

## **Fleeing the Draft: Lived Experiences of Middle-Class Migrants in Bangkok**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines how forced migration reshapes the class trajectories of middle-class migrants. It asks whether and how displaced professionals experience career downward mobility, status loss, or the ability to maintain positions, and how different forms of capital shape these market outcomes. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework of economic, cultural, and social capital, the study analyses how these resources are mobilized and converted under conditions of forced migration.

The research is based on in-depth life-history interviews with 13 middle-class professionals living in Bangkok. It argues that middle-class migrants who have access to different forms of capital are often able to navigate forced migration and resettlement with fewer disruptions than those with more limited resources. By drawing on their economic, cultural, and social capital, they try to protect their careers and avoid slipping too far down the socio-economic ladder. However, these advantages do not guarantee security. Many still experience serious downward mobility, showing that forced migration can unsettle even relatively privileged groups.

This study contributes to migration scholarship by foregrounding how social class and different forms of capital shape forced migration trajectories and outcomes among middle-class professionals, including dynamics that sometimes resemble economic migration. By focusing on a group often overlooked in forced migration research, it addresses a key gap in the literature and demonstrates how class-based resources mediate both resilience and downward mobility under conditions of displacement.