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Chinese Globalization and Migration to Europe

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Chinese Globalization and Migration to Europe

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Writing on Chinese migration is a perilous enterprise. To illustrate the choppy waters one has to navigate, I would like to start with two rather different quotes. I will begin with a recent lecture given by Wang Gungwu, the doyen of overseas Chinese studies:

“The current acceptance of the term [diaspora] for ‘dispersed Chinese communities’ suggests that scholars of the Chinese overseas have certainly created much new work for themselves for many years to come. The more I think about it, the unhappier I am that the term has come to be applied to the Chinese. I have used the term with great reluctance and regret, and I still believe that it carries the wrong connotation and that, unless it is used carefully to avoid projecting the image of a single Chinese diaspora, it will eventually bring tragedy to the Chinese overseas.” (Wang Gungwu 2004)

Strong words indeed that remind us how powerful the fear of the “yellow peril” still is, even when dressed up as “Greater China”, a “Chinese Commonwealth”, “Chinese capitalism”, or “Chinese diaspora”.

In Western Europe, fear of the coming Chinese age connects seamlessly with the fear of migration. The most recent example is the reporting around the death of 19 Chinese in Britain on 6 February 2004. A group of Chinese workers picking cockles tragically drowned when caught at night by the incoming tide at Morecambe Bay in Lancashire. Even *The Guardian*, the voice of Britain’s polite and compassionate left, effortlessly drummed up the usual imagery of snakeheads, criminal gangs, exploitation, and bogus asylum seeking. Some lowlights from the leading story on 7 February under the headline “Victims of the sands and the snakeheads”:

“Early evidence and testimony to the Guardian from one former Chinese cockle picker who worked in Morecambe, *suggests* the dead were working illegally for organized criminal gangs.

Police said 14 were from mainland China, of whom nine were asylum seekers and five were unknown to the immigration service.

Sources in Britain's Chinese community *suggest* that eight of the dead were from the Fujian province in south-eastern China, where people pay up to £20,000 to snakehead gangsters who smuggle them out of the country to western Europe.

Although it is understood that the dead Chinese workers held the necessary permits for cockle picking, it was being *suggested* that they may have used forged national insurance numbers and identity documents to acquire them." (The Guardian 7 February 2004, p. 1, emphasis added)

Only after the tone of *suggestion* (read suspicion) has firmly been set does Britain's quality newspaper allow a few more nuanced voices to speak briefly about the lack of government regulation of seasonal agricultural work, the responsibility of employers, and Britain's strict immigration policies that drive people into asylum seeking and illegality. However, the newspaper still gives cabinet minister Beverly Hughes the last word. Using the same tropes of fear, Chinese crime and Chinese cruelty (associated for centuries with western negative images of China), she skillfully pastes over the Home Office's responsibility for the almost entirely unregulated nature of seasonal agricultural work:

"It demonstrates yet again what can happen to people when the highly organized criminal elements that are behind the trafficking in the first place – *and here with Chinese people we are talking about the ruthless gangs, the snakeheads and so on* who operate globally and transport people for labor exploitation – at what great risk people put themselves." (The Guardian 7 February 2004, p. 3, emphasis added)

The quotes from Wang Gungwu and The Guardian raise the two questions that I deal with in this presentation, questions that are perhaps quite different at one level, but are nevertheless ultimately linked:

What does the new Fujianese migration to Europe tell us about the changes in international migration, and how are these changes linked the transformation of the world order, in particular the increased globalization and prominence of China?

How should governments of western countries, and particularly the UK, deal with the new opportunities and challenges of Chinese migration? How will old understandings of international migration guiding policy making in the UK and elsewhere in western world have to be adapted to account for these changes and to make for better policy?

The data reported on here were collected in Hungary, the UK, Italy and Fujian during a research project funded by the British Economic and Social Research Council.¹ We

¹ ESRC grant number L214252012. Our research took us to many different locations in China and Europe. The project started with gathering basic information on immigration, through-migration and employment patterns of Fujianese in selected European countries (Britain, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Hungary, Romania and Russia). Subsequently, exploratory research in Fujian province was carried out. During the second phase the project focused on three countries in Europe that were selected on the basis the exploratory research of the first phase. All three countries occupy a prominent place on the Fujianese map of Europe. Britain, has the oldest and one of the largest Chinese communities in Europe, and has become the destination of choice for many Fujianese. Hungary occupies a

started our work on Fujianese migrants and transnationalism in 1999 and ended in 2001. The full findings of the project have been published last month by Stanford University Press under the title *Transnational Chinese: Fujianese Migrants in Europe* (Pieke, et al. 2004). Both research and writing were fully collaborative, and involved close cooperation between Pál Nyíri, Mette Thunø, Antonella Ceccagno and myself.

I will first briefly describe the ways and means of Fujianese migration to Europe. I will then turn to the larger conceptual issue of how to account for the growing variety and scale of Chinese migration as part of fundamental changes in the world order, avoiding the dangers of feeding the fears of Chinese domination drummed up by politicians, journalists and certain scholars alike that Wang Gungwu so rightfully warned against. Concluding that it is neither possible nor desirable fully to stem the tide of the new Chinese migration, I then turn to the question of the principles that should guide policy-making. Against this background I will in the concluding part of this presentation evaluate some of the recent changes that have taken place in Britain's immigration policies, and provide some pointers where I think we should go from here.

Fujianese migration to Europe

With the onset of the reforms in 1978, a completely new emigration regime took shape in the overseas Chinese home areas. The immediate result of this was the infusion of new blood into the existing communities of overseas Chinese. Soon however new migrants began to explore new destinations. Established Chinese communities have become both much larger and ethnically more diverse than in the past, while areas - or even whole continents such as Africa - that previously had only few Chinese quite suddenly have become the home to vibrant overseas Chinese communities. In the process, long-established and geographically specialized diasporas were turned into truly global transnational communities and professional migration networks.

These developments have also been clearly visible in Europe. Throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, Europe's Chinese migration system had remained profoundly parochial. A handful of sending areas specialized in European migration and the flows that they generated often had little to do with global trends in Chinese migration. Changes in the global Chinese migration system rapidly caught up with the continent in the 1980s and 1990s. The new migrants came from traditional overseas home areas, both those with a history of specialization in Europe (chiefly southern Zhejiang) and those that did not have such a history of specialization in Europe (such as the Fuzhou area in Central Fujian), and increasingly also from areas with no history of overseas migration at all (for example, the Sanming area in western Fujian). Equally important, mass migration not only provided cheap labor for the restaurants and shops owned by the established Chinese communities in western Europe, but also inserted a dynamism and appetite for

pivotal place in the exploration of Eastern Europe by Chinese migrants following the fall of the Soviet bloc in 1989-1990; equally importantly, it is also a gateway to southern and western Europe. Italy became the main destination country in southern Europe for migrants from Zhejiang province in the 1980s; in the 1990s, the ethnic enclave economy they had established in Italy also began to attract many Fujianese. In addition, research was carried out in two villages counties in Fujian that specialized in migration to Europe, namely Fuqing in coastal Fuzhou prefecture and Mingxi in inland Sanming prefecture.

expansion that led to the exploration of new economic niches (vending, import, garment manufacturing) and frontier areas in southern, eastern and northern Europe.

As the new flows of migrants invigorated the traditional overseas Chinese communities and explored new frontiers, Chinese emigration also became much more enmeshed with socio-economic changes and migratory flows in China itself. Many of our informants had spent considerable time elsewhere in China, or had worked for a few years in Singapore, Macao or Hong Kong on fixed-term contracts before their return to Fujian and subsequent emigration to Europe. We also found that international migration in our field site in Fuqing is quite often supported financially by wives or other female family members circulating or commuting into nearby Putian county to work in factories producing shoes and other consumer items. Conversely, areas of emigration in Fujian double up as significant destinations for in-migrants from elsewhere in Fujian or farther afield. Migrants in these areas do agricultural or menial work that the local population, who have specialized in emigration, no longer find worthwhile, or simply can no longer do due to their absence.

Local government plays an important role in enabling migratory flows, mostly indirectly in the Fuzhou area, but much more openly in Mingxi county in the interior of Fujian. In Mingxi, the export of labor is a top priority for the county authorities, who are actively and self-consciously engaged in building up a “new overseas Chinese area” on the model of the old overseas Chinese areas along the coast of Fujian. Local government gives political recognition to migrants, turning them into “models” to be emulated. Local or county officials also help the family dependants of migrants solve problems, or even invite them to attend seminars. In more concrete terms, official support for migration is given in the form of free vocational training classes on matters and skills relevant to would-be migrants. Topics include general knowledge about foreign countries (legal affairs, customs, local conditions abroad) and training in sewing, cooking, and trading.

To Fujianese migrants, the many forms of “legal” and “illegal” migration constitute a continuum of alternatives rather than activities that are very different from each other. The diversity of migratory avenues and the fact that brokers are involved in all of them underscore the fact that the *commodification* of migration not necessarily entails its *criminalization*.

Which side of the boundary between legal and illegal movement and residence migrants find themselves on, and to what extent they employ the services of paid migration brokers – for most migrants, “snakehead” simply refers to such a facilitator, regardless of the legality of the service he or she provides – varies greatly. (Il)legality is also influenced by the locality the migrant sets out from and by the immigration regimes of destination countries, which have changed over the ten-odd years of large-scale migration from Fujian to Europe. Thus, migration mechanisms of Fujianese in the three countries we investigated show considerable variation both compared to each other and over time.

Nearly all Fujianese migration to the *United Kingdom* is illegal. Migration relies on brokers and involves an asylum application, which is as a rule rejected. This is due to a number of circumstances. First, Fujianese migrants to Britain mainly come from the

Fuzhou area where emigration is both highly professionalized and relatively tightly controlled. Second, due to the geographical obstacles associated with getting to Britain, clandestine migration there requires more professional organization than in the case of many continental European countries. Third, until recently an asylum application in Britain used to carry an important practical benefit: asylum applicants obtained the right to work after six months' stay in the country. By contrast, migration to *Hungary* is overwhelmingly legal, based on business, employment, and family reunion visas, although this too relies to a large extent on brokers in obtaining those visas. As Hungary has progressively restricted the issuing of visas – now refusing most family reunion visas even to relatives of permanent residents – an increasing number of migrants have started to resort to clandestine passage from neighboring countries. In *Italy* an increasing number of Fujianese gained legal residence as a result of periodic amnesties. As a result, the share of regular family reunion immigration increased. Neither in Hungary nor in Italy do Fujianese migrants apply for asylum, because the immigration regimes of both countries effectively permit them to make a living without resorting to that avenue. In Hungary, provided they made it into the country, migrants are generally able to maintain their legal status. In Italy, they are able to work illegally until, every few years, they can be regularized in an amnesty.

In the *United Kingdom* the upward mobility of the second generation Chinese means that the Chinese catering business has to look for new sources of labor. Chinese restaurant owners look to the poorer among more recent Chinese migrants to supplement the workforce. Although Britain's Chinese population is still dominated by the Cantonese speakers from mainly Hong Kong, their hold becomes increasingly tenuous. If migration from mainland China continues at this pace, the recent history of Manhattan – where part of the old Cantonese-speaking Chinatown has, after a period of tense standoff, been taken over by Fujianese – may repeat itself. Consequently, while Cantonese restaurant owners in London's Chinatown welcome cheap labor, they are wary of Fujianese opening businesses, establishing organizations, or engaging in criminal activities. Any attempts to do so elicit strong reactions since they are seen as attacks against the established order of Chinatown.

Before the beginning of migration from Fujian in the late 1980s, the overwhelming majority of Chinese in *Italy* came from the rural region of Wenzhou in Zhejiang province. The majority of Fujianese in Italy operates or works in leather or garment workshops owned by Zhejiangese that perform contract work for Italian customers. As the main asset of Chinese workshops is flexibility, work times are long and workplace security low. Because of the lack of any work security, workers are also free to quit without notice. Seasonal fluctuations are also strong. During the slack seasons after Christmas and in the summer, a migratory wave arises as Chinese workers travel across Italy to visit relatives and friends, moonlight as peddlers on the seaside, or go back to China.

Hungary has been one of the early hubs of entrepreneurial migration from China to Eastern Europe. The origins of that migration lie in the border trade between China and the Soviet Union that began in the late 1980s, stepping in to fill the vacuum created by

broken (or even nonexistent) retail networks for low-price clothing and shoes. Even more than in Italy, Chinese migration to Hungary comes almost exclusively from the PRC, but unlike there, there is no domination of migrants from one particular region, despite the fact that the Fujianese are the single largest group, accounting for 18 per cent of the registered Chinese population. Migrants are largely from the wealthier, urban-coastal zones of China, but many of them come from places that have no tradition of migration to Europe. This migration involves upwardly mobile individuals, educated above average, and individually motivated. Most Chinese in Hungary deal with the import, wholesale, or retail of low-price clothes and shoes from China, although an increasing number are active in other foreign trade sectors.

In Europe, Chinese immigrant labor creates and perpetuates a Chinese segment of the economy that produces for the non-Chinese economy, but does not directly compete with non-Chinese workers or enterprises.

During our research we found in all three of our fieldwork countries that Fujianese are employed in a Chinese labor market that exists largely separate from the non-Chinese labor market, but that is firmly embedded in a transnational Chinese labor market. This transnational fragmentation of the global labor market shields immigration from the direct impact of the balance between supply and demand for labor in the destination country. What is relevant to Chinese transnationals are the wage differentials and possible level of savings in Chinese labor markets across the globe. Not only does Chinese labor continue to flow from the home communities, but just as importantly, Chinese migrants quite easily move from country to country in Europe and even beyond in search of better paying jobs, more favorable immigration policies, or better investment opportunities.

However, this picture was beginning to change already during our research, as was very recently dramatically illustrated by the death of the Chinese cockle-pickers that I started this presentation with. Although I only have anecdotal evidence regarding this very recent phenomenon, Chinese unskilled immigrant workers in the UK are increasingly found in sectors outside Chinese catering and retail, especially construction, a trend we found during our research that had already started some years earlier in New York. While some immigrants find such employment on their own initiative, most are placed as whole teams by Chinese recruiters who charge a fee for their services. Conversely, non-Chinese migrant workers have begun to appear in the worst jobs in the Chinese ethnic sector at even lower pay than Chinese immigrants would put up with. It may as yet be premature to draw firm conclusions from these very recent trends, but it seems that the rapidly increasing commercialization and commodification that has already taken hold over of the migration process itself is now spreading to other aspects of migrant life, selectively beginning to break down the traditional ethnic barriers dividing the labor market.

Migration and Chinese globalization

The new Chinese migration of which the Fujianese are a prominent part is one of the most visible exponents of the increasing globalization of China. The term globalization captures a great number of processes that transcend and redefine regional and national

boundaries. The ever freer flow of capital, information, goods and people not only makes its impact felt on the world's economy, politics and population, but equally on culture, religion and education, reshaping the world we live in. Yet it is easy to get carried away with the idea of globalization. The much greater interconnectedness of even distant parts of the world as much shapes a new reality as it reconfigures and reproduces established social forms, such as the nation-state, the family, class, race, or ethnicity.

In discussions on globalization, China and the ethnic Chinese routinely feature as the prime example of a group, culture, or civilization that has successfully risen to the challenge of a global modernity originating from and dominated by the West. China from this perspective is different and even more exciting than its "Confucian" neighbor Japan. China combines continental size, rapid economic growth and increasing integration in the world system with large, proactive, affluent and widely dispersed diasporic communities. China, moreover, had largely cut itself off from the world during the more radical, Cultural Revolution years of the Maoist era (1966-1976). Consequently, after the onset of the reforms in 1978, China had to re-enter the global community almost from scratch. The short timeframe and sheer massive scale of Chinese globalization throw in especially sharp relief not only how China itself is becoming more global, but also, and equally importantly, how Chinese people, ideas, capital and goods find their way across the globe.

Various concepts have been proposed to capture part or whole of these exciting developments, including "Greater China", a "Chinese Commonwealth", the "Clash of civilizations", "Chinese capitalism" or "Confucian values." These terms point in important directions, yet do not provide the analytical tools that are required. Most importantly, they tend to obscure the fact that the globalization of Chinese business, society and culture is by no means an established and uncontested fact. The global involvement of China has not settled in unambiguous and stable structures or patterns, but is an ongoing process that is constantly on the move. I propose here to explore the usefulness of the more open-ended and processual term of "Chinese globalization", which we conceptualize as multiple, transnational social spaces straddling and embedded in, on the one hand, diversifying smaller regional or national systems, and, on the other hand, as a part of a unifying global system. This reading of the term conceptualizes globalization as an ongoing, never complete and contested process that (1) creates and takes place in multiple centers and peripheries, (2) produces new forms of inequality and competition, and (3) encompasses a multiplicity of developments that are distinct yet at the same time interconnected. This reconceptualization of the global as an arena for competing and complementary processes aims to strip the teleological gloss from the term globalization. What I want to highlight here is that globalization consists of a range of contested, fragmented processes that do not necessarily lead to a final state of a more homogeneous, integrated, or even more interdependent post-modern world that has transcended the shackles of the conventional modern world order consisting of discrete nation-states.

By thinking of globalization as a multiplicity of processes (never a final state) that create a plurality of emerging and mature social spaces, we also do not want to repackage the

19th century ideology of the world consisting of a mosaic of bounded nation-states, nor do we want to resurrect Cold War images of a world carved up in discrete spheres of influence. Lived-in spaces of social action created by Chinese globalization intersect and interact in a larger global system that is more than the sum of its parts. Fujianese migrants in New York, for instance, live in a major hub of a social world that they share with Fujianese across the globe that also includes other hubs such as Fuzhou city, Xiamen and Shenzhen Special Economic Zones, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Honduras, London and Budapest. Yet many (but definitely not all!) of these places are of major importance to the Fujianese because they also are cosmopolitan centers of the world system, global cities that are sites of the interaction between many interdependent transnational social spaces and other globalization processes. Globalization, in other words, is as much specifically Chinese as it is universal, entailing particular Chinese versions and visions of modernity, parochialism and cosmopolitanism that only partially intersect with their European, North American, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, or Japanese counterparts.

The increasing transnational nature of Chinese migration and its embeddedness in Chinese globalization processes make it even more inappropriate to think of migration, such as that of Fujianese that is the subject of this book, simply as the transfer of human beings and their labor from one place to another. Fujianese migrate in the context of dense networks and as part of careers of ongoing spatial and social mobility that do not start when the decision to move has been made, and end upon arrival at the destination. In the Fujianese context, most people are involved in migration, regardless of whether they themselves actually move or not. Furthermore, a migrant's biography does not go through clear stages from local resident to migrant and settler. To many Fujianese, migration is an open-ended experience and process rather than a simple move from one place to another: transnational, migratory and localizing practices mutually condition each other and cannot be treated as separate factors. Migration is a profound biographical event that engrains on many migrants a new cosmopolitan attitude: their life, social environment and aspirations will never again be limited to just one place. Once on the move, many migrants, even those who have returned home, never reach a final destination, but can always move on if the conditions are right. Fujianese migration is therefore a constantly evolving process as new areas of origin emerge and as migrants find new ways of migrating, new countries to go to and new things to do in these countries. Wherever they are and whether or not they themselves have actually experienced spatial mobility, to Fujianese migration is not a singular event, but has become a way of life.

To come to grips with the jigsaw puzzle of Fujianese mobility we have to treat each locality as potentially a sending, transit and destination area. For this purpose, I found the concept of *migration configuration* useful. A migration configuration describes the connections between the total sum of social institutions and practices in areas of origin, transit and destination that produce and sustain a particular flow (or, more commonly, a set of closely connected flows) of migrants. A migratory flow cannot be studied as an institution or social group in isolation from its environment, but should rather be understood as an aspect of other institutions and communities, business and employment strategies, migration flows, and discourses of exclusion and inclusion. A migration

configuration constitutes a field of interaction that is much more than just people living and moving between different locations, including flows of information, goods, money and other resources. Institutions and networks within a migration configuration shape interaction across different sites. Examples of such institutions are kinship groups, friendship and home community networks, emigration and immigration officials and commercial migration brokers, other ethnic groups at a particular destination, airlines, railways and shipping companies, and law firms, human rights groups, and even anti-immigration activists and politicians.

Analyzing Chinese migratory flows in terms of migration systems and migration configurations will help us in this book in tackling the complexity of Fujianese migration. However, this approach's focus on the process of migration itself only very partially captures the broader context and ramifications of Fujianese migration in the areas of origin, transit and destination. In fact, such a focus on migration itself may obscure the fact that mobility is only one aspect of migrants' life. Understanding the relationship between migration and processes of localization and settlement require that we embed migratory practices within other non-migratory aspects of Chinese globalization, among which I would like to highlight in particular the state.

Rather than dissolving the nation, "competitive globalization" changes the equation of rivalry between nations. Nations are still firmly rooted in core areas, but reach out throughout the global system following, shaping and imagining their own globalization processes (Basch, et al. 1994). Although the Chinese state does not levy taxes or other forms of non-voluntary contributions as some other nations with large emigrant populations such as the Philippines or Eritrea do, Chinese transnationals and cosmopolites find the Chinese state nevertheless increasingly interested in their life, loyalty and, above all, contribution to Chinese modernization. This usually is not done by direct interference in the affairs of overseas Chinese communities, but rather through the organizations, schools, and networks of the overseas Chinese community of residence, in addition to the home community of origin. In the world beyond China's national boundaries the Chinese state obviously cannot and does not want to claim total sovereign power over people that it does not consider its full subjects anyway, but neither does it let go altogether.

State power in the context of external populations is not a matter of all or nothing; it is partial, negotiated and shared with other states. In fact, as in other contexts, it is misleading to think of the Chinese state as a unified corporate actor. The Chinese state, like any other state, consists of a multitude of actors: regional governments, specific state institutions and even individual officials. In the context of overseas Chinese communities this is brought out very clearly, because here the national Chinese state meets local Chinese states of the overseas Chinese home areas, the Taiwanese and Hong Kong state, and, most importantly, the various levels of the state of the country of residence.

A focus on the state in the context of Chinese globalization requires us to rethink local Chinese communities as arenas of *multi-centered state power* (Pieke 1999: 21). Competition between the various states and their agents in these arenas does not

necessarily have to be a zero-sum game, and we do not want to conjure up suspicions of an alien fifth column that so often informs the perception of overseas Chinese, particularly in Southeast Asia. To limit ourselves to the national Chinese state (although that does not necessarily speak with one voice either), its involvement in Chinese globalization has various objectives, objectives that themselves are partially contradictory and that change over time. Some of these objectives are overtly political, such as limiting Taiwanese diplomatic influence, containing possible political dissent and heterodox religious movements such as the Falungong, and, most importantly, preventing material or diplomatic claims from overseas Chinese that may interfere with PRC diplomatic interests. Others tie in with long-term economic reform, such as *de facto* promotion of emigration and securing a flow of China-bound overseas Chinese investments. Yet other measures seem to cater to a long-term policy of attaining a more active role in the formation of the Chinese global culture, for instance extending its own standardized reading of Chinese culture and language through Chinese education, or facilitating the setting up of remarkably standardized native place organizations of overseas Chinese (see Nyíri 2001; Thunø 2001).

As China partakes more in the world economy, it also becomes the focus of a distinctly Chinese pattern of globalization. Globalization does indeed break down the old borders, but China's integration in the world system can only be understood against the background of processes taking place in China itself. As China extends further across the globe, it does not simply join processes whose ground rules have already been well established elsewhere. Both in building up its own pattern of globalization and in its participation in more general global processes China also exports its home-bred logic and patterns of capital accumulation, investment, migration, cultural production and consumption, and even religious proselytizing, just as much as China necessarily imports many of the same things from the world.

We do recognize that Chinese globalization covers a great number of processes and people, whose differences should not be glossed over. Without wishing to say that the current wave of migration from Fujian is any way typical of Chinese globalization, we do believe that a focus on a group of recent migrants such as the Fujianese puts the distinctive nature of these processes in especially sharp relief. Migration moves whole people. With people move capital, goods and ideas across the globe. Migration therefore serves as a very useful focus for unraveling the complexity of many interdependent globalization processes. From very modest beginnings, Fujianese migrants have spread across the globe in an extraordinarily short period of time, often overcoming seemingly impossible odds. In many respects, the Fujianese are the best illustration and epitome of the still raw and unfinished processes of Chinese globalization. The Fujianese sudden global presence opens up new social spaces and challenges received wisdom, well-established structures and firmly entrenched interests. To understand Fujianese migration better is also better to grasp a world that China is fast becoming a vital part of.

Policy considerations

Chinese migration to Europe has increased both in scale and degree of professionalization, in the range of origins, destinations and social backgrounds of the people involved, and in the types of activities pursued in Europe. Fujianese migration is driven as much as, if not more, by processes spawned by fundamental changes in the world order that I have summarized under the term Chinese globalization. Chinese globalization is, in the final analysis, a politically charged process. Social spaces opened up by international migrants are sites and modalities for the contestation (and sometimes resolution) of conflict. Such contestations involve a range of stakeholders, none of whom can fully control the outcome, importantly also including agents of nation-states and the migrants themselves. When studying international migration from the perspective of Chinese globalization, we wish to understand how Chinese people, society and culture become part of the world, and how competing powerful actors (the Chinese national and local state, states of receiving countries, overseas Chinese tycoons, ethnic Chinese organizations and lobbies) seek to gain control over this process.

From a policy perspective this means that we cannot assume that the supply of Chinese immigrant labor arriving on our shores in the West is simply a function of the demand for labor here. Although the opportunities for gainful employment are the single most important factor in making Chinese immigration a fact that cannot, and indeed should not be wished away given the important contribution that Chinese are making to the dynamism and growth of our economies, we cannot naively assume that Chinese immigration cannot be managed only from the receiving end. As Stephen Castles put it, immigration is not a tap that governments can simply turn on and off. Chinese immigration is an aspect of processes that are larger than any nation-state can handle, and involves external interests that no government can ignore.

The heterogeneity and transnationalism of Chinese migration do not add up to an unequivocal picture. On closer inspection, the category of “Chinese migration” gives way to a kaleidoscope of flows, biographies and ambitions. Increasing numbers of people are moving about the planet in an increasing number of ways for an increasing variety of reasons. Some of these people are Chinese, while others are not. Furthermore, Chinese and other migrants are not so much all seeking to immigrate to centers of the world system in the US or Europe, but simply have become much more mobile as part of their life in transnational social spaces. Currently, they are indeed moving into the US and western Europe, but they are also moving to much less obvious places such as eastern Europe, Siberia, Central Asia and Africa. Moreover, not permanent settlement elsewhere, but the ability to move freely when and where they want to go, including elsewhere in China, is a central objective in most cases.

Our findings indicate that permanent residence continues to be important to transnational migrants such as the Fujianese, but often for fundamentally other reasons than is normally assumed. We found that only migrants who for instance got a child or who fell seriously ill after having migrated wished to gain residency in order to claim public housing or medical care (benefits were almost never an issue). However, to the majority of our informants permanent residency was vital because it would give them the right to find employment and make possible free (or at least freer) movement in and out of the

country for themselves and their families. Issuing long-term multi-entry visas with the right to seek employment to such migrants will not amount to opening the floodgates, but will be an important policy measure to keep one's country internationally competitive and connected to the flows of transnational labor, entrepreneurship and capital that individual countries, no matter how robust or powerful they may be, cannot and should not try to seal themselves off from. Following the experiences of more traditional immigration countries such as Canada, the US, or Australia, several European countries (Germany, the UK) have recently pioneered schemes to admit migrants with skills or qualifications in especially short supply. However, we would like to argue that such schemes should not necessarily be limited to skilled migrants. Unskilled migrants, like many of the Fujianese we interviewed, likewise do not easily fit the stereotype of a traditional immigrant wishing to settle permanently, but simply arrive in Europe as highly mobile workers exploring employment opportunities in multiple countries.

Equally importantly, aiming for the legalization and regulation of Fujianese and other migratory flows is the only way fundamentally to address the current asylum crisis in Europe and the serious abuses that are currently part of the migration trade and the exploitation of cheap and disposable immigrant laborers. Although our research has not focused explicitly on the migration trade itself, we conclude on the basis of the evidence collected in the course of our interviews that debt bondage, violence and abuse by brokers or enforcers are the exception rather than the rule. Having said that, the Dover incident in 2000 and recent police investigations in for instance the UK have shown that criminal negligence, extortion and even hostage taking do occur. However, we argue that pushing the migration trade even further underground will very likely only raise the risk and price of transit and with it the likelihood that irregular migrants will suffer even more.

Similarly, irregular migrants employed in the ethnic Chinese sector or elsewhere are without any legal protection and are essentially fully exposed to the rigors of the labor market. This may work to their advantage when the economy of the ethnic sector is booming, with workers frequently changing jobs in pursuit of better work or pay. However, when there are no longer plenty of jobs around, agents introducing jobs, landlords and employers face few restrictions, as has been illustrated by the death of the cockle-pickers and similar incidents, such as the recent death of northern Chinese working under exploitative conditions in an assembly sweatshop in the UK.² Migrants may end up in the situation that they cannot pay off their migration debts and even may continue to have to be subsidized by their family and friends back home. Such migrants often put up with considerable hardship in the form of low pay, poor living conditions and food, and even disease before contemplating return migration

However, as I have pointed out earlier, such incidents should not simply lead us to conclude that the solution is clamping down even harder on illegal migration. That constructive policies will have to deal with migration as a reality to be managed rather than a threat to be contained is an observation that is by now commonly made. However,

² "Tragic death that uncovered the shadowy world of Britain's hidden Chinese workers", *The Guardian* January 13, 2004, p. 4.

how to manage migration has proved a much more elusive question. Here I will present some preliminary thoughts on this question borne from the analysis and interpretation of the nature of Fujianese migration to Europe presented above. These thoughts should emphatically not be read as prescriptive policy recommendations, but merely as a modest and tentative contribution to an ongoing discussion. To this aim, I will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of four alternative models of migration management in view of the different interests to which they ought to cater. At stake is not to identify the right model of migration management, but to gain greater clarity on the trade-offs of the choices one is faced with. My discussion is primarily relevant to the Fujianese in Britain; how or to what extent it is relevant to other groups and places we can explore in the discussion.

In my view, migration management should allow the market forces to find their own equilibrium as much as that is possible without infringing on overriding national interests or the interests of the weak, poor and unemployed in the sending or receiving countries. Such migration management should be predicated on the following three principles: (1) migration management will have to include both elements of control and facilitation; (2) migration is a composite phenomenon, and there is no magic formula that can be applied to all forms and flows of migration; (3) migration management should involve and cater for the interests of all relevant parties involved.

(1) *Control and facilitation.* To migrants, the permeability of the border of the destination country is only one of the factors entering migration decisions. Equally important is the ease with which permanent residence can be obtained once in the country, for instance through political asylum, periodic amnesties for illegal immigrants, or simply by sale or quota. Important also is the ability of the government to force the return to the country of origins of illegal migrants who have been caught or asylum seekers whose application has been rejected. Despite appearances to the contrary, migrants care a great deal about their legal status. Many consider their emigration successful only after they have obtained permanent residence somewhere, somehow, even if they do not intend to settle permanently. Crucially, with permanent residence comes the right to return visits, the possibility of finding a bride back home, improved salaries and employment opportunities, the possibility of onward legal migration to countries that are very difficult to enter directly from China (such as Japan, the United States or western Europe), and the possibility perhaps simply to enjoy life just a little bit more. In sum, permanent residence makes the migrant a real person again, instead of living the shadowy existence of someone who has not yet really arrived at his or her destination. Currently, an asylum application is one of the most important ways to gain at least temporary residence. Effective migration management is therefore both predicated on and part of the solution of the current crisis of the asylum system.

American research (Chin 1999; Zhang and Chin 2000) on Chinese human smugglers has revealed that snakeheads are not triad-like criminal organizations that can be countered by conventional law-enforcement methods aimed at eliminating the organization's leadership. Rather, snakeheads are independent and highly specialized entrepreneurs enmeshed in loose networks, only cooperating on specific consignments. Consequently,

countering snakeheads should focus on spoiling their market, both by raising the risks and costs of their operations and by taking away the demand for their services. The key issue then becomes how many Fujianese a country should admit under a program of migration to make a sufficient number of snakeheads abandon their trade for something less risky and more profitable.

The conclusion that migration management requires a mix of control and facilitation is corroborated when we look at the issue of human smuggling against the background in sending and receiving contexts outlined in this presentation. Smuggled migrants take substantial financial and personal risks. Their picture of life in Europe may be unduly positive and their understanding of the risks of smuggling may be limited, but in the final analysis they emigrate because of the demand for cheap, Chinese labor in the economies in Europe. Likewise, migrant villages in Fujian have come to specialize in emigration at the expense of almost all other career choices: emigration itself thus promotes further population movement. This process cannot abruptly be countered, but only very gradually be reversed by promoting local economic development that generates economic opportunities on a par with employment and entrepreneurship in developed western countries. This happened for instance with the mass migratory flows of Chinese in the 1960s and 1970s from Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. However, crudely reinforcing the barrier between China and the West will only make migration more difficult or costly, but will not address the underlying factors that generate and promote migration in the first place. I fully concur with Ko-lin Chin, who concludes that Chinese will continue to emigrate for a long time to come. Stepping up efforts to stem the tide of illegal immigration and reform of the asylum system are essential and overdue, but on their own will never be enough and will have to be matched by measures that increase the opportunities to migrate legally (Chin 1999: 165).

(2) *Migration as a composite phenomenon.* Our research comparing the rather different flows from Mingxi and Fuqing counties offers a view of the differences and similarities between the many Chinese migration flows, which helps unpack and demystify the large and seemingly threatening fact of Chinese (or even Fujianese) mass migration. Chinese come to Europe from many different places and social backgrounds, settle into a variety of careers, or alternatively migrate on to other countries. That migration is not one, but a collection of many different phenomena is the first crucial step toward the realization that Chinese migration need not be the unmanageable domestic and diplomatic hot potato that it is often thought to be, without, however, wishing to deny the seriousness of the challenge that it poses to policy making and implementation in the areas of origin and destination alike. However, this also means that measures that may help manage migration from for instance Mingxi to Europe do not necessary apply to other Chinese migratory flows. Likewise, measures that are effective now may very well quite suddenly become obsolete as the migratory flow changes in nature, volume, or direction. In other words, there is no panacea for the problem of migration. Each migratory flow will have to be managed individually, although certain measures may of course apply across a range of such flows.

(3) *Migration management should cater for all interests.* In our research we found that Fujianese migration is embedded in robust configurations of social and cultural institutions. Managing such configurations and the migration flows that they produce clearly is a complex political task. Unilateral measures will at most only have temporary effects and at worst even further criminalize and harden the migration trade. What is needed is a coordinated set of measures that involves as much as possible all relevant actors. *When we try to think of measures that could help us deal with the current flows of Fujianese immigration, we first need to consider not only what we wish to achieve, but also what the interests of others involved in this particular migratory flow are.* Catering for our own national interests and those of migrants, Chinese local and national governments, national and local governments of other destination areas, and the established overseas Chinese communities, is possible and even desirable. Such cooperation enlists the considerable influence and power of the other players involved in achieving a key joint policy aim: the creation and management of a sustainable level of migration to Europe.

In the case of the Fujianese, some of the key interests involved in migration might be read as follows:

- Migrants: stable, predictable and safe access to employment and entrepreneurial opportunities abroad that allow for minimal living expenses and a high level of remittances and savings.
- Chinese national government: minimization of the diplomatic liabilities that come with illegal emigration and accusations of human rights abuses; maximization of overseas Chinese investments in China (remittances are less important at the national level); minimization of Taiwanese influence on overseas Chinese communities.
- Local governments in sending areas: minimization of central government pressure to curb illegal migration, maximization of remittances and overseas Chinese investment.
- Established overseas Chinese communities in receiving countries: minimization of stigmatization and discrimination caused by the influx of new illegal immigrants; minimization of competition from new immigrants for jobs, investment opportunities and political power; maximization of access to cheap migrant labor.
- National interests of receiving countries: minimization of competition for jobs with the locally unemployed; maximization of economic growth, including that of the ethnic enclave; reduction of criminality and abuse of the asylum system; minimization of ethnic and racial tension; minimization of number irregular migrants; minimization of the exploitation and abuse of migrant laborers.

Catering to the interests of migrants, Chinese governments and established overseas Chinese communities in conjunction with those of the governments and general population in the receiving countries may be possible if we create and manage a sustainable level of Fujianese migration to Europe. The recently published government

White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain* (London: Home Office, February 2002) takes some first, tentative steps, building on experimental schemes that are already in effect, particularly those that allow for the recruitment of foreign farm labor by British farmers and the issuance of work permits to highly skilled IT workers who wish to search for employment in Britain. I would want to argue that we will have to build on these promising beginnings and extend the scope of migration management in Britain to other employment categories.

The material on the Fujianese presented here in brief clearly indicates that there is a need to do so. There are (at least) four ways in which this might be done: removal of immigration barriers; fixed quotas of recruitment licenses to employers; fixed quotas of work permits; and lastly rolling quotas of work permits.

(1) Removing all barriers to immigration to all Fujianese, all Chinese, or indeed residents of all non-EU countries. This is by far the simplest solution to implement and will make abuse of the asylum system a thing of the past, but has some obvious disadvantages that perhaps hardly have to be pointed out. Most importantly, it will be almost impossible to sell politically, as there is little in it that will allay fears of abuse of the welfare system and competition for jobs, houses, and government services. Although it can be argued that in the long term the supply of foreign immigrant labor will stabilize around an equilibrium point determined by what the British economy needs and can sustain, short-term dislocations may be severe and politically explosive; moreover, even in the longer term the new equilibrium wage level can be expected to be lower than it otherwise would have been. This is understandably unacceptable, especially for the more vulnerable groups in the labor market, who most directly face competition from unskilled Chinese labor.

(2) Issuing fixed quotas of recruitment licenses for Chinese workers to British employers. This has the great advantage of catering directly and immediately to the short-term interests of British employers of Chinese workers. Such a scheme would be much like the current scheme in effect for seasonal agricultural labor, and thus have the advantage of established precedent. It is also politically relatively easy to sell, provided of course it can be proved that no British workers can be found for the jobs. However, it is also a system that is wide open to abuse. First, it may tempt snakeheads or individual migrants to offer payments to employers in return for sponsoring a migrant. Instead of undermining commercial migration brokerage, it will in fact create new avenues for it. Admittedly, some of these disadvantages can be overcome by careful management and monitoring, but there is a second issue: such a scheme would make Chinese workers virtual serfs of British employers. Chinese immigrants will be dependent on their employer not only for work, but also for obtaining and renewing their residence permit. This raises profound ethical issues: does Britain really want to be seen as simply wishing to import cheap, dependent and utterly commodified labor?

(3) Fixed immigration quotas that are not tied to a particular job or employer for sectors of the labor market, for instance the catering trade, and/or selected countries or areas of origin, say China as a whole, or parts of it that generate identifiable migration flows. In

effect, this would be a scheme much like the new British scheme for skilled IT workers. A much more ambitious scheme that nevertheless operates on fundamentally the same principle would be a quota point system in which fixed quotas of immigrants from specific countries are selected on the basis of their score on a number of crucial background characteristics, such as type and level of education, age, employment sector or type of job, and so on. I would argue that such schemes cater adequately for most interests involved, in addition to putting a clear cap on the number of migrants. This will show that the British government and not migrants themselves remain in control of the numbers allowed in every year. Again provided that it can be shown that British jobs are not under threat, this scheme should therefore be acceptable politically. The chief problem is that the operators of such schemes lack a clear mechanism to determine how many and what kind of migrants the British economy needs. In effect, under such a scheme administrative decisions take the place of the market mechanism in balancing supply and demand for labor. In my view, such schemes are therefore flawed in principle: migration management should aim to facilitate the free play of the market forces, not to replace them.

However, there is yet another problem with quota schemes. One could argue that the type and number of migrants can be estimated, provided specific and clearly identifiable skills are involved. However, it remains less clear how such a scheme could adequately deal with the supply and demand for *unskilled* labor. Quotas or quota-point systems ignore the fact that many immigrants actually work in jobs that require few skills (ironically, in countries such as Canada or Australia that already have such schemes in place, *including* those admitted as skilled migrants), their chief selling point being a low wage, ease of termination of employment and quite often a cultural and linguistic background similar to that of the employer. In other words, the continued growth of the European economies, including the ethnic sectors in them, requires the importation of cheap, unskilled labor. This is particularly relevant in the Fujianese case, were migrants come to Britain to work, initially at least, in unskilled jobs mainly in the Chinese ethnic economy. Arguably, this problem can in part be solved by directing Fujianese (and other Chinese) migrants away from the most menial jobs by requiring and enabling applicants for immigration to Britain to acquire skills relevant to the catering trade: spoken and written English, basic accountancy, and Chinese cooking skills. Helping local authorities in China set up vocational training courses for potential migrants that teach such skills as a prerequisite for an application for migration to Britain will create a selective legal migration channel that will take at least some of the wind out of the sails of the illegal migration trade. Graduates from such courses are still very likely to start in the most menial of jobs in the British catering trade, but will at least get a head start in climbing up the employment ladder, and, most importantly of all, will be less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than irregular migrants currently are.

(4) Rolling quotas by employment category and/or area of origin. Although fixed quotas go quite far in dealing with most problems while catering to most interests involved, their main Achilles heel is the burden it puts on bureaucratic decision-making in determining the type and number of migrants admitted. I would therefore like to propose, if only to get a discussion started, to allow market forces at least some role in adjusting quotas from

year to year. In the Fujianese case, one way that this could be done is when local governments in the sending areas in China and European governments sign and jointly carry out migration contracts under the sponsorship of the European Union and the Chinese national government. In order to avoid at least some of the problems caused by past labor procurement schemes, I would want to argue that work permits are initially issued for one year. Their extension and the level of further migration of others in subsequent years should be assessed on the basis of the employment record, tax payments and possibly criminal record of the cohort of first year immigrants of the previous year. This would create a flow of managed migration that ties new immigration *post facto* to the track record of the cohort of immigrants immediately before them. By building in such a feedback mechanism, we might find a way to transcend the deadlock between the two traditional positions of either in favor or against immigration, while also avoiding the alternative of a quota or quota-points systems that mainly caters for the short-term interests of the receiving country as perceived by bureaucratic decision makers.

I realize that many objections can be raised to such a scheme. For starters, it might be expensive and difficult, if not downright impossible to gain access to criminal, tax and employment records of specific cohorts of migrants from specific areas in China. Secondly, from a human rights point it may be hard to accept the collective responsibility put upon migrants. Is it really fair to burden migrants in this country with the responsibility for the admission of future migrants, and won't this tempt local Chinese governments and Chinese community leaders in Britain to exercise intense pressure on migrants and (crucially) their families at home to conform to the rules set out by the British government? And lastly, implementation of such a scheme in, say, Fujian will leave other areas in China out in the cold, in time leading to pressure to implement similar schemes in an increasing number of places in China, creating the politically very damaging impression that Britain is no longer in control of the number of Chinese it lets into the country. I am aware of these very legitimate concerns and objections. However, I would like to argue very strongly for allowing maximum flexibility in the level of immigration to this country. This ought to be an important principle in any package of policy measures to deal with this long-standing and vexing issue. To do otherwise will only create an illusion of control by erecting the edifice of a carefully regulated and managed front door of immigration, while leaving the back door of irregular migration wide open.

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