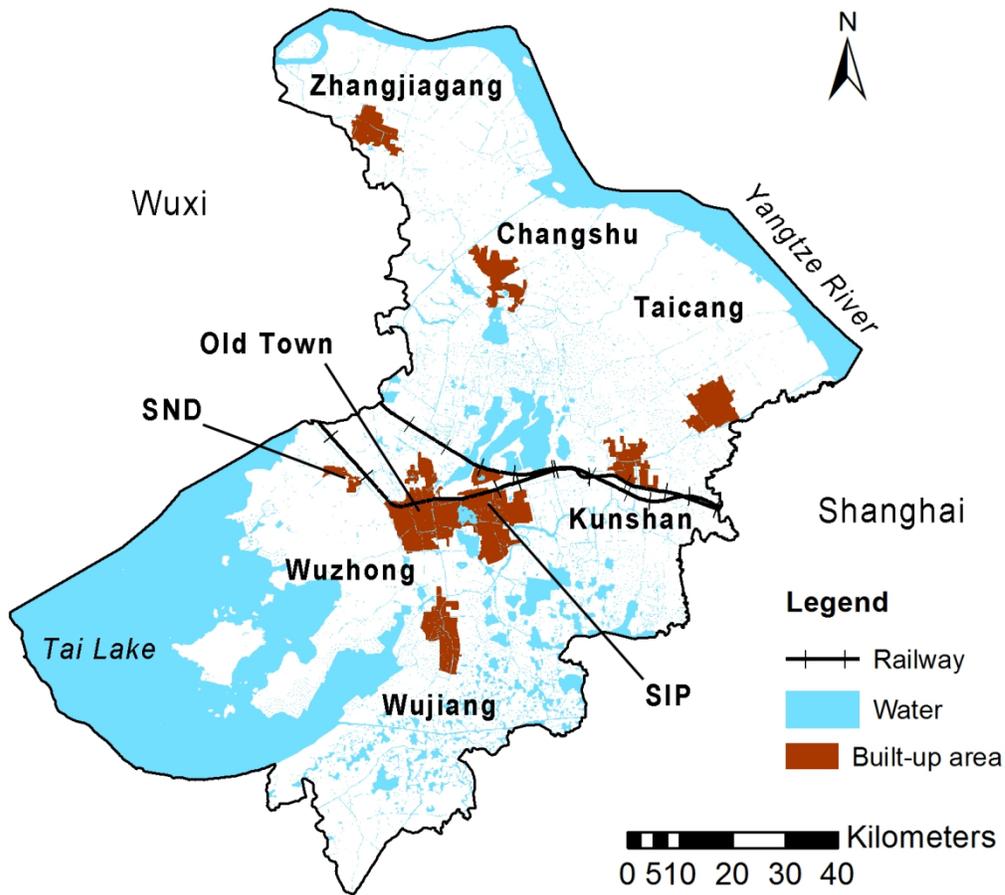


Figure 2 A map of Suzhou

Over the past decade the rising numbers of such new industrial parks across China have been the subject of increased research and analysis. The foci of these studies have generally been

upon the location patterns of FDI at various scales in different industries and production networks, as well as the role of the government in the process (He, 2003, He and Yeung, 2011, Wei et al., 2012, Pereira, 2004b). However, few have considered the liveability aspects of such location decisions and how significant these are in attracting and retaining creative and knowledge migrants. Indeed, as China seeks to develop its industrial parks up the value chain to more high-tech, knowledge and creative industries, liveability factors have the potential to become more significant in the process of place competition (Gu et al., 2016). Gu et al. (2015) consider current Chinese urbanisation as being in transition from an economy-oriented to a city-living-oriented model. Concerns with retaining global talent may be particularly relevant for the numerous 'higher education towns' which are emerging in China, often within strategic industrial parks (including the SIP) (Kim and Cocks, In press). Their many graduates come from across provinces and sometimes countries and have equal mobility potential when they have completed their studies.

The population targeted by this project is foreign expatriates who have come to work in China for usually a fixed period of time (commonly three to four years), but have the potential to stay longer (and many do). In this research, expatriates mean foreign nationals working in Suzhou and their attached family members. Most expatriates tied up with MNEs in China are highly skilled workers and can be considered as global talent – a significant element of 'creative class' definition. If a city/economic centre is to attract and retain certain groups of people which are essential to the economic growth model they are developing, the question being asked here is do this group of individuals desire or require certain liveability factors to be in place to a sufficient degree in order to remain in that location, thus resulting in a more sustainable growth model? Whilst such a study could have potential implications for a range of policy areas (including education, health, welfare, etc.), this paper focuses specifically on those which broadly fall under the remit of strategic urban planning or urban management.

Research methods

A questionnaire was developed which requested a range of basic details about the responder (including nationality, age, occupation, income level, housing type and size, numbers of children, etc.) and then went on to ask a number of questions related to how liveability considerations were important in their (and their family's, if appropriate) decision to relocate to Suzhou. The

questions were carefully developed to measure subjective perception of QoP in Suzhou. As expatriates came from a wide range of geographical backgrounds, they had different benchmarks to perceive QoP in Suzhou. Therefore, relative questions were asked with regard to perception of liveability and the significance of liveability factors over purely career/salary related factors.

The datasets are based on extensive survey questionnaires with foreign nationals in Suzhou; as far as the authors are aware, this was the first attempt of its kind. The questionnaire was produced in both hard copy and online formats, and in a range of relevant languages (i.e., English, Korean and Japanese), and sent to expatriates who are presently living in Suzhou and have been for more than six months. International students, short-term business travellers, and tourists were excluded from the survey as the research focused specifically on expatriate global talent. Unlike top-tier global cities where highly polarised international immigrants were observed (Hugo, 2004), in Chinese emerging global city-regions international immigrants tend to be highly-paid professionals. Cheap labour has been mostly provided from Chinese rural-to-urban migrants instead of international migrants (Kim, 2015, Fan, 2008).

Potential respondents were approached through 'cold calling' to expatriate social and international business-related organisations. Additionally, respondents were also approached on the street in certain locations. In total, 508 responses were received in November – December 2014. In the sample, the largest origin group was from Korea (222) followed by the US (59), Japan (51), France (29) and the UK (24). There is no available official statistics on the origin countries of expatriates in Suzhou. So, referring to nationwide statistics on foreign nationals in China, Koreans were the largest (20.3%) followed by Americans (12.1%) and the Japanese (11.1%) in 2013. In addition, one international school in Suzhou reported school enrolment information that the top five origins amongst students were Korea (33%), Taiwan (11%), the US (8%), Germany (7%) and Malaysia (4.5%) in 2014 (Kim, 2015). Thus, samples represented the foreign population to a reasonable extent; although it seemed that Koreans were slightly over-sampled whilst responses from the Japanese and Taiwanese were less collected. 392 respondents out of 508 or 77% lived in the SIP followed by the Suzhou New District (SND)² with 101 respondents or 20%. The SIP reported the number of foreign nationals

² The Suzhou New District (SND) is a high tech-oriented development zone that the Suzhou government has developed since the early 1990s. The SND is located in the west of the old Suzhou town (Figure 2).

reached record highs at 14.1 thousand in 2011 (SIP website). So, collected samples accounted for 2-3% of the total foreign nationals for the SIP. Primary industrial types that expatriates worked were IT-related manufacturing (24.8%), other manufacturing (15.7%), education sectors (13.2%), car manufacturing (8.1%), electronic manufacturing (7.1%) and higher education sectors (6.9%). Respondents included spouses of international workers assuming the relocation decision was made on an agreement within the family. Some questions were incomplete and so missing information was not used in some analyses.

This research employed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and binary logit regression analysis. The PCA was used to find key factors in pre-conditions when expatriates decided to relocate to Suzhou. 11 questions were used for PCA with respect to liveability-related pre-conditions. The binary logit regression model was specified to analyse the impact of QoP perception on the willingness to stay for the long-term in Suzhou, using 342 complete responses.³ The binary logit regression is useful when the dependent variable is dichotomous, taking 0 or 1 value. In addition, descriptive statistics were presented to understand liveability factors in different groups.

Quality of Place factors

How significant are QoP factors?

This section analyses the significance of QoP factors over career-related factors. The question asked to foreign nationals was “how important were living conditions relative to purely career-related factors in your decision to come to Suzhou?” Responses were in 7 scales comparing between living conditions and career-related factors, which showed relative perception on the significance of life style factors. (+3) signified living conditions were much more important than career-related factors whilst (-3) was the opposite. ‘0’ meant equal significance. For expatriates in Suzhou, career-related factors played a more crucial role in relocating internationally as can

³ This research did not use expatriates' realised choice on future stays, but willingness to stay in the future. The willingness represents stated future preferences to the place. There might be a discrepancy between the willingness and realised future choice. However, at the timing of survey, realised future choice was unpredictable. Thus, stated willingness is the available measurement given this research framework.

be seen in the mean value, (-0.26). 45.4% of the respondents were career-oriented (-3 ~ -1) whilst 28.5% were liveability-oriented (+3 ~ +1). 26.2% were neutral (0) between the two factors (Figure 3). A weak correlation was observed between this relative perception and socio/demographic status. Correlation coefficients of this perception with age, income levels, and marital status were very low or less than ± 0.1 and statistically insignificant. So, this perception was more related with personal characteristics and preference. On the one hand, career-related factors implied salary levels, job opportunities and higher positions that might not be available in expatriates' home city but offered by institutions in Suzhou. On the other hand, companies dispatched their managers to Suzhou in search of business opportunities and expatriates accepted their company's business strategy; otherwise they might face issues with regard to their career. The questionnaire survey showed expatriates' judgement on their experience in Suzhou in terms of their career development. The result signified career development and job opportunities were a more fundamental attraction than QoP factors. QoP factors could be seen more as pre-conditions that global talent considers in their international relocation. The priority between living conditions and career factors was further investigated by the following question: "Without these-preconditions in place, would you have decided to come to Suzhou?" The answers are summarised in Table 1. Approximately two-thirds of the respondents answered that they would have come to Suzhou despite the unsatisfactory liveability pre-conditions; only one-third responded that they would have not come to Suzhou without the pre-conditions. This result confirms that global talent has been attracted primarily by career-related factors rather than living conditions.

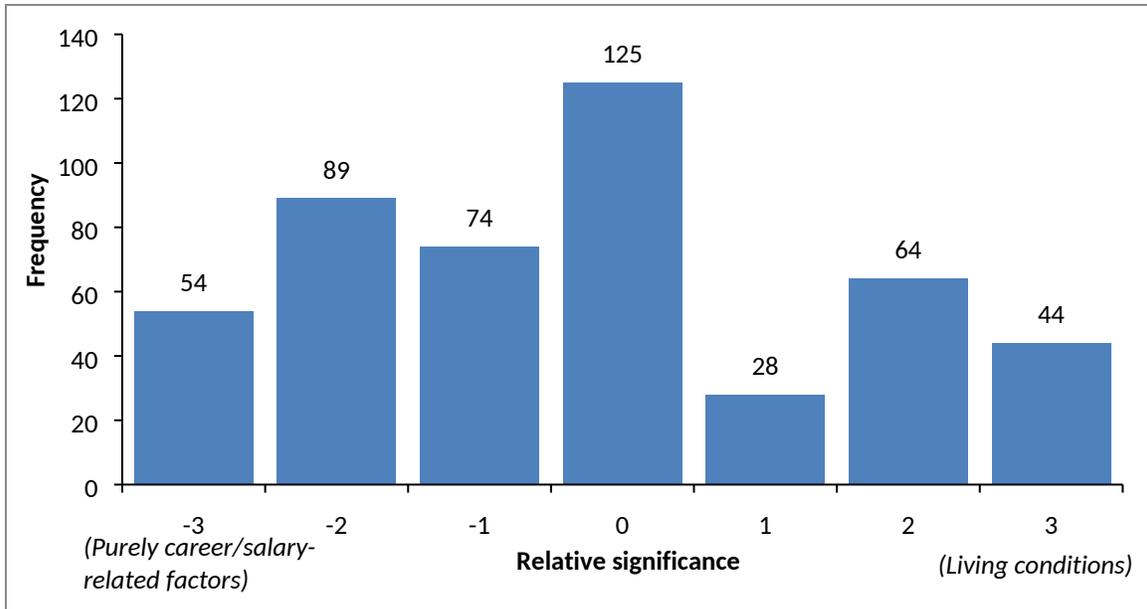


Figure 3 Significance of liveability factors over purely career/salary-related factors

Table 1 Significance of pre-conditions in decision on relocation to Suzhou

	Marital status	Decision on NOT coming to Suzhou without satisfactory pre-conditions	Percentage
Single	111	38	34.2%
Married	386	143	37.0%
Total	497	181	36.4%

Decisions on relocation are dependent upon demographic characteristics and life cycles as seen in inter and intra-urban migration and international migration (Nifo and Vecchione, 2014). However, career-related factors were more important than living conditions for both married expatriate families and singles in Suzhou. There was only a minor difference between the married and singles on their decision to come; 37.0% and 34.2%, respectively.

There is one more indicator that may represent the significance of career-related factors amongst families. The question was “Would you have come alone whilst your family is in your home country if the living conditions were poor in Suzhou?” 124 people out of 314 married responses, or 39.5%, replied that they would have come to Suzhou alone if the living conditions were unsatisfactory. To put it another way, the result means 60.5% would have relocated

altogether with their family member(s) in spite of poor living environments. These three questions suggest that the primary concerns were more related to career factors rather than QoP factors.

What QoP pre-conditions have been considered in relocating to Suzhou?

This section attempts to identify key considerations in the relocation decision. Respondents scored the significance of each factor shown in Table 2 from 0 to 10. The most important was 10 whilst 0 was the least. The results indicated that the top three most important factors were safety, healthcare, and decent housing quality; the least important three factors were ties with Chinese neighbours, the presence of expat communities, and public parks. The significance varied amongst different demographic groups. Singles tended to be easy-going, as seen in the lowest average significance at 5.28. Married couples without children were in the middle, whilst families with children scored liveability factors the highest. As the size of the unit for relocation is large, expatriates are likely to consider a wider range of factors significantly. In singles' responses no area scored more than 7.00, whilst for married couples two areas scored more than 7.00 and for families with children four areas scored more than 7.00 (Table 2). This result implies that single professionals had risk-taking behaviours and were mobile with less family-related barriers influencing their decision on international relocation. The most important considerations were decent housing quality (6.57), urban transport (6.47) and safety (6.38) for the singles. Urban transport was stressed only by the singles group meaning that their intra-urban mobility was crucial for their stay in Suzhou. Due to their demographic characteristics, education for children was the least important factor followed by ties with Chinese neighbours and the presence of an expat community. Married couples without children emphasised decent housing quality (7.36), safety (7.31) and healthcare (6.86). These three factors have little relevance to interactions with others. The most significant concerns expressed by families with children were safety (8.19) followed by healthcare (7.67), and education for children (7.64). These three factors are tied up with considerations for children. Due to notorious news about child related crime and vehicle-oriented traffic environments that can cause detrimental accidents, expatriate families can be very concerned with safety. Unlikely other groups, education services for children were also specified as a very important consideration. Suzhou provides high-quality international standard education services for foreign nationals. Only 9

respondents out of 187 with school-aged children replied that their children were enrolled in a local Chinese school. The rest (95.2%) enrolled their children in an international school, foreign language school(s) or ethnically specific school(s). The majority of them received an education subsidy for their children from their employers. 117 out of 261 informants with children of kindergarten or school age (48.8%) stated that their employer provided 80-100% of the tuition fees for their children's education. Only 18.8% replied that they received no education subsidy from their employers. The three least important considerations were ties with Chinese neighbours, expat communities, and public parks that generally involve interactions with other people.

Table 2 Key considerations to relocated to Suzhou

Factors	Overall	Group 1_Singles	Group 2_Married without children	Group 3_Married with children
Decent housing quality	7.10	6.57	7.36	7.23
Air quality	6.62	5.83	6.75	6.88
Education for children	5.73	1.22	3.12	7.64
Safety	7.64	6.38	7.31	8.19
Shopping	5.81	5.19	6.15	5.95
Expats community	5.17	4.88	5.19	5.28
Ties with Chinese neighbours	4.58	4.50	5.04	4.49
Urban transport	6.25	6.47	6.49	6.11
Cultural activities	5.54	5.70	5.25	5.56
Healthcare	7.20	6.20	6.86	7.67
Public parks	5.23	5.18	5.23	5.24
Average*	6.08	5.28	5.89	6.39

Note: *Average means the arithmetic mean of the 11 factors without weight.

Two types of considerations (or pre-conditions) were identified from the result of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Table 3). The first factor includes primary pre-conditions, i.e., safety, air quality, decent housing quality, healthcare, and education for children. These five elements were acknowledged in Table 3 as significant pre-conditions when expatriates decided to move to Suzhou. The second group of factors were less significant than the primary pre-conditions: cultural activities, urban transport, ties with Chinese neighbours, public parks, and expats

community. Shopping is closer to secondary pre-conditions. The primary pre-conditions can have a direct impact, so they are more essential and fundamental. This result sheds light on policy implications for developing cities. These primary pre-conditions are associated with safety, health, education for children and a shelter. As foreign nationals have to face the 'disadvantages of alien status' (Caves, 1971), necessities play a fundamental role in securing their stay. Secondary pre-conditions are relevant to socialising and luxuries. For instance, public parks are useful for refreshment and recreation, but not necessary for their stay. These pre-conditions were consequently recognised less significant than the primary pre-conditions listed in Table 3. Shopping can be both primary and secondary pre-conditions depending on the items purchased. When expatriates buy essential goods such as food, shopping would be primary, but when they purchase luxuries, shopping tends to be a secondary pre-condition.

Table 3 The result of factor analysis: rotated component matrix*

	Primary pre-conditions	Secondary Pre-conditions
Safety	.786	
Air quality	.763	
Decent housing quality	.700	
Healthcare	.689	
Education for children	.645	
Cultural activities		.759
Urban transport		.746
Ties with Chinese neighbours		.732
Public parks		.690
Expats community		.558
Shopping	.418	.542

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. *Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Perception of liveability in Suzhou

How do expatriates perceive liveability in Suzhou? Measuring liveability is difficult due to subjective perception and the unique personal experiences of participants in their previous places of residence. Therefore, perception of liveability in Suzhou was asked relative to their home city: "Which place is better in living conditions between Suzhou and your origin city?" This relative question can provide at least two important meanings. First, expatriates have a different benchmark in perceiving living conditions in the relocated host city. So, the home city can be the benchmark to measure their liveability. Second, the relative question can provide implications with respect to territorial competition between cities (Budd, 1998, Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). Global cities compete with other global cities in attracting command-and-control functions, investment capital and global talent. In terms of attracting or retaining global talent, this question can identify relative liveability between the origin city and the host city. The next section will address this relative perception of liveability in Suzhou as a key variable in terms of longer term stays in the city.

Figure 4 and Table 4 report the results of the relative perception of Suzhou's liveability over respondents' home city. Whilst '0' showed neutral between the two cities, +3 indicated that living conditions in Suzhou were much better. On the contrary (-3) indicated that living conditions in the home city were much better than Suzhou. The average score was -0.70, which signified that expatriates surveyed generally perceived their home cities had better living conditions. However, the highest number of respondents (21.1%) answered that living conditions were indifferent. 22.9% of the respondents perceived living conditions in Suzhou were even better than their home city.

Was there a difference between expatriates' origins? Table 4 shows differences between origin groups. Expatriates from developed countries responded that Suzhou was relatively less liveable than their origin cities (at -1.16). Developed countries included the U.K., the US, Australia, France, Canada, Germany, and New Zealand in the responses. Some cities in these countries have a high reputation for their highly liveable environments; for instance, Australian cities, Canadian cities and European cities (EIU, 2013). Neighbouring countries were two major FDI sources for Suzhou: Japan and Korea. Japan is advanced in its economy, and Korea is in transition towards a developed economy (Kim and Han, 2012). The relative liveability perception of Suzhou was negative at (-0.51), but their perception was better than expats from developing

countries (-1.16). There have been close interactions historically between China and these countries and, as mentioned, they are significant sources of FDI and expatriates into Suzhou. Their languages are neither Chinese nor English. Often Koreans and the Japanese in China do not have sufficient either Chinese or English language skill. So, they tend to form ethnic communities in Suzhou. For instance, Koreans are highly concentrated in the core of the SIP whilst the vast majority of the Japanese are living in the SND; as confirmed by the survey result. In the sample responses 98.4% of Koreans were living in the SIP, whilst 90.7% of the Japanese informants, in the SND.

The category of developing countries includes Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia in the survey responses. The expatriates from these developing countries perceived better liveability in Suzhou than their home cities. However, they showed a variety of liveability perceptions, as can be seen in the large standard deviation. The number of expatriates from developing countries was not as high as neighbouring countries and developed countries in the survey responses; just 24 (or 4.9%) in total.

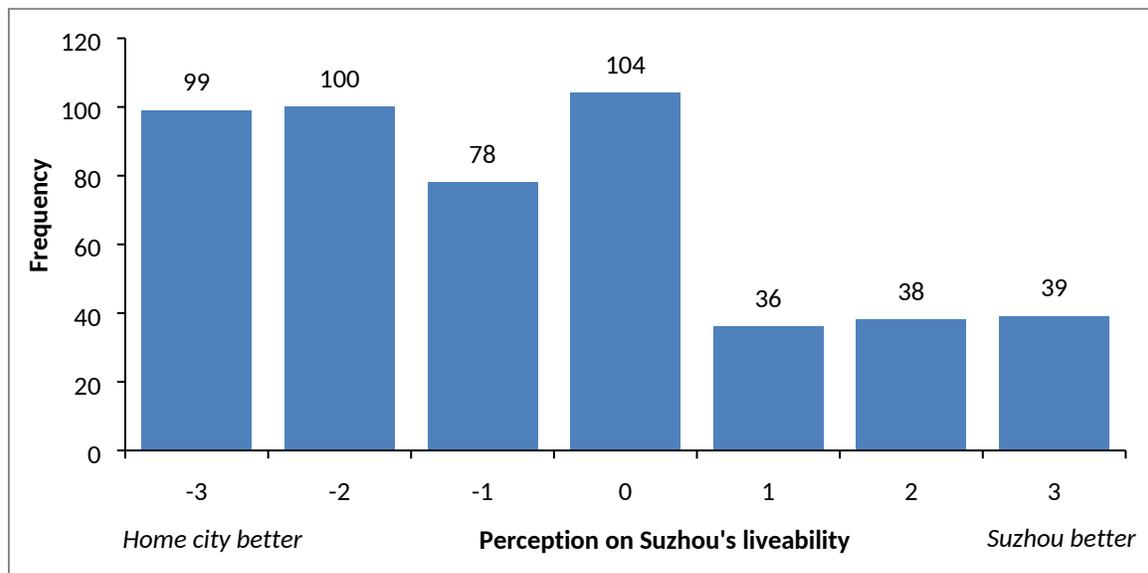


Figure 4 Relative perception on Suzhou's liveability over respondent's home city

Table 4 Expatriates' relative liveability perception in Suzhou by origin

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
(A) Developing countries	24	0.38	2.102	.429	-.51	1.26	-3	3
(B) Neighbouring countries (Japan/Korea)	287	-0.51	1.832	.108	-.72	-.29	-3	3
(C) Developed countries	145	-1.16	1.707	.142	-1.44	-.88	-3	3
Others	38	-1.11	1.721	.279	-1.67	-.54	-3	3
Total	494	-0.70	1.838	.083	-.86	-.54	-3	3

Note: The ANOVA result shows the mean difference between (A) and (B) is statistically insignificant whilst the differences between (A) and (C) and between (B) and (C) are statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

Effects of QoP perception on longer-term stays

The previous sections have analysed the relative significance between living conditions and career-related factors in expatriates' decisions to relocate to Suzhou. The results indicated that career development was a more fundamental attraction for global talent moving to the city. Living conditions could be more likely seen as pre-conditions that expatriates may consider when relocating. In spite of unsatisfactory pre-conditions, the majority of expatriates were keen to work in Suzhou in search of career and salary-related opportunities. However, this section elucidates another aspect of liveability – its significance with respect to retaining global talent over time. Although global talent moved to Suzhou primarily seeking career/salary-related opportunities, their better perception of the living quality in the host city can play an important role in retaining them as analysed in this section.

A binary logistic regression model was specified to analyse the effect of QoP perception on the duration of stays in Suzhou, as seen in Equation (1). In this analysis, the dependent variable was 'willingness to stay for the next three years'. When the expatriate is willing to stay in Suzhou for the next three years the dependant variable is one, otherwise zero in the regression model. 111 out of 342 (32.5%) responded that they were unwilling to stay in Suzhou for the next three years, whilst approximately two-thirds wanted to stay.

$$\text{Willingness to stay long} = f(\text{Housing quality characteristics, demographic characteristics, socio-economic characteristics, localisation, and liveability perception}) \quad (1)$$

Explanatory variables included housing quality characteristics, demographic characteristics, socio-economic characteristics, localisation and liveability perception. Housing quality characteristics included two variables: the amount of rent subsidy from the employer, and the housing size. The housing size employed the middle value in each category. For instance, the housing-size class 80-100m² was converted to 90m². As consistent with the previous sections, decent housing quality can provide secure environments for expatriates. Expatriates with larger housing and a higher amount of rental subsidy tended to be willing to stay longer in Suzhou. However, in the regression analysis demographic characteristics were insignificant in decisions on future stays in Suzhou. All of the three variables related with family life cycles were statistically insignificant. These variables were the age of the main income earner in the family, the number of children, and marital status. In contrast to the demographic characteristics, income levels as a socio-economic factor turned out to be statistically significant. The higher income earners tended to stay longer in Suzhou. The income level may represent career/salary-related factors that can also affect the willingness to stay in the host city. Localisation or adaptation in the host city was measured by asking the frequency of visits to ethnic grocery stores per week, as a proxy. Frequent visits to purchase ethnic foods may signify less localised lifestyle patterns. As seen in the estimated coefficient, frequent visitors for ethnic foods tended to stay for shorter periods. The liveability variable was perception on liveability relative to expatriates' home city. The result shows that expatriates who have higher satisfaction on liveability are willing to stay longer. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% significance level. The odds ratio was the second highest at 1.290 after income levels (1.338).

Table 5 The result of a binary logit analysis: variables in the equation

Variables		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
	Constant	-.875	.606	2.081	1	.149	.417
Housing quality	Rent Subsidy	.000	.000	8.827	1	.003	1.000
	Housing size band	.016	.004	17.791	1	.000	1.016
Demographic characteristics	Age band	.055	.153	.130	1	.719	1.057
	Children	.073	.124	.343	1	.558	1.076
	Marital status	-.071	.381	.035	1	.852	.931
Socio-economic status	Income level	.291	.121	5.760	1	.016	1.338
Localisation	Frequency to visit ethnic grocery stores	-.268	.120	4.995	1	.025	.765
Liveability perception	Relative perception on liveability in Suzhou	.255	.075	11.608	1	.001	1.290

Notes: The number of selected cases for this analysis is 342 out of 508. 166 sample responses were removed due to incomplete information.

* Variable(s) entered on step 1: Rent Subsidy, Housing size band, Age band, Children, Marital status, Income level, Frequency to visit ethnic grocery stores, and Relative perception on liveability in Suzhou.

Table 6 shows changes in probability of being willing to stay longer in Suzhou in accordance with relative perception of living conditions in Suzhou. 71.8% of expatriates with (-3) relative liveability perception want to stay longer in Suzhou, whilst the figure was 84.5% for expatriates that perceived equal liveability between Suzhou and their home city. There is a 20.4% difference between the two extremes in terms of relative liveability perception. This result confirms that liveability plays an important role in retaining global talent although it is not a leading attraction. This research indicates, therefore, that in the process of global territorial competition, high quality living environments are closely associated with long-term effects in terms of retaining global talent when the host city provides better QoP environments.

Table 6 Willingness to stay long by relative liveability perception

Relative perception on living conditions in Suzhou	Probability of staying long (%)	Probability of staying short (%)	Changes in probability (%p)	Odds	Changes in odds	Odds ratio EXP(B)
-3	71.8	28.2		2.546		
-2	76.6	23.4	4.8	3.274	0.727	1.290

-1	80.9	19.1	4.3	4.236	0.962	1.290
0	84.5	15.5	3.6	5.452	1.216	1.290
1	87.6	12.4	3.1	7.065	1.613	1.290
2	90.1	9.9	2.5	9.101	2.036	1.290
3	92.2	7.8	2.1	11.821	2.720	1.290

Notes: This table is based on a typical sample, married family with two children, a 7000RMB rental subsidy, 110m² housing, 40,000RMB monthly income, once-a-week frequency to visit ethnic grocery stores in their 30s.

Implications and conclusion

Global talent is hyper-mobile and so territorial competition to attract such people is not limited to developed countries. Emerging cities have joined this competition as can be seen in the case of Suzhou. This research has examined QoP factors in the decision to relocate to the emerging city at an individual or household level. Unlike the implications from some creative city literature on liveable environments, the findings indicate that global talent in Suzhou has been driven primarily by career-related opportunities instead of liveability factors. Although Suzhou is well-regarded as a liveable place amongst the Chinese, it has not yet built up a high global reputation. Consequently, career and salary-related opportunities may play a more fundamental role in attracting global talent to this emerging city-region. In this sense, strategies to attract good quality firms are crucial for the talent because they are primarily attracted by jobs offered by firms. Suzhou and its surrounding area has attracted a wide range of MNEs, encouraged by the local construction of nationally strategic industrial parks and development zones. The vast majority of these MNEs are technology-oriented manufacturers within which global talent is necessary for management and efficient production. As claimed by Kim (2015), the firm establishment of entire production networks are the key to large inflows of MNEs. Planning efforts to provide business-friendly environments for the target production networks would be effective in creating the basis for both economic and human capital developments. In this sense, findings from this research provide another array of planning implications different from the literature discussed in Western contexts.

Nevertheless, whilst liveability factors were not shown to be significant in terms of attracting global talent, the presence of certain liveability pre-conditions did seem significant in the relocation process. Fundamental considerations were identified, such as safety, air quality,

decent housing quality, healthcare and education for children. Secondary considerations were cultural activities, urban transport, ties with Chinese neighbours, public parks and the presence of expat communities. These secondary considerations were still regarded as important, but not as crucial as the fundamental considerations. The findings therefore provide potential urban planning implications for developing countries where the attraction of global talent is a strategic goal. Cultural and social factors to encourage socialising amongst expatriates and between foreign nationals and the locals are secondary concerns for developing countries. Possibly due to infrequent interactions with locals, private spaces, i.e. expatriates' housing, were conceived to be much more important than cultural/social activities and public spaces (i.e., public parks). However, one result of this could be the potential for inflows of global talent to result in further socio-economic and spatial inequality in globalising Chinese cities. This could particularly be the case if local government spending is oriented towards the provision of goods targeted at prospective global talent, and thus away from the needs of the existing local population. This is an important area for further in-depth research.

Additionally, the role of QoP factors was also highlighted to positively contribute towards retaining global talent, as seen in the result of the logit analysis. In spite of available positions in respective firms, low liveable environments appeared to discourage the attracted professionals from staying for longer periods. When their perception of QoP factors is high, they are more willing to stay in the emerging city-region for the longer-term. Suzhou has been reasonably successful in providing quality living environments. Overall the perception of liveability by foreign nationals was reported to be similar to or just slightly lower than participants' home city.

The results of this study therefore imply the relevance of liveability circumstances for Chinese growth, suggesting that such factors should be considered carefully by planners and city governments; particularly in locations where growth strategies are centred on the attraction and retention of FDI. However, a further point can be made in the Chinese context. As Chinese labour costs increase and the country seeks to develop its economy up the value chain, China's cities and industrial locations are likely to find themselves increasingly competing for Chinese investment and talent. The young cohort of Chinese highly-skilled workers has the potential to, like their counterparts in the West, be increasingly selective in their location choice. A significant factor in determining their decisions could be the QoP offers of particular locations. The extent to which the Floridian geographies of talent localisation are being, and will be, transferred to the

Chinese context, as well as other emerging economies, is an area for considerable future research.

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The role of Quality of Place factors in expatriate international relocation decisions: A case study of Suzhou, a globally-focused Chinese city

Abstract

The role of 'quality of place' (QoP) in attracting and retaining workers has been a significant concern of urban related policy makers and research communities over the past decade. This paper aims to address the significance of QoP factors in attracting and/or retaining global talent by presenting the findings and implications of a study into the relocation decisions of expatriate workers in Suzhou, China. Findings from a survey questionnaire indicate that global talent moving to Suzhou have been driven primarily by career-related opportunities instead of QoP factors. However, binary logit analysis shows that QoP factors have contributed positively towards the retention of global talent in the city.

Keywords: Quality of Place, Liveability, Global Talent, Expatriate, Suzhou

Introduction

The role of 'quality of place' (QoP) in attracting and retaining highly skilled and creative workers has been a significant concern of urban related policy makers and research communities in recent years. This has taken place on the back of claims that the development of creative and knowledge economies over recent decades has occasioned a reversal in the traditional economic logic where workers move to employment locations, to one where employment opportunities emerge in locations where certain types of workers are based. However, this area of study still remains under-researched, as Bound et al. suggest:

"While we know a fair amount about why talent is important to place, we know less about why place is important to talent (2008: p. 17)".

The implications of research findings in this area have obvious and certain implications for urban and regional planning policy, particularly in terms of the kinds of amenities, environments and life-style offers they seek to develop in individual locations. The bounded relation between place and economies has taken a new turn, but understanding of the implications of this turn in

theory and practice remain at best partial. A key author in this area, Richard Florida -has stressed the existence of [thea](#) globally mobile 'creative class' who are to drive future economic growth, and argues that where they decide to locate will determine the geographical loci of growth. However, his argument concerns only one specific cohort of the global workforce – that of young and mobile creative/knowledge-related workers in Western countries. Further, Florida's original empirical analysis, as well as subsequent studies, has tended to be focused within a Western context, primarily North America and Europe (Niedomysl and Hansen, 2010, Lawton et al., 2013). Little consideration has been given to the situation outside of these geographical areas.

This paper aims to address at least a portion of this research gap by presenting the findings and implications of a study into the role of QoP factors in the relocation decisions of expatriate workers moving to Suzhou, China. The Chinese case presents quite a different industrial context to that considered by Florida and the creative class discourse (Nifo and Vecchione, 2014). China's economic miracle has overwhelmingly been driven by foreign direct investment (FDI) seeking efficiency gains in the factors of production – primarily labour (Kim, 2015, Zhao and Zhang, 2007, He, 2002, He, 2003). Consequently, only limited attention has been paid to QoP considerations in the recent and contemporary development of Chinese cities. This is largely due to the vast majority of migrants to Chinese cities being low skilled and from the surrounding rural areas. In these cases, QoP considerations are generally limited to simply a basic sheltered bed, access to food and affordable transport back to their home location at certain times of year. However, in contrast, for the expatriate managers and employees who move to China to run or oversee factories, certain QoP factors are likely to have been considered when the personal (or household) decision was made to relocate. Further, the onset of mass manufacturing has been accompanied by an increasing service sector, much of which has been provided by foreign companies and individuals (Yeh et al., 2015), particularly in areas such as architecture, urban planning, English language instruction and financial/business services.

This paper presents the results of research that sought to identify the various QoP requirements and preferences of different categories of expatriate professionals in a rapidly globalising Chinese city, Suzhou. Over the past two decades Suzhou has emerged as one of China's major economic locations, and this has largely been based upon a growth strategy centred on attracting FDI. Consequently, there are many expatriate communities in the city from across the

world, but particularly from Taiwan, Korea, Japan, the US and Germany. The questions that the research seeks to answer are as follows:

- How significant have QoP factors been in attracting/retaining global talent in Suzhou?
- What QoP factors have global talent considered when relocating to Suzhou?
- How do expatriates perceive QoP factors in Suzhou?

By answering these questions, this paper aims to identify potential planning implications for Suzhou and other Chinese cities with respect to liveability and territorial competitiveness. Further, two theoretical arguments are made based upon the results of the research. Firstly, ~~that the~~ findings reinforce existing calls in the literature for a more nuanced understanding of the role of QoP in different geographical locations. This research focuses on an eastern Chinese conurbation which is not known well internationally for its QoP characteristics and finds that QoP factors play a minor role (when compared with career factors) in the attraction of workers. Secondly, the results of the research also reinforce a need to make a conceptual distinction of the role of QoP in retaining workers, rather than a one-sided focus on just its role in initially attracting them. The research found that QoP factors played a significant role in workers' decisions to remain in Suzhou. The paper will firstly consider existing research and commentary surrounding the attraction and retention of FDI and globally mobile knowledge/creative workers, including the role of QoP factors. The case study will then be introduced, with a discussion of both the Chinese context and Suzhou specifically. The research methodology will then be described before the results are presented. Finally, some concluding comments and implications will be drawn from the findings.

Investment, Growth, People and Place

Understanding of the relationship between mobile global talent and QoP remains under-developed. Perhaps the most prominent contribution comes from the creative class literature which has its emphasis upon people who can bring about dynamic changes to cities (Florida, 2002), considering the presence of individuals with knowledge, creativity and enthusiasm as a potential engine for economic growth. Florida (2002, p. 69) defines the creative class as made up of two groups: a 'super creative core' (scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers and architects, as well as the thought leadership of modern society - non-fiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think tank

researchers, analysts and other opinion makers) and 'creative professionals' (working in a wide range of knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial services, the legal and health care professions, and business management). Members of the creative class are thus typically well-educated and highly skilled. In the particular context under study (i.e., Suzhou), expatriates are a significant component of the labour force in these particular professions. Figure 1 displays a creative people-oriented framework and the relation described as Line A is commonly accepted. Therefore, city managers and policy makers are eager to enhance tertiary education sectors, invest in research and development (R&D), and attract many of the professional groups highlighted by Florida. Despite many critics (Berry, 2005, Glaeser, 2005, Peck, 2005), Florida's ideas have been highly influential, with a range of cities across the US and Europe gearing their growth strategies around the creative city model (TRIGAUX, 2003, IMPRESA-AND-COLETTA&COMPANY, 2004, Peck, 2005, CINCINNATI TOMORROW, 2003).

One of the controversial arguments raised by Florida (2002) is the relationship indicated by Line B in Figure 1 with respect to firms' location choice related to the question: 'do jobs follow people?' The location preferences of globally mobile companies have been a key consideration of academic and policy communities over the past three to four decades (Sassen, 2001, Friedmann, 1986, Dunning, 1998). Prior to the 1980s the location decisions of mobile firms was considered to be primarily related to a location's offer in terms of the traditional factors of production, particularly land (including proximity to markets) and labour (including skills) (Dunning, 1993, Dunning, 1998, Zhang, 2005, Kim and Choi, 2004, Kamo, 2000). Towards the end of the 1980s and into the early 1990s a range of key publications were produced which began to seek new ways to understand location choices of FDI. Harvey (1990) pointed to the role of urban centres in this process and the competitive battle for investment between cities, taking form in a range of 'entrepreneurial' urban strategies. However, the more recent creative people-oriented approach has stressed the primary role of labour quality. Bound et al. (2008) have commented on this perspective in relation to the present global economic context, suggesting that *"highly skilled people have become the most critical factor of competitive advantage. Economic development has become less about creating and attracting firms and more about training, retaining and attracting skilled people. In a reversal of what seemed an economic law, jobs have begun to follow people"* (Bound et al., 2008: p.17). Although this argument regarding the causal relation has faced criticism due to a lack of empirical rigour (Berry, 2005), considerable numbers of policy makers and city managers have been developing

strategies designed to attract knowledge workers and the 'creative class' (Yigitcanlar et al., 2008).

In parallel with this new turn, the 2000s also began to see a number of research efforts to investigate the importance and role of the various factors previously outlined in attracting FDI companies. Parkinson et al. (2004) evaluated the competitiveness of European cities and suggested six factors which determine competitiveness:

- Economic diversity
- Skilled workforce
- Connectivity – internal and external
- Strategic capacity to mobilise and implement long term development strategies
- Innovation in firms and organisations
- Quality of life – social, cultural, environmental

The latter factor in this list is one which has particular relevance to the attraction of the creative class, and one which Florida emphasises repeatedly. With regard to this factor in relation to the employees of FDI companies, Parkinson et al. (2004, p.61) state that “*The quality of life for themselves and their families is an increasingly important factor.*”

Along this line, a typical strategy by city governments to attract the creative class has been to develop living environments which conform to their supposed preferences (as illustrated by Line C in Figure 1). However, whilst Florida emphasises a tolerant and open city with a range of social opportunities as one which is preferable to the creative class, the difficulty of defining the 'amenity' value of a location is highlighted by Storper and Manville: “*Amenity' can mean many things, including good weather, a shoreline, ethnic diversity (or its absence), options for dining and entertainment, cultural offerings and aesthetically beautiful architecture. One person's amenity is often the next person's inconvenience.*” (2006: p.1252)~~(2006, p. 1252)~~

Even once a definition of amenity has been established in a particular case, a significant further consideration has been whether career factors, rather than QoP factors, ~~are have been~~ the lure or a more subtle interaction between the two. A number of scholars have questioned whether evidence is sufficient to indicate the relationship between amenities and the attraction of labour (Storper and Scott, 2009, Peck, 2005, Storper and Manville, 2006). In testing this relationship, some correlation has been found (Bound, 2008; Clifton, 2008). In a UK based study, Bound et al.

(2008, p. 105) found that “places which offer a strong identity, cultural openness and diversity, and the potential, not only to ‘plug and play’ in the society, but to own it, shape it and experience its development, attracted talented people.” Clifton (2008) also considered the impact of QoP upon the dispersion of the creative class in the UK, finding that the creative class in England and Wales showed a similar pattern of distribution with respect to QoP as observed in North American cities.

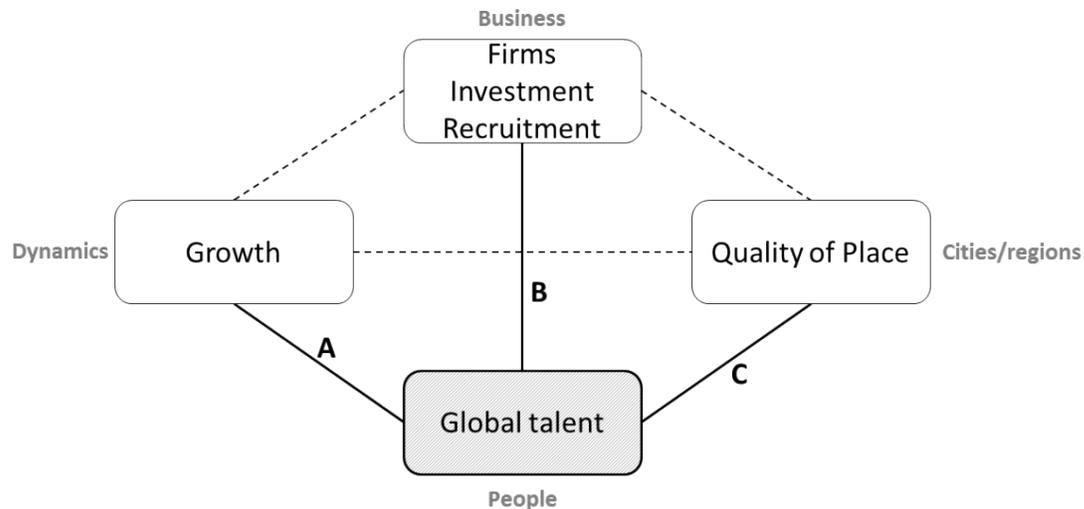


Figure 1 A creative class-oriented framework

A further distinction made in the literature is between the role of QoP factors in *attracting* talent and then *retaining* talent. Darchen and Tremblay (2010) compared the attractiveness of Montreal and Ottawa to students in science and technology finding that “*quality of life...in the case of Ottawa, has more impact on the retention of graduating students than in the case of Montreal*” (2010, p. 228).

The wider geographical literature has also considered the relation between place and migration more generally. This literature is rooted in the position that the concepts of ‘space’ and ‘place’ are distinct, with the former being more general, and the latter including specific particularities (Tuan, 1975, Massey, 1995, Rose, 1995). Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2013) provided an overview of empirical investigations which have sought to consider the relation of place to migration. Studies to date have included considerations of the impacts of the characteristics of place on human migration (Walters, 2000), the relevance of migration for people’s ‘sense of place’ among immigrant groups living in settler societies (Armstrong, 2004) and the importance

of a sense of place amongst highly skilled migrants (Fielding, 1992, Boyle et al., 2014). However, Mendoza and Morén-Alegret argue that whilst discussions of 'sense of place' have been widespread in geography since the mid-1970s, "with few exceptions the analytical potential of this concept has yet to be fully achieved as far as the study of migratory movements is concerned" (2013: p.777).

This study focuses on expatriate professionals and considers their international relocation decisions at an individual or household level by identifying the weighting of QoP and salary/career-related factors in their decision process. Expatriate professionals represent a specific group within the global talent pool, but one which has been under-studied to date. A particular focus is on the role of QoP in retaining such professionals in the location they have moved to. Whilst the human resource management literature has addressed global talent management (Tarique and Schuler, 2010, Schuler et al., 2011), built-environmental factors have not been a focus to date. The study hypothesises that high QoP encourages global talent to be retained in the destination city.

This study also focuses on an area of the world currently under-studied in light of these debates, China. The research findings provide implications to policy makers who are seeking out a global talent-oriented economic growth model; particularly for cities which presently have a strong industrial base. In considering the Chinese case specifically, the research also attempts to evaluate current QoP offers in such contexts by analysing the perception of expatriates in Suzhou. A further focus of this research is in identifying the primary pre-conditions amongst a wide range of QoP factors when the decision on international relocation is made. This can further shed light on policy implications with regard to the potential priorities of public investment in contexts where a strategic goal is to attract/retain global talent. It is also an area which is yet to be considered in the literature. In the research presented here, the QoP factors represent the overall quality of life, living conditions or liveability, including amenities. These terms are used interchangeably in the paper.

FDI and foreign nationals in China

China's model of economic growth in many emerging growth areas and intermediate cities still places an important role on international direct investment. The pro-FDI policy has been accelerated by special economic zones and development zones (Chubarov and Brooker, 2013).

In 1978 the central government originally set four (now five) special economic zones, including Shenzhen (Airriess, 2008, Gu et al., 2015). Due to outstanding examples of economic growth in development zones across the country, other local governments have been keen to create development zones in search of inward FDI; this phenomenon has been referred to as the 'development zone fever' (Yang and Wang, 2008). In order to attract FDI in Chinese cities and encourage MNEs to establish production plants, the Chinese government loosened the residential registration system (called '*hukou*') in 1992 (Gu et al., 2015). The *hukou* reform provided abundant cheap labourers to metropolitan areas mostly located in coastal regions resulting in segmented residential, occupational status (Fan, 2002). The volume of inward FDI in China subsequently increased markedly to the extent that China was the second largest FDI recipient in the world in the mid-1990s after the US. In a single year, 2003, the scale of FDI into mainland China was even larger than the US (UNCTADstat, 2013). Inward FDI has been channelled via foreign invested enterprises (FIEs) that are jointly invested by Chinese and foreign investors or wholly by foreign investors. The number of FIEs was 84,000 in 1992; but it significantly increased to 440,000 in 2012, showing more than a 5-fold increase over the two decades (National Bureau of Statistics of China¹). Due to favourable government policy via development zones, better accessibility, and risk-aversion behaviour of foreign investors, coastal regions have been favoured by FDI projects (He, 2002, He, 2003). However, even within metropolitan areas, spatial patterns of FIEs are uneven. For Suzhou, spatial mismatches have been observed between local firms and FIEs (Wei et al., 2013). Whilst there has been a high concentration of global capital functions as a growth pole on the one hand, on the other hand the rest of regions have not economically benefited from global capital accumulation. International investment involves flows of people, too (Kim and Han, 2014). In line with increases in inward FDI and FIEs, foreign nationals are growing in size in Chinese cities (Kim, 2015). The number of international migrants was 686,000 in 2010, which was a 35% increase over the previous decade (IOM, 2013). By virtue of the manifest presence of foreign nationals, a body of literature has emerged describing expatriate life in Chinese cities (Lehmann, 2014) and analysing family issues amongst expatriates (Yeoh and Willis, 2005).

Suzhou, as a mega city-region with a population of 10.5 million on a land area of 8488km² is a fast urbanising and globalising Chinese city located in the southern part of Jiangsu Province,

¹ <http://data.stats.gov.cn/>

approximately 100km west from Shanghai (Figure 2). As discussed, Suzhou’s development has been driven by intensive inflows of FDI following collaboration between the Chinese and Singapore governments (Wang and Lee, 2007, Liu et al., 2016, Kim and Cocks, In press). This collaboration has been particularly focused on the construction of the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP), begun in 1994 (Pereira, 2003, Pereira, 2004a, Wei et al., 2013). The park is located on the eastern side of the city’s old town and over the past 20 years the SIP has grown to the extent that it now hosts over 4,800 foreign companies (84 from the Fortune 500 list in 2010) and over 700,000 residents (SIP website). Possibly due to embedded Singaporean planning practices, the SIP has developed master-planned built environments equipped with modern urban amenity facilities such as waterfront parks and high-end shopping areas (see Kim and Cocks (in press) for details of institutional amenities in Suzhou).

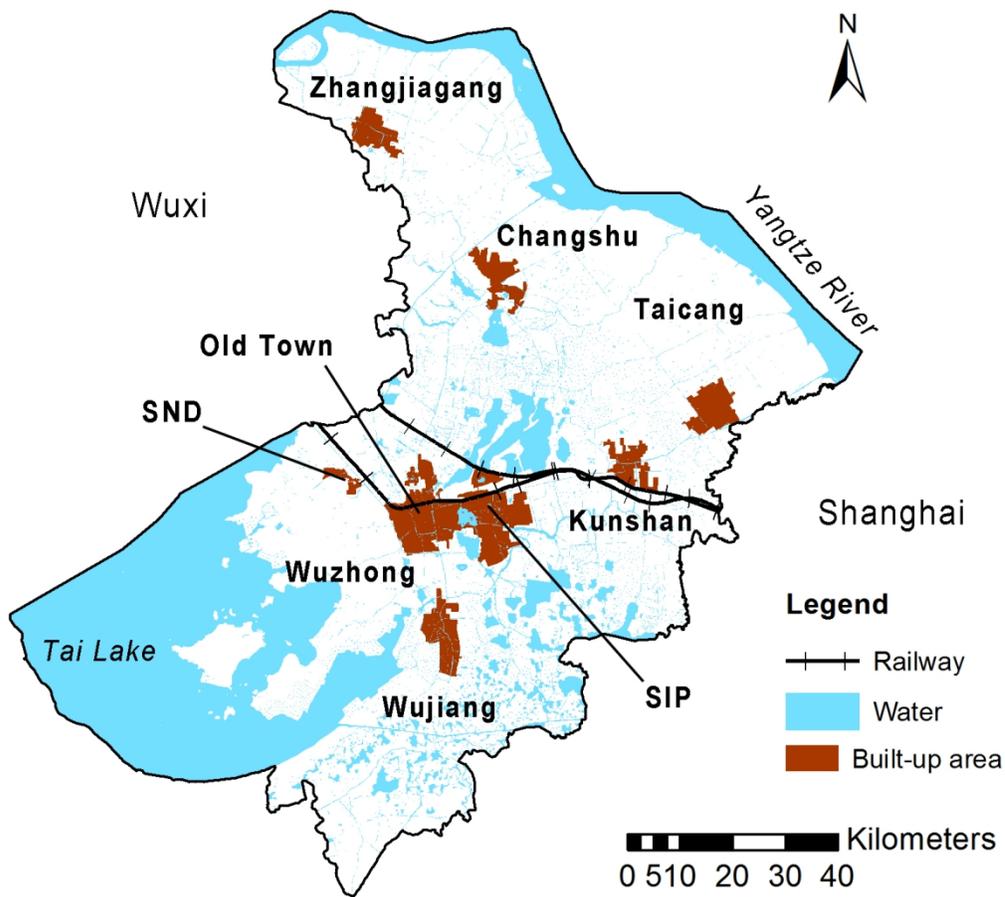


Figure 2 A map of Suzhou

Over the past decade the rising numbers of such new industrial parks across China have been the subject of increased research and analysis. The foci of these studies have generally been

upon the location patterns of FDI at various scales in different industries and production networks, as well as the role of the government in the process (He, 2003, He and Yeung, 2011, Wei et al., 2012, Pereira, 2004b). However, few have considered the liveability aspects of such location decisions and how significant these are in attracting and retaining creative and knowledge migrants. Indeed, as China seeks to develop its industrial parks up the value chain to more high-tech, knowledge and creative industries, liveability factors have the potential to become more significant in the process of place competition (Gu et al., 2016). Gu et al. (2015) consider current Chinese urbanisation as being in transition from an economy-oriented to a city-living-oriented model. Concerns with retaining global talent may be particularly relevant for the numerous 'higher education towns' which are emerging in China, often within strategic industrial parks (including the SIP) (Kim and Cocks, In press). Their many graduates come from across provinces and sometimes countries and have equal mobility potential when they have completed their studies.

The population targeted by this project is foreign expatriates who have come to work in China for usually a fixed period of time (commonly three to four years), but have the potential to stay longer (and many do). In this research, expatriates mean foreign nationals working in Suzhou and their attached family members. Most expatriates tied up with MNEs in China are highly skilled workers and can be considered as global talent – a significant element of 'creative class' definition. If a city/economic centre is to attract and retain certain groups of people which are essential to the economic growth model they are developing, the question being asked here is do this group of individuals desire or require certain liveability factors to be in place to a sufficient degree in order to remain in that location, thus resulting in a more sustainable growth model? Whilst such a study could have potential implications for a range of policy areas (including education, health, welfare, etc.), this paper focuses specifically on those which broadly fall under the remit of strategic urban planning or urban management.

Research methods

A questionnaire was developed which requested a range of basic details about the responder (including nationality, age, occupation, income level, housing type and size, numbers of children, etc.) and then went on to ask a number of questions related to how liveability considerations were important in their (and their family's, if appropriate) decision to relocate to Suzhou. The

questions were carefully developed to measure subjective perception of QoP in Suzhou. As expatriates came from a wide range of geographical backgrounds, they had different benchmarks to perceive QoP in Suzhou. Therefore, relative questions were asked with regard to perception of liveability and the significance of liveability factors over purely career/salary related factors.

The datasets are based on extensive survey questionnaires with foreign nationals in Suzhou; as far as the authors are aware, this was the first attempt of its kind. The questionnaire was produced in both hard copy and online formats, and in a range of relevant languages (i.e., English, Korean and Japanese), and sent to expatriates who are presently living in Suzhou and have been for more than six months. International students, short-term business travellers, and tourists were excluded from the survey as the research focused specifically on expatriate global talent. Unlike top-tier global cities where highly polarised international immigrants were observed (Hugo, 2004), in Chinese emerging global city-regions international immigrants tend to be highly-paid professionals. Cheap labour has been mostly provided from ~~internal~~ Chinese rural-to-urban migrants instead of international migrants (Kim, 2015, Fan, 2008). ~~Thus, surveyed foreign nationals were highly likely to be knowledge workers or global talent.~~

Potential respondents were approached through 'cold calling' to expatriate social and international business-related organisations. Additionally, respondents were also approached on the street in certain locations. In total, 508 responses were received in November – December 2014. In the sample, the largest origin group was from Korea (222) followed by the US (59), Japan (51), France (29) and the UK (24). There is no available official statistics on the origin countries of expatriates in Suzhou. So, referring to nationwide statistics on foreign nationals in China, Koreans were the largest (20.3%) followed by Americans (12.1%) and the Japanese (11.1%) in 2013. In addition, one international school in Suzhou reported school enrolment information that the top five origins amongst students were Korea (33%), Taiwan (11%), the US (8%), Germany (7%) and Malaysia (4.5%) in 2014 (Kim, 2015). Thus, samples represented the foreign population to a reasonable extent; although it seemed that Koreans were slightly over-sampled whilst responses from the Japanese and Taiwanese were less collected. 392 respondents out of 508 or 77% lived in the SIP followed by the Suzhou New

District (SND)² with 101 respondents or 20%. The SIP reported the number of foreign nationals reached record highs at 14.1 thousand in 2011 (SIP website). So, collected samples accounted for 2-3% of the total foreign nationals for the SIP. Primary industrial types that expatriates worked were IT-related manufacturing (24.8%), other manufacturing (15.7%), education sectors (13.2%), car manufacturing (8.1%), electronic manufacturing (7.1%) and higher education sectors (6.9%). Respondents included spouses of international workers assuming the relocation decision was made on an agreement within the family. Some questions were incomplete and so missing information was not used in some analyses.

This research employed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and binary logit regression analysis. The PCA was used to find key factors in pre-conditions when expatriates decided to relocate to Suzhou. 11 questions were used for PCA with respect to liveability-related pre-conditions. The binary logit regression model was specified to analyse the impact of QoP perception on the willingness to stay for the long-term in Suzhou, using 342 complete responses.³ The binary logit regression is useful when the dependent variable is dichotomous, taking 0 or 1 value (Gujarati, 2003). In addition, descriptive statistics were presented to understand liveability factors in different groups.

Quality of Place factors

How significant are QoP factors?

This section analyses the significance of QoP factors over career-related factors. The question asked to foreign nationals was “how important were living conditions relative to purely career-related factors in your decision to come to Suzhou?” Responses were in 7 scales comparing between living conditions and career-related factors, which showed relative perception on the significance of life style factors. (+3) signified living conditions were much more important than

² The Suzhou New District (SND) is a high tech-oriented development zone that the Suzhou government has developed since the early 1990s. The SND is located in the west of the old Suzhou town (Figure 2).

³ This research did not use expatriates' realised choice on future stays, but willingness to stay in the future. The willingness represents stated future preferences to the place. There might be a discrepancy between the willingness and realised future choice. However, at the timing of survey, realised future choice was unpredictable. Thus, stated willingness is the available measurement given this research framework.

career-related factors whilst (-3) was the opposite. '0' meant equal significance. For expatriates in Suzhou, career-related factors played a more crucial role in relocating internationally as can be seen in the mean value, (-0.26). 45.4% of the respondents were career-oriented (-3 ~ -1) whilst 28.5% were liveability-oriented (+3 ~ +1). 26.2% were neutral (0) between the two factors (Figure 3). A weak correlation was observed between this relative perception and socio/demographic status. Correlation coefficients of this perception with age, income levels, and marital status were very low or less than ± 0.1 and statistically insignificant. So, this perception was more related with personal characteristics and preference. On the one hand, career-related factors implied salary levels, job opportunities and higher positions that might not be available in expatriates' home city but offered by institutions in Suzhou. On the other hand, companies dispatched their managers to Suzhou in search of business opportunities and expatriates accepted their company's business strategy; otherwise they might face issues with regard to their career. The questionnaire survey showed expatriates' judgement on their experience in Suzhou in terms of their career development. The result signified career development and job opportunities were a more fundamental attraction than QoP factors. QoP factors could be seen more as pre-conditions that global talent considers in their international relocation. The priority between living conditions and career factors was further investigated by the following question: "Without these-preconditions in place, would you have decided to come to Suzhou?" The answers are summarised in Table 1. -Approximately two-thirds of the respondents answered that they would have come to Suzhou despite the unsatisfactory liveability pre-conditions; only one-third responded that they would have not come to Suzhou without the pre-conditions. This result confirms that global talent has been attracted primarily by career-related factors rather than living conditions.

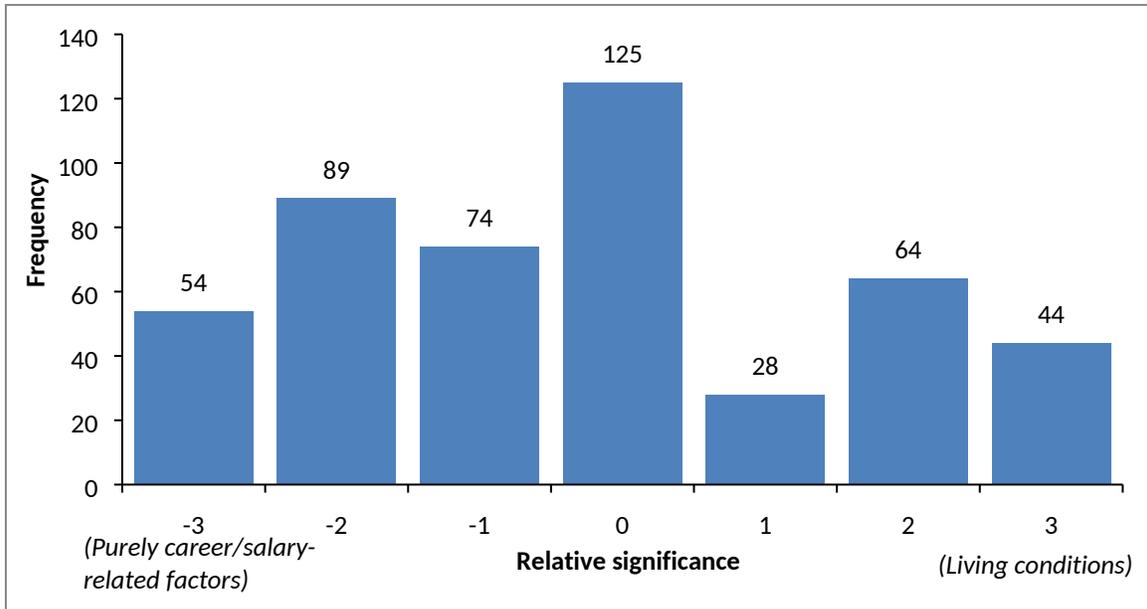


Figure 3 Significance of liveability factors over purely career/salary-related factors

Table 1 Significance of pre-conditions in decision on relocation to Suzhou

	Marital status	Decision on NOT coming to Suzhou without satisfactory pre-conditions	Percentage
Single	111	38	34.2%
Married	386	143	37.0%
Total	497	181	36.4%

Decisions on relocation are dependent upon demographic characteristics and life cycles as seen in inter and intra-urban migration and international migration (Nifo and Vecchione, 2014). However, career-related factors were more important than living conditions for both married expatriate families and singles in Suzhou. There was only a minor difference between the married and singles on their decision to come; 37.0% and 34.2%, respectively.

There is one more indicator that may represent the significance of career-related factors amongst families. The question was “Would you have come alone whilst your family is in your home country if the living conditions were poor in Suzhou?” 124 people out of 314 married responses, or 39.5%, replied that they would have come to Suzhou alone if the living conditions were unsatisfactory. To put it another way, the result means 60.5% would have relocated

altogether with their family member(s) in spite of poor living environments. These three questions suggest that the primary concerns were more related to career factors rather than QoP factors.

What QoP pre-conditions have been considered in relocating to Suzhou?

This section attempts to identify key considerations in the relocation decision. Respondents scored the significance of each factor shown in Table 2 from 0 to 10. The most important was 10 whilst 0 was the least. The results indicated that the top three most important factors were safety, healthcare, and decent housing quality; the least important three factors were ties with Chinese neighbours, the presence of expat communities, and public parks. The significance varied amongst different demographic groups. Singles tended to be easy-going, as seen in the lowest average significance at 5.28. Married couples without children were in the middle, whilst families with children scored liveability factors the highest. As the size of the unit for relocation is large, expatriates are likely to consider a wider range of factors significantly. In singles' responses no area scored more than 7.00, whilst for married couples two areas scored more than 7.00 and for families with children four areas scored more than 7.00 (Table 2). This result implies that single professionals had risk-taking behaviours and were mobile with less family-related barriers influencing their decision on international relocation. The most important considerations were decent housing quality (6.57), urban transport (6.47) and safety (6.38) for the singles. Urban transport was stressed only by the singles group meaning that their intra-urban mobility was crucial for their stay in Suzhou. Due to their demographic characteristics, education for children was the least important factor followed by ties with Chinese neighbours and the presence of an expat community. Married couples without children emphasised decent housing quality (7.36), safety (7.31) and healthcare (6.86). These three factors have little relevance to interactions with others. The most significant concerns expressed by families with children were safety (8.19) followed by healthcare (7.67), and education for children (7.64). These three factors are tied up with considerations for children. Due to notorious news about child related crime and vehicle-oriented traffic environments that can cause detrimental accidents, expatriate families can be very concerned with safety. Unlikely other groups, education services for children were also specified as a very important consideration. Suzhou provides high-quality international standard education services for foreign nationals. Only 9

respondents out of 187 with school-aged children replied that their children were enrolled in a local Chinese school. The rest (95.2%) enrolled their children in an international school, foreign language school(s) or ethnically specific school(s). The majority of them received an education subsidy for their children from their employers. 117 out of 261 informantsrespondents with children of kindergarten or school age (48.8%) stated that their employer provided 80-100% of the tuition fees for their children’s education. Only 18.8% replied that they received no education subsidy from their employers. The three least important considerations were ties with Chinese neighbours, expat communities, and public parks that generally involve interactions with other people.

Table 2 Key considerations to relocated to Suzhou

Factors	Overall	Group 1_Singles	Group 2_Married without children	Group 3_Married with children
Decent housing quality	7.10	6.57	7.36	7.23
Air quality	6.62	5.83	6.75	6.88
Education for children	5.73	1.22	3.12	7.64
Safety	7.64	6.38	7.31	8.19
Shopping	5.81	5.19	6.15	5.95
Expats community	5.17	4.88	5.19	5.28
Ties with Chinese neighbours	4.58	4.50	5.04	4.49
Urban transport	6.25	6.47	6.49	6.11
Cultural activities	5.54	5.70	5.25	5.56
Healthcare	7.20	6.20	6.86	7.67
Public parks	5.23	5.18	5.23	5.24
Average*	6.08	5.28	5.89	6.39

Note: *Average means the arithmetic mean of the 11 factors without weight.

Two types of considerations (or pre-conditions) were identified from the result of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) (Table 3). The first factor includes primary pre-conditions, i.e., safety, air quality, decent housing quality, healthcare, and education for children. These five elements were acknowledged in Table 3 as significant pre-conditions when expatriates decided to move to Suzhou. The second group of factors were less significant than the primary pre-conditions: cultural activities, urban transport, ties with Chinese neighbours, public parks, and expats

community. Shopping is closer to secondary pre-conditions. The primary pre-conditions can have a direct impact, so they are more essential and fundamental. This result sheds light on policy implications for developing cities. These primary pre-conditions are associated with safety, health, education for children and a shelter. As foreign nationals have to face the 'disadvantages of alien status' (Caves, 1971), necessities play a fundamental role in securing their stay. Secondary pre-conditions are relevant to socialising and luxuries. For instance, public parks are useful for refreshment and recreation, but not necessary for their stay. These pre-conditions were consequently recognised less significantly than the primary pre-conditions listed in Table 3. Shopping can be both primary and secondary pre-conditions depending on the items purchased. When expatriates buy essential goods such as food, shopping would be primary, but when they purchase luxuries, shopping tends to be a secondary pre-condition.

Table 3 The result of factor analysis: rotated component matrix*

	Primary pre-conditions	Secondary Pre-conditions
Safety	.786	
Air quality	.763	
Decent housing quality	.700	
Healthcare	.689	
Education for children	.645	
Cultural activities		.759
Urban transport		.746
Ties with Chinese neighbours		.732
Public parks		.690
Expats community		.558
Shopping	.418	.542

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. *Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Perception of liveability in Suzhou

How do expatriates perceive liveability in Suzhou? Measuring liveability is difficult due to subjective perception and the unique personal experiences of participants in their previous places of residence. Therefore, perception of liveability in Suzhou was asked relative to their home city: "Which place is better in living conditions between Suzhou and your origin city?" This relative question can provide at least two important meanings. First, expatriates have a different benchmark in perceiving living conditions in the relocated host city. So, the home city can be the benchmark to measure their liveability. Second, the relative question can provide implications with respect to territorial competition between cities (Budd, 1998, Rubalcaba-Bermejo and Cuadrado-Roura, 1995). Global cities compete with other global cities in attracting command-and-control functions, investment capital and global talent. In terms of attracting or retaining global talent, this question can identify relative liveability between the origin city and the host city. The next section will address this relative perception of liveability in Suzhou as a key variable in terms of longer term stays in the city.

Figure 4 and Table 4 report the results of the relative perception of Suzhou's liveability over respondents' home city. Whilst '0' showed neutral between the two cities, +3 indicated that living conditions in Suzhou were much better. On the contrary (-3) indicated that living conditions in the home city were much better than Suzhou. The average score was -0.70, which signified that expatriates surveyed generally perceived their home cities ~~to have~~ better living conditions. However, the highest number of respondents (21.1%) answered that living conditions were indifferent. 22.9% of the respondents perceived living conditions in Suzhou were even better than their home city.

Was there a difference between expatriates' origins? Table 4 shows differences between origin groups. Expatriates from developed countries responded that Suzhou was relatively less liveable than their origin cities (at -1.16). Developed countries included the U.K., the US, Australia, France, Canada, Germany, and New Zealand in the responses. Some cities in these countries have a high reputation for their highly liveable environments; for instance, Australian cities, Canadian cities and European cities (EIU, 2013). Neighbouring countries were two major FDI sources for Suzhou: Japan and Korea. Japan is advanced in its economy, and Korea is in transition towards a developed economy (Kim and Han, 2012). The relative liveability perception of Suzhou was negative at (-0.51), but their perception was better than expats from developing

countries (-1.16). There have been close interactions historically between China and these countries and, as mentioned, they are significant sources of FDI and expatriates into Suzhou. Their languages are neither Chinese nor English. Often Koreans and the Japanese in China do not have sufficient either Chinese or English language skill. So, they tend to form ethnic communities in Suzhou. For instance, Koreans are highly concentrated in the core of the SIP whilst the vast majority of the Japanese are living in the SND; as confirmed by the survey result. In the sample responses 98.4% of Koreans were living in the SIP, whilst 90.7% of the Japanese respondents/informants, in the SND.

The category of developing countries includes Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia in the survey responses. The expatriates from these developing countries perceived better liveability in Suzhou than their home cities. However, they showed a variety of liveability perceptions, as can be seen in the large standard deviation. The number of expatriates from developing countries was not as high as neighbouring countries and developed countries in the survey responses; just 24 (or 4.9%) in total.

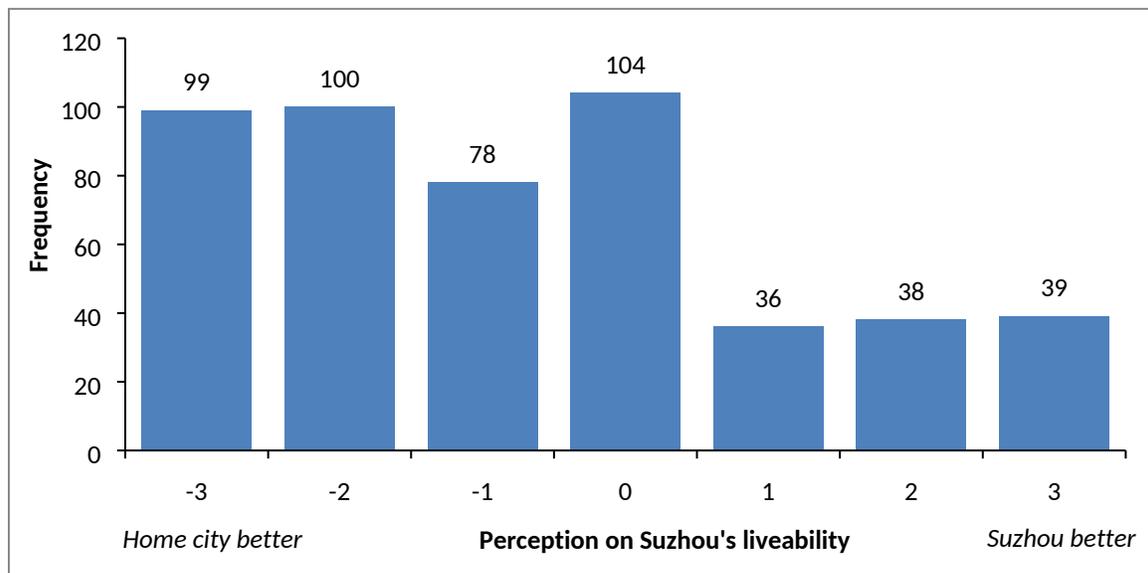


Figure 4 Relative perception on Suzhou's liveability over respondent's home city

Table 4 Expatriates' relative liveability perception in Suzhou by origin

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
(A) Developing countries	24	0.38	2.102	.429	-.51	1.26	-3	3
(B) Neighbouring countries (Japan/Korea)	287	-0.51	1.832	.108	-.72	-.29	-3	3
(C) Developed countries	145	-1.16	1.707	.142	-1.44	-.88	-3	3
Others	38	-1.11	1.721	.279	-1.67	-.54	-3	3
Total	494	-0.70	1.838	.083	-.86	-.54	-3	3

Note: The ANOVA result shows the mean difference between (A) and (B) is statistically insignificant whilst the differences between (A) and (C) and between (B) and (C) are statistically significant at the 1% significance level.

Effects of QoP perception on longer-term stays

The previous sections have analysed the relative significance between living conditions and career-related factors in expatriates' decisions to relocate to Suzhou. The results indicated that career development was a more fundamental attraction for global talent moving to the city. Living conditions could be more likely seen as pre-conditions that expatriates may consider when relocating. In spite of unsatisfactory pre-conditions, the majority of expatriates were keen to work in Suzhou in search of career and salary-related opportunities. However, this section elucidates another aspect of liveability – its significance with respect to retaining global talent over time. Although global talent moved to Suzhou primarily seeking career/salary-related opportunities, their better perception of the living quality in the host city can play an important role in retaining them as analysed in this section.

A binary logistic regression model was specified to analyse the effect of QoP perception on the duration of stays in Suzhou, as seen in Equation (1). In this analysis, the dependent variable was 'willingness to stay for the next three years'. When the expatriate is willing to stay in Suzhou for the next three years the dependant variable is one, otherwise zero in the regression model. 111 out of 342 (32.5%) responded that they were unwilling to stay in Suzhou for the next three years, whilst approximately two-thirds wanted to stay.

$$\text{Willingness to stay long} = f(\text{Housing quality characteristics, demographic characteristics, socio-economic characteristics, localisation, and liveability perception}) \quad (1)$$

Explanatory variables included housing quality characteristics, demographic characteristics, socio-economic characteristics, localisation and liveability perception. Housing quality characteristics included two variables: the amount of rent subsidy from the employer, and the housing size. The housing size employed the middle value in each category. For instance, the housing-size class 80-100m² was converted to 90m². As consistent with the previous sections, decent housing quality can provide secure environments for expatriates. Expatriates with larger housing and a higher amount of rental subsidy tended to be willing to stay longer in Suzhou. However, in the regression analysis demographic characteristics were insignificant in decisions on future stays in Suzhou. All of the three variables related with family life cycles were statistically insignificant. These variables were the age of the main income earner in the family, the number of children, and marital status. In contrast to the demographic characteristics, income levels as a socio-economic factor turned out to be statistically significant. The higher income earners tended to stay longer in Suzhou. The income level may represent career/salary-related factors that can also affect the willingness to stay in the host city. Localisation or adaptation in the host city was measured by asking the frequency of visits to ethnic grocery stores per week, as a proxy. Frequent visits to purchase ethnic foods may signify less localised lifestyle patterns. As seen in the estimated coefficient, frequent visitors for ethnic foods tended to stay for shorter periods. The liveability variable was perception on liveability relative to expatriates' home city. The result shows that expatriates who have higher satisfaction on liveability are willing to stay longer. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% significance level. The odds ratio was the second highest at 1.290 after income levels (1.338).

Table 5 The result of a binary logit analysis: variables in the equation

Variables		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
	Constant	-.875	.606	2.081	1	.149	.417
Housing quality	Rent Subsidy	.000	.000	8.827	1	.003	1.000
	Housing size band	.016	.004	17.791	1	.000	1.016
Demographic characteristics	Age band	.055	.153	.130	1	.719	1.057
	Children	.073	.124	.343	1	.558	1.076
	Marital status	-.071	.381	.035	1	.852	.931
Socio-economic status	Income level	.291	.121	5.760	1	.016	1.338
Localisation	Frequency to visit ethnic grocery stores	-.268	.120	4.995	1	.025	.765
Liveability perception	Relative perception on liveability in Suzhou	.255	.075	11.608	1	.001	1.290

Notes: The number of selected cases for this analysis is 342 out of 508. 166 sample responses were removed due to incomplete information.

* Variable(s) entered on step 1: Rent Subsidy, Housing size band, Age band, Children, Marital status, Income level, Frequency to visit ethnic grocery stores, and Relative perception on liveability in Suzhou.

Table 6 shows changes in probability of being willing to stay longer in Suzhou in accordance with relative perception of living conditions in Suzhou. 71.8% of expatriates with (-3) relative liveability perception want to stay longer in Suzhou, whilst the figure was 84.5% for expatriates that perceived equal liveability between Suzhou and their home city. There is a 20.4% difference between the two extremes in terms of relative liveability perception. This result confirms that liveability plays an important role in retaining global talent although it is not a leading attraction. This research indicates, therefore, that in the process of global territorial competition, high quality living environments are closely associated with long-term effects in terms of retaining global talent when the host city provides better QoP environments.

Table 6 Willingness to stay long by relative liveability perception

Relative perception on living conditions in Suzhou	Probability of staying long (%)	Probability of staying short (%)	Changes in probability (%p)	Odds	Changes in odds	Odds ratio EXP(B)
-3	71.8	28.2		2.546		
-2	76.6	23.4	4.8	3.274	0.727	1.290

-1	80.9	19.1	4.3	4.236	0.962	1.290
0	84.5	15.5	3.6	5.452	1.216	1.290
1	87.6	12.4	3.1	7.065	1.613	1.290
2	90.1	9.9	2.5	9.101	2.036	1.290
3	92.2	7.8	2.1	11.821	2.720	1.290

Notes: This table is based on a typical sample, married family with two children, a 7000RMB rental subsidy, 110m² housing, 40,000RMB monthly income, once-a-week frequency to visit ethnic grocery stores in their 30s.

Implications and conclusion

Global talent is hyper-mobile and so territorial competition to attract such people is not limited to developed countries. Emerging cities have joined this competition as can be seen in the case of Suzhou. This research has examined QoP factors in the decision to relocate to the emerging city at an individual or household level. Unlike the implications from some creative city literature on liveable environments, the findings indicate that global talent in Suzhou has been driven primarily by career-related opportunities instead of liveability factors. Although Suzhou is well-regarded as a liveable place amongst the Chinese, it has not yet built up a high global reputation. Consequently, career and salary-related opportunities may play a more fundamental role in attracting global talent to this emerging city-region. In this sense, strategies to attract good quality firms are crucial for the talent because they are primarily attracted by jobs offered by firms. Suzhou and its surrounding area has attracted a wide range of MNEs, encouraged by the local construction of nationally strategic industrial parks and development zones. The vast majority of these MNEs are technology-oriented manufacturers within which global talent is necessary for management and efficient production. As claimed by Kim (2015), the firm establishment of entire production networks are the key to large inflows of MNEs. Planning efforts to provide business-friendly environments for the target production networks would be effective in creating the basis for both economic and human capital developments. In this sense, findings from this research provide another array of planning implications different from the literature discussed in Western contexts.

Nevertheless, whilst liveability factors were not shown to be significant in terms of attracting global talent, the presence of certain liveability pre-conditions did seem significant in the relocation process. Fundamental considerations were identified, such as safety, air quality,

decent housing quality, healthcare and education for children. Secondary considerations were cultural activities, urban transport, ties with Chinese neighbours, public parks and the presence of expat communities. These secondary considerations were still regarded as important, but not as crucial as the fundamental considerations. The findings therefore provide potential urban planning implications for developing countries where the attraction of global talent is a strategic goal. Cultural and social factors to encourage socialising amongst expatriates and between foreign nationals and the locals are secondary concerns for developing countries. Possibly due to infrequent interactions with locals, private spaces, i.e. expatriates' housing, were conceived to be much more important than cultural/social activities and public spaces (i.e., public parks). However, one result of this could be the potential for inflows of global talent to result in further socio-economic and spatial inequality in globalising Chinese cities. This could particularly be the case if local government spending is oriented towards the provision of goods targeted at prospective global talent, and thus away from the needs of the existing local population. This is an important area for further in-depth research.

Additionally, the role of QoP factors was also highlighted to positively contribute towards retaining global talent, as seen in the result of the logit analysis. In spite of available positions in respective firms, low liveable environments appeared to discourage the attracted professionals from staying for longer periods. When their perception of QoP factors is high, they are more willing to stay in the emerging city-region for the longer-term. Suzhou has been reasonably successful in providing quality living environments. Overall the perception of liveability by foreign nationals was reported to be similar to or just slightly lower than participants' home city.

The results of this study therefore imply the relevance of liveability circumstances for Chinese growth, suggesting that such factors should be considered carefully by planners and city governments; particularly in locations where growth strategies are centred on the attraction and retention of FDI. However, a further point can be made in the Chinese context. As Chinese labour costs increase and the country seeks to develop its economy up the value chain, China's cities and industrial locations are likely to find themselves increasingly competing for Chinese investment and talent. The young cohort of Chinese highly-skilled workers has the potential to, like their counterparts in the West, be increasingly selective in their location choice. A significant factor in determining their decisions could be the QoP offers of particular locations. The extent to which the Floridian geographies of talent localisation are being, and will be, transferred to the

Chinese context, as well as other emerging economies, is an area for considerable future research.

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The role of Quality of Place factors in expatriate international relocation decisions: A case study of Suzhou, a globally-focused Chinese city

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