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Community and Identity
in the New Chinese
Migration Order

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Abstract:

Migration from China has fundamentally changed in the past 25 years. Much has been written on the benefits and threats of different types of Chinese migration flows for receiving countries. Almost equally much has been written about the many forms of Chinese transnationalism and cosmopolitanism brought forth by the new Chinese migration. This introductory essay discusses the new types of migratory flows emanating from China with a focus on ethnic identity formation, competition and cooperation between different migrant Chinese groups, both new and old, in different settings in Europe, North America and Africa.

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1. Introduction[1]

The study of Chinese migration and ethnicity used to be a small field at the margins. As recently as the 1970s and 1980s, research on the overseas Chinese was integrated more with Chinese studies, itself a marginal and isolated field of study (Pieke 2002), than with the burgeoning work on migration, ethnicity and race relations, particularly in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, geography and political science. Much of this had of course to do with timing. After the Second World War, first North America and then Europe were confronted with large flows of immigrants; at the same time, China almost completely shut itself off from the rest of the world, Until the mid-1960s, Chinese exclusion acts also made it almost impossible for Chinese migrants to enter North America.[2] Relatively modest migratory flows of Chinese from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia (at least compared to large-scale immigration from the Mediterranean, Latin America and the Caribbean) brought only students, businesspeople, professionals and hard working, independently-minded peasants to northern Europe and North America. These flows could be safely ignored by policy makers and academic researchers, except as a "model" or "invisible" minority used to name and shame other, much more problematic and demanding immigrant groups.

In the 1990s, this situation changed both suddenly and rapidly. China's economic growth and increasing global prominence created a seemingly insatiable appetite for knowledge of China and its impact on the world.

Simultaneously, and partially as a reaction to China's prominence, the social sciences turned away from the rather tired concepts and theories on world systems, race relations and ethnicity, and started talking about globalization, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and diaspora instead. Now that the world was seen as the migrant's oyster, the "Chinese overseas" quite suddenly were the object of much research and writing, even to the point of becoming the very paradigm of the new global (or at least transnational) citizen.

In the last few years a backlash can be discerned, although globalization and transnationalism as guiding concepts in research are by no means dead. Perhaps the most important driver of this change is the shift in immigration regimes across Europe and North America. Especially after 9/11, but as a trend already visible before then, globalization and migration are much less seen as enabling and liberating, and the path to a new modernity that will transcend the jaded constraints of the old nation-states and international organizations alike. Instead, globalization is now also associated with transnational terrorist networks, aggressive economic challenges from countries like China and India to the West's dominance, and a Malthusian flood of destitute migrants in search of the spoils of what remains of the West's welfare states. In a sharp reaction, nations have affirmed themselves, and states have cracked down on immigration, imports and real or imagined terrorist threats. In turn, academic discourse has shifted; the hard, policy-relevant issues of uncontrolled immigration, hostile race relations and global

competition and confrontation seem much more relevant than the rather free-floating and naïve discussions on globalization in the 1990s.

In this new world, China and Chinese migrants still play a prominent part, but their role has become much more ambivalent. In the US in the second half of the 1990s, shortly afterwards followed by Europe, Chinese immigration began not only to be associated with the arrival of model citizens. Particularly the sudden growth of large-scale migration from Central Fujian highlighted the new, much uglier realities of the new world migration order: commercialization, professionalization, criminalization, human smuggling and trafficking, forced labour, hyper-exploitation and opportunistic asylum seeking. The Chinese – until recently the "model minority" – suddenly came to epitomize everything that was feared about international migration. Amplified by the rising apprehension of China's global challenge that now routinely fills the pages of mainstream journals and magazines, the image of the unstoppable Chinese tide has become a powerful driver of Western public opinion and government-imposed immigration restrictions.

Obviously, most western governments know about the crucial importance of immigration: brain and skills gain, revenue and profits from foreign students, relief of the ageing of the population and labour shortages in low-skilled sectors of the labour market (for instance, care, cleaning, agriculture, catering, construction). However, they choose to believe that states can actually "manage" migration, which is based on the pretension that

governments are in fact able to decide which migratory flows are beneficial and which ones are not. Furthermore, the belief in managed migration is predicated on the government's ability to design, put in place and enforce a package of policies that will in fact winnow out the undesirable migrants (Castles 2004). Again, the Chinese feature very prominently in this debate: in many countries, China (plus Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Chinese in Southeast Asia) are the largest source of desirable fee-paying foreign students and highly-skilled or business migrants, but also of the most prominent flows of undesirable immigrants who enter the country in the back of a lorry and may end up dead, caught by the incoming tide at Morecambe Bay.

With China as a crucial hub of the new global migration order, and Chinese migrants being one of the main examples (both negative and positive) that immigration policy makers have in mind, Chinese migration is no longer a marginal and merely "academic" issue. There are many points that should be (and indeed are) taken up by research on Chinese migration. Much of the attention to Chinese migration in the last ten years or so has understandably focussed on recent changes in Chinese migration itself: the new flows and modalities of mobility that characterise what I would like to call the new Chinese migration order. Much of the excitement about Chinese migration is, as I explained earlier, about Chinese migrants as the paradigmatic new global and transnational citizens, regardless of whether this is perceived to be the promise of new modernity or a threat to an established way of life.

However, there is, on the whole, much less work done on the more mundane realities of life beyond what is immediately policy-relevant.

Upon arrival, the new Chinese migrants have to carve out a place for themselves in the receiving society. This entails much more than finding a job, securing residence, and paying one's debts. In particular, Chinese migrants finds themselves in a social landscape shaped both other flows of Chinese migrants and established Chinese communities and institutions that are the legacy of earlier (and often much earlier) Chinese migration. These Chinese communities are inadequately equipped, indifferent, or even plainly hostile to the new migrants. At the same time, the new migrants present opportunities and challenges that the established communities cannot ignore, such as cheap and abundant co-ethnic labour, new forms and sources of criminality, the dominance of Mandarin over southern Chinese dialects, in particular Cantonese, greater access to the People's Republic of China, and the presence of students and professionals who are highly educated both in China and abroad.

The interaction between the many different Chinese migratory flows and communities is clearly crucial in shaping the way that new migrants insert themselves in the receiving society. In other words, what changes does the new Chinese migration bring to local Chinese communities, local Chinese ethnicities and identities, and local forms of ethnic political participation? These questions in themselves are a subset of the larger, but familiar

questions on integration, settlement and identity formation. The articles collected in this special issue are all ethnographically rich studies on these issues, ultimately addressing the larger conceptual issue of what the still relatively new research agenda of globalization and transnationalism has yielded for the much older questions, essentially defined in the 1970s, on ethnicity, community and identity that are again becoming increasingly relevant.

In this introduction I will first outline the main changes in the Chinese migration order since roughly 1980 with particular reference to Europe (about which I know most) and North America (about which I know much less). I will then discuss some of the key issues that have emerged from the articles regarding the impact of the new migration has had on community and identity amongst the overseas Chinese populations.

2. The new Chinese migration order

Several of the profound changes that have taken place in Chinese migration from the People's Republic of China (PRC) since the 1980s were prefigured by flows that originated from Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Southeast Asia that started in the late 1950s or 1960s.

The first one is emigration to Western Europe from Hong Kong's New Territories. Although in many respects similar to overseas Chinese migration

in the 19th and early 20th century, this first major Chinese migration flow after the Second World War also shares important characteristics with the current mass flows from old overseas areas in Fujian and Zhejiang. For instance, Hong Kong Chinese entered western Europe to take advantage of the acute shortage of Chinese labour in the Chinese ethnic sector (catering), quickly establishing their own migration chain that allowed them to outnumber the small established Chinese communities and to assume a dominant position. Subsequently, Hong Kong migrants opportunistically fanned out all across Western Europe in search of employment and business opportunities in this frontier area of Chinese settlement. Although much less strict immigration controls did not require the extent of professionalization of the migration trade that currently is the case, in Hong Kong a similar migration configuration of institutions sprang up that facilitated, routinized, perpetuated and directed mass migration. Quickly, the Hong Kong Chinese in Europe became a transnational community with almost seamlessly connections between the home communities in Hong Kong and a great number of European countries, while at the same time being the dominant core to settled local Chinese communities in almost every major city in Western Europe (Watson 1976; Watson 2004).

The second pre-1980s flow that I would like to draw attention to is students and professionals from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia who entered the United States (US) in increasing numbers after the much-delayed establishment of a Chinese immigration quota in 1965. This group of

migrants is the first example of mass migration of middle and upper class Chinese after the large number of Chinese students who went to Japan in the 1910s and 1920s. Crucially, most of these migrants to the US started as students taking an advanced degree in the US, subsequently seeking employment and settling, usually to the comforts of America's suburban life style. This flow of migrants had – and continues to have – little in common (and in fact very little contact) with the much older Chinese communities in the US (Avenarius 2005; Kwong 1996).

Before 1980, both Europe and North America had therefore already witnessed inflows of Chinese migrants who in many ways established precedents and set the parameters for Chinese migrants from the late 1970s onward. Since then, the most important change in the Chinese emigration order obviously was the resumption of emigration from the PRC, but emigration also increased in scale and diversity from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. From the latter non-PRC countries of origin, modernization and increased wealth in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s gradually eroded the wage premium and thus the scale of unskilled labour emigration to western destinations. At the same time study, skilled migration, business and settlement in the West (particularly the US, Canada and Australia) became a normal part of life for the growing elites and middle classes. For Taiwan and especially Hong Kong and Macao, residence rights in the West also became a form of "political insurance" against the threat (Taiwan) or reality (Hong Kong and Macao) of reunification with the Chinese mainland. In the 1990s,

Hong Kong, Taiwan and Southeast Asian Chinese "astronauts" and "flexible citizenship" became emblematic of the transnationalism of the new deterritorialized world forged by the forces of globalization of capital, goods, knowledge and people (Skeldon 1994; Ong and Nonini 1997; Ong 1999).

The main driver, at least initially, of the new migration from the PRC was a gradual but fundamental relaxation of the country's emigration policy. From an almost total ban on officially endorsed emigration during most of the 1960s, starting around 1974 the PRC moved to a policy framework that now allows foreign travel and emigration to virtually all Chinese citizens who can produce a visa or other evidence of the right of legitimate entry to a foreign country (Xiang 2003). The frequent chastening of China for not letting its citizens out are but a vague memory of a distant Cold War past; currently, China is mainly criticized for letting too many people out by being too soft on "illegal" migration!

Between the late 1970s and late 1980s, the new Chinese migration from the PRC consisted of two very different types. The first one was the resumption of emigration from traditional overseas Chinese areas, first to the overseas communities established before 1949 but gradually branching out to other areas in search of economic opportunities. The chief examples of this are migrants from the Taishan area in Guangdong province to the US and from the Wenzhou/Qingtian area in Zhejiang province to Europe. Only somewhat later did emigration from Central Fujian province start. Despite being an old

overseas area with communities in Southeast Asia, Central Fujian had no pre-existing ties with North America and Europe, the chief destination areas of new migrants. With the benefit of hindsight, we can observe that the emergence of this flow foreshadowed some of the much more fundamental changes in the Chinese migration order that were to take place in the 1990s and 2000s (Pieke et al. 2004).

The second initial flow of new Chinese migrants consisted of students. Chinese students chiefly went to the US, with smaller numbers accepted by other developed countries (Japan, Western Europe, Australia) as well. At this time, almost all Chinese students were postgraduates, accepted and supported on exchange programmes or western scholarships; few Chinese could as yet afford the costs of study abroad themselves (Zweig and Chang 1995; Gao and Liu 1998; Cheng 2002).

This relatively ordered pattern of Chinese migration, with reasonably well-defined flows and areas of origin and destination, changed fundamentally in the 1990s and 2000s. Some of these changes were at least partially path-dependent in that they followed from the impact that ongoing migration had on policy making and social and economic development in sending and receiving areas. However, change has equally much been driven by developments in Chinese society. Economic reform in the cities really began to bite in the early 1990s, weaning increasing numbers of urban Chinese from the dependence and restrictions of the Chinese "work unit" system.

Reform and foreign trade generated unprecedented economic growth, in turn creating a new entrepreneurial elite and middle class with a life style and expectations to match (Tomba 2004). In terms of social and spatial mobility, Chinese now have almost as much freedom as residents of non-socialist countries. However, as China's market reform creates an increasingly level playing field, it produces not only winners but also losers: rural dwellers in the interior or otherwise isolated places and urban residents who have been shed by state enterprise reform without much hope of finding comparable employment elsewhere.

The overall result of these developments has been that the types, origins and destinations of Chinese migration have proliferated. Emigration is no longer limited to a few pockets of Chinese society, but has become an option that can be entertained by Chinese across the country and from a wide range of backgrounds. This does emphatically not entail that the number of Chinese migrants is now only limited by the obstacles that sending countries put in their way – many factors impinge on migratory decisions, opportunity being one and only one of them – but it does mean that Chinese migration has become highly diverse, making it increasingly difficult to speak about Chinese migration in the singular in any analytically meaningful sense (although in some contexts it might still be politically expedient!). Below I will briefly review the most important of these changes in the Chinese migration order in some more detail. I will start with commercialization of emigration, and then discuss the involvement of local government before moving on the

globalization of Chinese migration and the rise and diversification of education and professional migration. Finally, I will briefly turn to some of the possible policy implications of the new patterns of Chinese migration.

The first change that I would like to discuss is the acceleration of the commercialization of emigration. Arguably pioneered by Fujianese migration in the 1980s, emigration opportunities have increasingly become a scarce commodity for sale in the market place. The first things that may very well come to mind here are illegal migration, asylum abuse, human smuggling and trafficking (about which I will have more to say in the next section), but commercialization is actually a much broader issue. The emigration business is a world-wide phenomenon that includes everything from schools for language or professional training in preparation for work or study abroad, to emigration agencies that advertise in newspapers or on the Internet, to the gradual commercialization of assistance originally given free of charge to friends or family.

However, a key development in China in the 1990s has been the overt involvement of local government in sending areas in encouraging and even facilitating migration. For internal migration, such involvement of local government dates back to the 1980s see (Murphy 2002), and is in fact getting less now that private agencies and migrant networks have firmly established themselves in many source areas (Tan 2005). Fujian province provides the earliest example as far as international migration is concerned.

Individual officials of the government of coastal central Fujian had been involved in the illegal emigration business already from the early 1980s (one of the key reasons why emigration could flourish in this area one would expect), but the government could not openly been seen to be involved.

The first example of open government involvement in international migration that I know of dates from 1990 in the interior of Fujian province, an area without any overseas Chinese tradition, where the authorities were keen to raise the local standard of living through migration just as had happened in the coastal overseas areas (Thunø and Pieke 2005). At the time, the local government's encouragement of emigration still had be carefully weighted against the provincial government's displeasure and the general sensitivities arising from Fujian's illegal emigration business, and the local government could not openly facilitate emigration. Nevertheless, almost from scratch the area became an important sending area of Chinese migrants to Europe, foreshadowing developments that are currently underway in China's three north-eastern provinces (also know as Manchuria) and other provinces (for instance Shandong), which in the late 1990s suddenly put themselves on the Chinese emigration map (Paul 2002; Gao and Poisson 2005; Xiang 2005).

Much like the interior of Fujian, but on a much larger scale, the Northeast is a rustbelt of ill-performing state-owned enterprises, where emigration provides urban workers a much needed escape from unemployment. However, and again like interior Fujian, rural dwellers, who had engaged in

circular migration to urban areas already for some time (Yan 2003), also quickly availed themselves of the opportunities to go abroad. Although little is as yet known about this new flow, research currently undertaken by Xiang Biao shows that emigration companies drive much of the emigration from the Northeast, companies that in turn operate in full view of the authorities and are often connected to state-owned enterprises (Xiang 2005; see also Paul 2002).

Local government, in other words, is one of the key agents in the spread of mass emigration across China, playing a role rather similar to the national government in countries, such as the Philippines, that rely heavily on emigration as a development strategy. The role of the local government is of course quite consistent with the great premium that the central government in China attaches to economic development and the considerable autonomy that local officials enjoy to pursue this goal. In the late 1970s, the central government's relaxation of emigration restrictions was central in kick-starting emigration. By contrast, since the early 1990s policy-making by the central government has played more of a secondary facilitating role, quite often reacting to developments that already are well underway (Xiang 2003).

The second key feature of the new Chinese migration order is the globalization of migration, which mainly seems to be driven by the commercialization of emigration and the more intense competition for opportunities abroad. Until the late 1980s, individual Chinese migratory flows

tended to single out destination areas with well-established ethnic sectors and communities from the same area of origin, only gradually expanding into adjacent areas, thus minimizing competition between Chinese groups. Starting in the mid-1980s, the Fujianese were the first to break through this mould. By focussing on the US and later western Europe, Fujianese migrants consciously entered the territories of entrenched overseas communities of Hong Kong, Guangdong, or Zhejiang extraction, where they were mostly treated with hostility and as cheap, expendable labour, as evidenced by Beck (Beck 2005; see also Kwong 1997; Liang and Ye 2001; Pieke et al. 2004). However, the Fujianese did not stop there, but also sought out opportunities both in within and outside the ethnic sector all across the globe, rather than following the much older path of gradual expansion of establishing new ethnic sectors in adjacent areas or countries.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s this example was quickly followed by the Zhejiangese, who aggressively expanded from their traditional stronghold in western (and more recently southern) Europe. In the 1990s, Zhejiangese appeared in new frontier areas, such as eastern Europe or Africa (Nyíri 1999; Carling Haugen and Carling 2005). They also established a foothold in North America,[3] and since about 2003 even took the 31 kilometre leap into Britain, which they had inexplicably but consistently avoided ever since the arrival of the first Zhejiangese in continental Europe in the late nineteenth century (Thunø 1999).

Globalization of Chinese migration is also a consequence of the rise of education and professional migration, which is the third aspect of the new Chinese migration order that I would like to highlight here. In the 1990s and 2000s, Chinese education migration has proliferated, both in terms of sheer numbers and in the range of student backgrounds, destinations, and degrees pursued. As China got richer, foreign study came within reach of the offspring of China's burgeoning entrepreneurial elite and even the salaried middle classes. Currently, young Chinese travel abroad not only for a postgraduate degree at a top-level research university, but for undergraduate degrees, high school diplomas, or short-term certificate courses in English or other vocational skills as well. Chinese students currently are by far the largest group of foreign students in most western countries, whose governments and educational institutions energetically compete for this profitable growth market (Bohm et al. 2004).

Chinese professional migration is to a large extent the by-product of educational migration, when graduates seek employment in the country of study (or perhaps elsewhere abroad) rather than return to their homeland. This pattern is particularly pronounced in the US, but is significant in for instance western Europe and Japan as well, despite government policies that try to prohibit this (Zweig and Chang 1995; Cheng 2002). Direct immigration of professionals from the PRC is also significant and on the rise, not only to countries where one might expect it (North America, western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong, see for instance Salaff

and Chan 2005), but also to places that at first sight seem strangely non-obvious, such as Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Elisabeth Hsu's work on Chinese medical practitioners in East Africa breaks new ground in this regard (Hsu 2005).

Since the late 1970s and accelerating in the early 1990s, Chinese migration has changed almost beyond recognition. Some old overseas Chinese areas (for instance in southern Fujian or the eastern part of the Pearl River Delta) that were able to tap into the opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship in New Economic Zones close by have conspicuously failed to generate new flows of mass migration. However, other, less well-located overseas Chinese areas (Central Fujian, Wenzhou, and to a lesser extent the Sze Yep area in Guangdong) have instead capitalized on their overseas links and have turned into commercialized migration configurations with a truly global reach. In these areas, emigration has become virtually universal: migrating abroad is the number one choice for success for all but the very rich and the very poor. These migration configurations generate large and sustained flows of emigrants that usually end up in low-paid unskilled employment and ultimately self-employment. However, given the universality of emigration in many villages in these areas, one would expect major further growth in the numbers of emigrants to run up against the limits of the population base in these areas (Hood 1998; Liang and Morooka 2004).

Simultaneously, emigration has also become a much more generally available avenue for social mobility across China's (mainly urban) middle and upper classes. Here, unlike the commercialization migration configurations, emigration is far from the only choice that people wish to entertain. Instead, a decision to emigrate follows from diverse educational, employment, or entrepreneurial strategies in which emigration is carefully weighted up against domestic employment, entrepreneurship, or higher education, all of which may also include possible migration elsewhere in China. In other words, these migratory flows have to be understood as aspects of domestic patterns of geographical and social mobility created by the fundamental changes that have taken place in Chinese society. Migrants of this type aspire to find white-collar employment or self-employment, although a considerable number may actually end up have to settle for low-skilled work (see Salaff and Chan 2005). The numbers involved in these migratory flows can be large and are most likely to grow in absolute terms, but I would expect that only a very small percentage of the potential migration base will ever actually emigrate. For the vast majority, opportunities in China itself will continue to be less risky and expensive, and more attractive, realistically available, or in tune with one's preferred life style.

Both patterns outlined above will continue to generate flows of large-scale and sustained emigration at the present or higher levels (particularly through the further growth of China's middle classes), without being likely to lead to a further quantitative leap in the total level of emigration from China.

However, the potential of truly significant and rapid increases in the aggregate level of Chinese emigration lies in the pattern I first encountered in the interior of Fujian province and which is now also found on much larger scale in the Northeast, and quite possible also elsewhere in China, for instance in Shandong or Yunnan provinces (Gao and Poisson 2005: 27; Liang and Morooka 2004: 149-150). In these areas, small-scale emigration of, for instance, middle class students or professionals (or possibly also farmers with a history of domestic migration) can quite rapidly develop into a mass migration configuration not unlike those in certain old overseas Chinese areas. Judging from the evidence in Fujian and the Northeast, the growth of such new overseas Chinese areas does not happen spontaneously, but is predicated on the endorsement and active support by the local government that incorporates international migration in its development and modernization strategy.

This conclusion has important implications for efforts to "manage" Chinese emigration. Managing migration cannot aspire, to invoke Stephen Castles' felicitous phrase, to turn migration off or on "like at tap" (Castles 2004: 208). Managing migration has to start with the realization that current flows will continue, unless one is prepared to take truly draconian measures. However, something can be done to gain at least some influence over future flows. If one thus accepts the current aggregate level of Chinese emigration as sustainable or at least unavoidable, policy intervention should not prioritize already developed overseas Chinese emigration areas or the more generic

flow generated by strategies for social mobility among the middle and upper classes. Instead, in areas where emigration has not yet reached mass proportions policy should try to avoid the inclusion of emigration as a pillar of local government development strategies in order to prevent the emergence of new overseas Chinese emigration areas.

3. New migration, community and identity

The new flows and modalities of migration described in the preceding section are so diverse that one may legitimately ask whether it still makes sense to talk about Chinese migration as one empirical phenomenon, a point that I have also made elsewhere (Pieke 1999; Pieke 2002). However, no matter how little flows of emigrants have in common from the perspective of the sending country, at the receiving end, China's highly diverse migratory flows encounter not only the institutions of the receiving country and established groups of overseas Chinese, but also each other. In this encounter, Chinese migrants have to make choices on how to deal with the realities and discourses of Chinese life abroad, choices that in turn weave patterns of community formation, identity creation, division of labour and political participation that are as much Chinese as they are unique to each place and time.

It would be easy to conclude that such variety defies any generalization, and, as with all social science, no hard laws are indeed discernable. However,

from the articles collected in this volume several themes emerge that relate to employment, residence, community formation and ethnicity. Below, I will offer my observations on these themes pointing out both the differences and similarities between the cases. In this discussion, I will draw particular attention to the implications of the case studies collected in this volume for our understanding of the more general patterns by which migration, socioeconomic stratification, social inclusion and exclusion, ethnicity and political participation impinge on each other.

Before the commencement of new emigration flows, employment and entrepreneurship were confined to familiar ethnic enclave activities, ranging in the articles collected here from noodle making in Zanzibar to Chinese restaurants, grocery stores and travel agents in Liverpool and Toronto. With Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Southeast Asian Chinese education and skilled migration to North America from the mid-1960s onward, and the growth of the second and third generations of established Chinese groups, Chinese communities in North America embarked on a relatively straightforward path of socially upward mobility and spatial mobility away from Chinatowns and into the suburbs. In post-war Europe, Chinatowns never were centres of economic activity or residential areas to begin with; Chinese lived as dispersed as the restaurant trade required, and upward social mobility of both the first and second generation was much less visibly reflected in spatial mobility. The case of Zanzibar discussed by Elisabeth Hsu (2005) reveals yet another pattern – which could be with some imagination be interpreted as a

variation on the North American one – in which economic success and generational shift lead to a move either into elite neighbourhoods, or away from Zanzibar altogether for the comforts and opportunities of upper or middle class life in Southeast Asia, Europe, or North America.

The arrival of large numbers of immigrants from the PRC simultaneously both reinforced and changed this general pattern of upward mobility and entry into the middle classes. Like Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Southeast Asian Chinese, PRC Chinese graduated students and professionals aspired to a suburban lifestyle. Some succeed in achieving this ambition, but, as is shown by Salaff and Chan (2005), many middle class migrants find that the language barrier and the failure to gain recognition of their Chinese professional qualification condemns them to low skilled employment and social isolation, and they often turn to the employment opportunities and institutional support network in Chinatown.

For unskilled Chinese immigrants from old and new overseas Chinese areas, employment in Chinatown or more generally the Chinese ethnic sector, such as the catering trade or leather goods or garment sweatshops in Europe, is not merely a second choice option, but in fact the main pull factor. Immigration of large numbers of Chinese willing to accept often gruelling work and living conditions undoubtedly revitalized the ethnic enclave economies and spurred their growth and spread. However, it is also well-

documented that this happened at an often serious human cost (Kwong 1997; Chin 1999; Pieke et al. 2004).

Like other ethnic enclaves, Chinatown economies have never been places whose economies operated in full accord with employment and labour legislation in the West; indeed, this is one of the main reason why such enclaves are competitive and can act as a stepping stone (at least for some) into mainstream society (Portes and Bach 1985; Portes and Jensen 1987; Zhou 1992). What is perhaps unusual about the case of recent Chinese labour immigration is the sheer force and volume of the migration push generated by the highly commercialized old and new overseas Chinese migration configuration. The stakes for migrants, facilitators, recruiters, employers and government in the sending areas have simply become too high for the migration pressure to be tempered by the risks and costs of migration, the hardships of employment, or the downward trend of wages in the enclave economies caused by the inflow of ever more eager workers.

The obvious consequence has been an even further worsening of labour relations in the Chinese economies, possibly also leading to a rise of debt bondage and abusive forms of trafficking. Migrants are also especially vulnerable to extortion and protection rackets (Gao and Poisson 2005). However, as Beck (2005) demonstrates, migration pressure in the UK recently has also had the effect of pushing Chinese migrants into employment outside the ethnic enclaves, which, in the case of women from

the Northeast, also includes prostitution (Gao and Poisson 2005). Judging from admittedly still mainly anecdotal evidence from Britain, this seems to take two main forms. Some Chinese migrants have proven resourceful enough to find employment on their own in mainstream society. However, many more, and especially those who have only arrived recently, rely on the services of Chinese recruiters. Such "gangmasters" put groups of Chinese to work either by contracting them out to for instance farmers, packaging firms, cleaning companies and the like, or else find work for them themselves, for instance in the by now notorious cockle picking at Morecambe Bay.

Labour gangs are a normal feature of the lower end of the British employment landscape. Although serious abuses frequently take place, the work of gangmasters can, if properly registered, be perfectly legal (Anderson and Rogaly 2004). However, the Chinese entry into this trade does not mean that they simply join a multi-ethnic proletariat put to work at the very bottom of the British labour market. Chinese gangmasters or recruiters play a crucial role and there may even be a direct link with smugglers or traffickers, opening the door to systematic debt bondage and associated forms of criminal abuse. Chinese forays into mainstream employment therefore chiefly work through the institutions of the Chinese ethnic enclave, and should in large part be interpreted as a spill-over or an extension of the ethnic economy rather than an escape from it.

Migration pressure generated by the commercialization of emigration has created new forms of social exclusion in Chinese communities. Socio-economic inequality is reinforced by ethnicity, pitting groups of recent PRC immigrants against established Chinese communities and against each other. However, this is only the case when different Chinese groups are in fact put in an exploitative relationship, or compete for economic or political resources. Where this is not the case, as in Zanzibar, several different groups of recently immigrated Chinese and established overseas Chinese can live their separate lives without interfering in each others' affairs, confirming that, in the absence of the need to cooperate or compete, cultural and socioeconomic differences remain just that, without being renegotiated as markers of ethnic identities and groups.

Before the onset of mass immigration from the PRC, both in Europe and in North America ethnic competition between different Chinese groups were by no means unknown, but less acute then in recent years. In Europe between the 1950s and 1970s, the new flow of rural migrants from Hong Kong simply outnumbered the remnants of the pre-Second World War Chinese communities. Other sub-ethnic groups whose origins also lay in Hong Kong or elsewhere in the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong province, either assimilated in the Hong Kong mainstream, or else (like the Hakka and Sze Yep) maintained their identity within the framework of the Hong Kong Cantonese majority (Christiansen 2003; Beck 2005). To outsiders, the Chinese appeared as a seemingly homogeneous community of Cantonese

speakers from Hong Kong. The exception was southern Zhejiang Chinese in continental Europe. They maintained their distance from the numerous Hong Kong newcomers, although they were happy to employ them, as long as emigration from the Zhejiang home communities remained impossible. However, at the time, the rapidly expanding restaurant trade offered enough opportunities for all to stunt the formation of politicized ethnic identities and forestalled serious interethnic competition.

In North America, the old Chinese communities lived mainly in Chinatowns where relations between different Chinese groups were mediated by a dense network of associations. Moreover, Chinatowns were ageing and shrinking communities that were largely bypassed by Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Southeast Asian middle class immigrants. Like Zanzibar, but obviously on a much larger scale, there was little or no competition or friction between them. However, as Avenarius (2005) shows, successful high-skilled middle class immigration does not necessarily lead to the erasure of (sub)ethnic difference. Among Taiwanese in Orange County, ethnicity is not the product of a cultural division of labour or the competition over resources in the US, but of remembered politicized ethnic identities back in Taiwan. Given the high concentration of Taiwanese in Orange County, the superficial uniformity and anonymity of life in America's urban sprawl in fact sustains an "institutional completeness" and Chinese pluralism that goes as far as between different groups of Taiwanese living in the same area. In this context, and quite unlike the old Chinatowns in North America, there is little

overarching integration of Chinese subethnic groups into a larger Chinese community. In fact, the suburban context changes the very meaning of the word "ethnic community." No longer are we talking about ethnic communities as agents and fields of economic and political cooperation and competition; instead, an "ethnic community" is leisure based and merely a patchwork of loose network-based associations and communities that individuals can choose to participate in.

As Avenarius alludes to (2005), new middle class migration from the PRC to North America has added similar PRC ethnic communities to America's urban sprawl. However, new Chinese migration also breathed new life into the old Chinatowns in North America and the Chinese ethnic enclaves in Europe, arousing very different and much more volatile ethnic identities. In the conflict between the established Chinatown elites of Cantonese extraction and newcomers from Fujian, or more recently Zhejiang, several issues are played out, and often at once. Tensions between employers and employees or the competition over entry or control over business sectors often inform political competition and identity politics. Within the Chinese community, established overseas Chinese groups and their leaders obviously fear the rising power of the leaders and associations of rapidly growing groups.

However, the conflict between the Fujianese "outsiders" and the Cantonese "established" groups (Elias and Scotson 1965) is far from an internal Chinese affair. The stakes in the relationships between Chinese groups are clearly

very high, and identity politics in the Chinese community is not only informed by Chinese concepts of migration, exclusivity and place of origin, but also by discourses on immigration and ethnicity in the receiving societies.

For instance, Salaff and Chan (2005) emphasize the role of Canadian multiculturalism in shaping divisions in Toronto's community. According to Salaff and Chan, the discourse of multiculturalism leads to ""loose coupling" between NGOs tasked by the government to work in specific ethnic communities. Each ethnic group has its own set of NGOs that are only weakly connected to their counterpart NGOs working for other ethnic communities. Multiculturalism in Canada thus charts out specific ethnic groups as the turf of a set of NGOs, justifying this in terms of a specific construction of that groups "culture" agreed upon by government and NGOs. Obviously, when new migrants groups try to enter the multicultural arena (and the interface with the state that it defines) they find that they have to compete with the existing NGOs' entrenched position, interests and construction of their culture.

Similarly, as Beck (2005) shows, the marginalization of the Fujianese by established Chinese groups in the UK is shaped by the fears, suspicion and hostility aroused by the public discourse and government policies on immigration. From the perspective of established communities, there is an acute danger that illegal immigration, trafficking and debt bondage associated with new migrants taint the carefully built image of Chinese in the

receiving society, and may jeopardise the political goodwill and influence that the Chinese have in the receiving society.

However, Chinese migrants are not simply passive victims of what existing structures, discourses, or policies make of them, but actively shape and create their own world in the places where they live, work, and may ultimately settle. New Chinese migration has spawned a broad range of new institutions that are a product of the transnational experience itself and therefore only very partially rely on local resources and opportunities from which new migrant groups are quite often excluded. As my co-authors and I have shown for Fujianese migrants in Europe, hometown associations of Fujianese migrants have proliferated with the active support of local government not in the receiving countries, but in China itself (Pieke et al. 2004; see also Liu 1998). Likewise, entrepreneurial Christian churches and other transnational religious organizations (such as the Yiguandao or Falungong sects) have proliferated across Southeast Asia, Australia, North America and Canada.

Religion in the diaspora has become a important resource and strategy for a broad range of Chinese migrant groups that helps them create a meaningful social space away from home (Beck 2005; Avenarius 2005; Nyíri 2003; Nagata 2005; Salaff and Chan 2005). One of main reasons for this is that Chinese transnational religious organizations are inclusive rather than exclusive. Not only are Christian churches for instance quite often non-

denominational, but they also are open to Chinese from many different social backgrounds and places of origin. Religion, more than established local organizations, makes the pain of migration and the transnational experience bearable and meaningful. Transnational religions are the kernel of the new Chinese communities the world over; religion gives Chinese migrants a place to belong to in societies where they often are excluded, because of their legal status, poverty, or sub-ethnicity, from a normal participation in social life.

Notes

[1] This paper has been submitted for publication to *Population, Space and Place* as the introduction to a special section on Chinese migration, ethnicity and identity. The other articles in this special section are Avenarius 2005, Beck 2005, Hsu 2005 and Salaff and Chan 2005.

[2] Until the mid-1960s, Chinese exclusion acts also made it almost impossible for Chinese migrants to enter North America.

[3] USINFO, U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs, "Where Do The Migrants Originate? A Brief Overview of Chinese Migration."
http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/chinese_human_smuggling/originate.html. Accessed 27 September 2005.

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