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Migrant ties and integration: A case of Chinese community in Poland

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KRZYSZTOF KARDASZEWICZ

MIGRANT TIES AND INTEGRATION - A CASE OF CHINESE COMMUNITY IN POLAND

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Abstrakt

Praca jest analizą znaczenia osobistych więzi dla przebiegu mobilności oraz integracji chińskich imigrantów, na przykładzie społeczności w Polsce. W oparciu o wyniki badania jakościowego oraz wykorzystując perspektywę transnarodową, praca omawia funkcjonowanie chińskich sieci które w coraz większym stopniu pozwalają osobom połączyć elementy doświadczenia migracyjnego (np. rodzinne, lub związane z pracą) w kilku różnych miejscach w Europie i Chinach. Jednocześnie praca kładzie nacisk na analizę integracji z perspektywy indywidualnych doświadczeń i sposobu w jaki są one wpisane w szersze czynniki strukturalne. W oparciu o wyniki badań twierdzą, że Chińczycy w Polsce są przykładem dynamiki migracyjnej pozwalającej na dużą elastyczność w integracji ze względu na więzi transnarodowe, ale także w wyniku tradycji kulturowej i migracyjnej, która ułatwia przystosowanie się do zmiany miejsca i tożsamości. Pokazują również, w jaki sposób chińska społeczność migrantów w Polsce jest wynikiem zarówno tradycyjnych wzorców migracyjnych, jak i nowej działalności transnarodowej.

Słowa kluczowe: Chiny, Polska, transnarodowość, więzi, sieci, migracja wewnętrzna, integracja, tożsamość, przynależność, *guanxi*

Abstract

This work draws on the results of a qualitative study of Chinese migrant community in Poland to analyze the significance of personal ties in the evolving process of mobility and integration. The analysis adopts a transnational perspective to illustrate the functioning of Chinese networks, which increasingly allow individuals to connect elements of migratory experience (be it family or work related) in several different places across Europe and China. At the same time, this work emphasizes analysis of integration from the perspective of individual experience and the way it is written into broader structural factors. Based on the study results, I argue that Chinese in Poland are an example of a distinctive migration dynamic, bringing a large degree of flexibility to integration based on transnational ties, but also as result of cultural and migratory tradition which helps to naturally accommodate change of place and identity. I also show how the Chinese migrant community in Poland is a product of both traditional migratory patterns and the new transnational activity.

Key words: China, Poland, transnationalism, ties, networks, domestic migration, integration, identity, belonging, *guanxi*

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Introduction

This work analyzes evolving patterns of Chinese mobility and integration in Europe, with a focus on a relatively young and growing Chinese community in Poland. The case serves as a picture of community at a crossroads, shaped in equal parts by an older ethnic enclave adhering to traditional migratory patterns, as well as a new wave of migration which intensified in the last five years as a result of expanding Chinese economy and is a reflection of present-day transnational dynamic.

The Chinese in Poland now span a range of cases, from those who marry locals and raise children in Warsaw, to highly mobile traders and investors, contract-based expats, or fresh university graduates. Increasingly, the reality of their integration is difficult to explain through a checklist of social and economic factors commonly used in integration analysis. For many, despite their residence in Poland, the country is only one of several places of destination in Europe, to which they are connected in different ways.

This work looks to explain in more detail why this is the case, and how do such migratory projects function in practice. The analysis is based on transnational perspective, and considers the role of ties and personal networks in the process of Chinese migratory dynamic. Ties are defined here as relationships to people which form a basis of attachment in space. More than just a form of social capital, ties are understood as a main source of attachment and identity, which take precedence over any specific territory.

The analysis builds on the work of Massey (1994) and her argument for understanding a community as a sum of people and their social relations, rather than a physically defined territory – an active process in which multiple ties of a given person help to define his or her identity and sense of place. Identity is then understood as a relational phenomenon and a social construct, which serves as a tool of orientation within the transnational reality.

I argue that such analysis based on personal ties is essential to understanding the broader picture and evolution of Chinese integration in Europe. Here, Poland serves as an example of broader change taking place among Chinese diaspora, where early migrations rooted in domestic labor migrations are increasingly being transformed through transnational dynamic. An analysis of 15 in-depth interviews conducted with Chinese in Warsaw is used to discuss the experience of Chinese migrations and integration in Poland and Europe¹. The names and some of the personal details of person's interviewed were changed to protect their privacy.

¹ The interviews were conducted over the period of December 2016 – July 2017 as part of broader research project by Centre for Migration Research, University of Warsaw, into the economic integration of Chinese and Vietnamese community in Poland (National Science Center Sonata Bis project 2014/14/E/HS4/00387 implemented by dr hab Pawel Kaczmarczyk). One of the interviews cited was carried out under another NSC project DEC-2013/09/D/HS6/03430 implemented by dr Katarzyna Andrejuk.

Individual perspective in study of integration

While there is no universally agreed upon definition of integration, a frequent and pragmatic consensus aims to capture the relationship of migrants with the receiving society through the degree of functional participation and position (or achievement) on the labor market, in education, and institutions. It is a process summed-up by Chiswick (1978) as that of ‘catching-up’ to resources and opportunities available to and enjoyed by the locals. While scholars frequently attempt to specify a range of aspects involved in integration - for example with typology of structural, cultural, interactive and identificational integration (Bosswick & Heckman, 2006) - they usually aim to streamline the phenomenon into a process of ‘attaining a similar position’ to that of the host society (Barrett and Duffy, 2007). This is usually understood as gaining unrestricted access to labor market (Pennix, 2005) and full participation in social institutions of receiving country (Engbersen, 2003). Others propose a framework of essential resources and competences, which can serve as a reference helping to evaluate the state of one’s socio-economic integration (Ager and Strang, 2008).

This work argues for a different approach. The overall analysis of migration dynamic relies on transnational perspective, and in contrast to the scholarship outlined above will emphasize migrant’s personal experience in the analysis of integration. Such approach can provide another angle to a largely structural (and depersonalized) interpretations and develops a theme raised by several scholars. De Haas (2001) introduces the concept of ‘aspirations and capabilities’ to show how migrant decision-making goes beyond macro-economic push-pull factors, and how the dynamic between individual goals and opportunity structure might shape migrant’s activity, decisions and overall integration trajectory. De Haas’ work provides an important reflection on the dynamic between personal factors and broader opportunity structure - whether it’s contacts, state of economy, or political freedoms. It is also important to consider how these might change in light of migrant experience. The concept of ‘migratory career’ introduced by Martiniello and Rea (2014) seeks to show how one’s priorities and perspective change over time as result of learning, acquired resources, relationships and evolving social and cultural interaction. This analysis will build on the above scholarship to show how Chinese integration process is increasingly defined by ongoing mobility and individual priorities and resources, rather than by structural positioning in a receiving society.

Chinese in the transnational perspective

The analysis of Chinese community in Poland presented below is based on transnational perspective, and a brief reference to literature and understanding of these concepts is necessary. The concept was first brought to widespread attention through the work of social anthropologists (Glick-Schiller et al., 1992) who pointed to the limits of established migration scholarship pre-occupied largely with assimilation into the host society. In their argument, migrants maintained active “linkages to their homeland, bringing together their societies of origin and settlement.” The scholars saw the phenomenon as “a reflection of political and economic global structural transformations” until Portes (1999, 2002) questioned the ubiquity of transnational ties, and demonstrated how “transnationalism – when limited to regular and sustainable activities or networks – was far from being a lifestyle

among migrants” (Dahinden, 2017, p.1477). The studies and conclusions drawn by Portes worked as point of departure for others – helping to conceptualize cross-border ties and activity as “transnational fields” (Vertovec, 2007; Faist et al., 2013) and to discuss how and why different ‘fields’ emerge, are maintained or fade away. Discussion over aspects related to structural opportunities, individual resources of migrants (economic, cultural and social), and existing migration regimes, gradually helped to show that different levels and dynamic of cross-border ties were possible (Waldinger, 2013).

As such, the transnational perspective provides a framework – complete with specific case details – helping to order and explain the ties and activity involved in migration, which might be understood as an ongoing rather than fixed process, and an “outcome of processes embedded in multi-layered structures (political, economic, social) at simultaneously local, national and supranational scales”. In other words, transnational perspective “helps to overcome the ‘sedentarist bias’ by taking into account the fact that transnational fields are created by diverse mobilities – migration being one of them – and immobilities.” (Dahinden, 2017, p. 1482-83).

The work of Ong and Nonni attempted to place the wealth of Chinese activity and migratory tradition within the transnational debate context. It presented Chinese transnationalism as a response to globalizing economy, where “new kinds of social organization” based on flexible and often deterritorialized activity, have been “juxtaposed with more ‘traditional’ patterns of family and networking.” By means of transnational mobility, Chinese have “eluded, or taken tactical advantage of... modern regimes of colonial empires, postcolonial national states, and international capitalism” (Ong and Nonni, 1997: 23). In effect, both as individuals and as a global diaspora Chinese have sought to “enact their own strategies of accumulation,” and to effectively create their own (semi-independent) transnational spaces – negotiated through mobility, networks and resources.

Christiansen points out how such individual strategies, could be pursued within broader ethnic network: “Chinese migrants can move over large geographical distances within one community. In each destination, Chinese migrants have access to tried and tested transnational institutions of passage and sojourn (whether knowledge, information and trusted practices).” (Christiansen, 2003, p. 149) As such, Chinese transnationals were often able to “resist the limitations set by specific places, while appropriating them for personal uses” (Ong and Nonni, 1997, p. 20), and in the process they often juggled citizenship, economic opportunities and family resources to the best personal advantage.

Key terms in the Chinese migratory mindset – the role of ties and cultural flexibility

To better understand how Chinese pursue the transnational migratory strategies outlined above, it is important to explain how they engage with the concept of personal ties. ‘Ties’ are a core element in the making and unmaking of transnational spaces, and in case of Chinese are steeped in a cultural practice which allows for a flexible sense of attachment and identity. Two key terms help to illustrate this point.

For many Chinese, the idea of *jiexiang*, or one's 'native place' is traditionally a flexible concept, and often means a symbolic attachment based on ancestor and kinship ties, rather than actual physical experience of home. A person might say they are from Sichuan, because of their parents, even though they have not ever lived in the province. In turn a young woman from Sichuan, might introduce herself as Hunanese, a home province of her husband, even while both of them make a living by running a restaurant in Beijing. This traditionally imbued flexibility, or the importance of relational ties to the concept of home and belonging matters when one considers the process of migrant transnationalism and integration, and shows how cultural ideas can be adapted to new realities of globalized economy.

Ties are also expressed through a concept of *guanxi*, a Chinese idea of 'personal network', connecting an individual to a broader cultural community. Fei uses *guanxi* to describe a model of social organization in China explained as a series of 'concentric circles' - individual relationships shaped over a lifetime of activity, and helping to define one's social standing, obligations and social role (for example as a husband, son, employer), as well as quality and potential utility of relationships (Fei, 1992). To a large extent, *guanxi* falls into the framework of social network and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam, 2007), but at the same time allows to better understand the nature of Chinese migrant's ties and relationships, which beyond their potential utility, are an important source of personal identity.

Guanxi together with cultural flexibility toward home and attachment are an important influence in Chinese understanding of identity, which is perceived and culturally conditioned as a relational phenomenon, and a social construct going beyond characteristics of a single place or a group of people (Kong, 1999). It is a theme strongly present in discussion of Chinese diaspora where global mobility has often resulted in 'multiple identities' created through different "ethnic, cultural, economic and political attributes" (Ma, 2003, p.32) and in 'flexible citizenship' where identity forms part of strategy in navigating a web of social relations (Ong, 1999). As such, "someone can be simultaneously Indonesian, Chinese, working-class, and a mother, as well as all of these together. What is invoked, or when, depends on particular circumstances and configuration of social relations that constitute our everyday world." (Ong and Nonni, 1997, p.25)

If 'ties' form a core dynamic of Chinese transnational spaces, the culturally flexible identity serves as an essential tool of navigation. In practice this means that Chinese can readily tap into their broad ethnic networks spanning much of Europe, which offer support and resources allowing them to adopt a flexible strategy of accumulation – changing place and community depending on available economic, legal and family opportunities. It is a defining trend of Chinese integration in Europe, and the following analysis of Chinese migrations to the continent shows its gradual progress.

Chinese migration and communities in Europe

The transnational dynamic of Chinese migrations we observe today did not develop overnight, and is rooted in patterns of mobility which for years shaped Chinese communities in Europe as China gradually connected to and changed with the globalizing economy. Two of the key

factors which help to better understand this process are an initial wave of migration, driven by Europe's colonial ties, and later the impact China's own social reforms and domestic labor migrations.

Chinese diaspora today is estimated to count between 40-45 million globally, with some 75% of migrants located in other Asian countries. Only about 5%, or a little over 2 million Chinese are said to be located in Europe (Tan, 2013; OCAC, 2017).

Christiansen describes how the footholds of Chinese presence and migration to Europe were created through flows of colonial and war-time indentured labor, and later post-World War II migration of ethnic Chinese from former colonial territories. Chinese were mobilized as "substitutes for European workers," for example, when "British and French governments recruited a total of 140,000 Chinese to work in the Chinese Labor Corps during First World War... the Russian effort... also involved recruitment of 100,000 workers and soldiers in China." While majority were later repatriated, several thousand remained, creating early ethnic communities in Europe. (Christiansen, 2013, p. 143).

Many of those migrants have established family-run enterprises, such as Chinese laundries in Britain, or leather workshops in France, which later helped to define the economic trajectory of Chinese in Europe. The overall the business-model was based on co-ethnic labor enterprises which, "could easily absorb and discharge workers, were based on low investment, relied on high turnover, involved labor-intensive, low-skilled activities, and could pay low wages." Workers who endured these conditions could eventually aspire to opening their own shop or business, which was a main strategy of economic advancement due to limited opportunities in the mainstream job market (Christiansen 2013, p.143-145).

Chinese communities in Europe began to expand more rapidly during 1980-90s when the policy reforms in People's Republic of China triggered large social and economic changes in the country – spurring labor migration of some 280 million people from countryside to China's coastal factory zones and its largest cities. Those with relatives living abroad, began moving to seek opportunities in South and West Europe. While their pattern of economic activity was modeled on family enterprises described above, it is also important to note how the mindset governing migration and functioning of such growing communities could closely resemble China's own domestic migrations.

The process of China's large-scale internal migration has matured over a couple of decades and was marked by policy and business improvisation, and by constant navigation of the gray areas between state and private economy. It created an environment where migrants moving to the cities often functioned like semi-legal foreigners – outsiders speaking a different dialect, without residence permit or access to social services, harassed by the police and reluctantly tolerated by the locals. The flexibility, problem solving, economic activity, as well as community relations which served as a source of support and capital have often been replicated by Chinese migrant communities in Europe.

A clear example of this is a large but informal trading community in Beijing known as Zhejiang Village, studied by Xiang Biao, which at its peak in late 1990s counted over 100,000 people (most from Yueqing county in Wenzhou prefecture), and functioned as a

“supply base for medium and low grade clothes for the whole of northeastern and northern China.” (Xiang, 2013, p. 221) This trade hub has originated in clandestine and informal migration, with early pioneers in 1970s and 1980s working from stalls and sidewalks in violation of official regulations and without required paperwork. They functioned largely as ‘illegal migrants’ who hid from the police, and faced detention and forced return to their native place. Eventually, learning to navigate policy and permits system, several families from one village established their activity in Beijing, carving out informal market space. Soon they “wrote letters home or went back personally to urge their relatives and other girls in the villages to go to Beijing with them... two or three years later, having learnt the business, these workers started their own [migratory] chains.” In one of the villages studied by Xiang Biao, “migration has become a ‘culture’” with some 600 out of 1000 villagers having migrated to Beijing (Xiang, 2013, p. 223-226).

While the domestic and international migrations did not necessarily overlap (those with relatives abroad moved internationally), they established a common ‘migratory culture’ with resources, knowledge and connections which helped to create a momentum and a pattern of activity. Throughout the 1990s, Zhejiang Village sold leather jackets to traders from Russia and eastern Europe and many Wenzhou villagers eventually started to establish an industry in border trade, or to go abroad to Russia or Hungary themselves (Xiang, 2013, p. 227). Zhejiang migrant communities active in eastern Europe, Italy and France, often mirrored the activity and migration pattern of places like the Zhejiang Village in Beijing, where the initial pioneers helped to establish migratory chains and communities with a clear pattern of economic advancement (worker or shop assistant – to manager – to business owner) and means of livelihood, whether through help with securing documents, housing, training or even medical care.

An example of such community is described by dei Ottati (2016), who studied the development of Wenzhou entrepreneurs in Prato near Florence; a community at the center of Chinese migration to Italy which overall grew from 16,000 in 1994 to 210,000 in 2011. The model of economic migration pursued by Wenzhouese seemed to fit-in perfectly with Italian small and medium-sized, family-owned enterprises. The Chinese were able to set-up small subcontractor workshops, which helped their Italian clients “to reduce their costs and production times” in face of the growing competition of the globalized economy (dei Ottati, 2016, p. 59). The new arrivals worked long hours to pay-off their debts and learn the trade, eventually setting up their own business. Much of their activity and immediate needs could be handled by other Chinese, with little need or opportunity for learning the language or developing social contacts beyond the immediate ethnic community. For many years the migrants in Prato could function similarly to those in Beijing, with a sole focus of earning money and eventually returning home. Similar cases are found in communities studied in Hungary (Nyiri, 2007) or France (Li, 2013).

Today’s make-up of Chinese communities in Europe, although becoming much more diverse, still reflects the original themes of emigration, when “nearly all overseas Chinese came from five place-dialect groups, and each place of origin was paired with specific country of destination.” While the diasporic settlements established by traders and laborers increasingly

now function as “business centers for Chinese transmigrants,” with a workforce “characterized by high education, high wages, skills and language proficiency,” (Ma, 2003 p. 25-27) many of the attitudes and solutions governing social and economic integration are conditioned by the early experience of ethnic community and by pragmatic, flexible, and goal-oriented activity of Chinese domestic and international labor migrations.

As the discussion in case-studies below will demonstrate, the transnational dynamic and cultural flexibility have now emerged as a key factor in the functioning of Chinese diaspora, but the ethnic enclave model and migratory strategies based in domestic labor migrations remain an important theme in understanding the mindset and functioning of Chinese communities in Europe.

Poland serves as an example of such evolving community. Official contacts and cooperation with China date to early 1950s, but an actual migrant community began to develop in Warsaw with a group of students and investments made by China’s traders and state-owned-enterprises in mid 1980s-90s. For many years the community functioned as a small enclave of less than 1,000 people and began to develop on a larger scale only after Polish accession to EU in 2004. At the moment Chinese constitute one of most rapidly growing foreign communities in the country, which in several years has more than doubled its official population from about 3,800 in 2011 to over 8,800 in 2017 (UdSC, 2017). Because it is a relatively new and a growing population, it represents a dynamic mixture of both old and new patterns of mobility. Alongside of early traders and investors centered around an Asian trade center in Wólka Kosowska, on the outskirts of Warsaw, a parallel group has emerged, composed of Polish-speaking university graduates, large transnational investors and professional class tied to global companies such as Huawei. A more detailed discussion of the community will help to illustrate how this combination of ‘the old’ with ‘the new’ - the grafting of modern strategies on the established migratory and cultural tradition, help to define individual migrants’ presence and integration in Polish society.

A case of home in transition

Wang is a middle-aged entrepreneur from Wenzhou, who by any indication is well-integrated in Poland. For many years he has ran a successful trade operation in leather jackets imported from Italy and has a range of assets and a network of both Chinese and Polish business contacts. His wife is Polish and their children are enrolled in the local education system. Yet for much of his time in Europe, Poland did not figure as a likely destination, much less a place of settlement.

Wang has emigrated to Europe illegally with fake passport and help of Chinese smugglers, who in early 1990s facilitated his journey from the native village near Wenzhou to Croatia. Following a brief period of work in Croatia, he has moved to the Netherlands, where his aunt and uncle were present, and in 1995 to Italy to take advantage of official amnesty and to legalize his status in the EU. Once there, he cooperated with his uncle and his sister, building up a family-run textiles factory in the manufacturing region near Florence. In 1997 after completing several business orders for Polish buyers, he came to Warsaw to explore the

market potential here. He soon decided to open a branch office of his family's company and became one of the earliest leather jacket importers on the market. There was little competition, and money came easily, but he did not plan to remain in the country. Then he met and fell in love with a local.

Within the next few years, as the business went through better and worse periods, Wang and his new family have moved back to Italy, then to Guangzhou (in southern China) and then again to Spain, each time using family connections and existing business capital to seize on potential market opportunities and to try to develop their operations. When in 2009 the global financial crisis significantly impacted their assets and operations they decided to move back to Poland - mostly due to Wang's wife, whose knowledge of language, culture and institutions, could facilitate easier business operation.

Today Wang simultaneously runs and develops several businesses and divides his time between Warsaw, where his wife and children are based, Wenzhou, where his parents and a number of business contacts still are, as well as Italy and Spain. He speaks a smattering of Polish, often mixed with a rush of Italian and Spanish words, and ultimately prefers to communicate with his family and friends in Chinese. While his children go to schools in Warsaw and he is effectively committed to the city, the reality of his relationship with the place and its local community is complicated. Wang never thought of Poland as 'home' but it became one as a result of gradual attachment formed through family ties and business contacts. At the same time, with his relatives firmly present in Prato and in Wenzhou, the idea of home is far from settled and could be a subject to change (as it was in the past). In fact, Wang tends to visit China and Italy every other month to attend to personal and business matters.

Wang's experience is one of a complex identity negotiated through multiple ties, and his activity can only be properly understood when his full story and personal background come into the picture. His idea of home and of community is a broader and shifting concept, with relationships stretching beyond a single place, through Europe and China.

Wang's example also touches on a second important issue - the ongoing dynamic between personal and structural factors in the migrant integration process. The commonly adopted approach might describe Wang's case through an integration checklist evaluating his business performance, local family, residence papers, and perhaps ability to navigate Polish social relations and institutions. But much of his actual, ongoing mobility is a result of dynamic between changing opportunities and personal ties. Wang's decisions often followed changing business prospects - be it his first stay in Poland during its early emerging market years, or his decision to return after the impact of financial crisis on Spanish economy - but they were related directly to his personal resources and experiences, such as family and business ties in Italy, Spain, Netherlands and Poland. Likewise, the current growth of competition and engagement from China in Poland has a strong impact on Wang's business diversification, future plans and priorities.

As such, Wang's case helps to illustrate how questions of integration and mobility are often a complex outcome of individual ties, resources and experience written into the broader opportunity structure. As explained below, Wang's story is far from unique within the Polish-

Chinese community, where business and migratory dynamic continued to evolve over the years, and where Warsaw often functions as a hub for regional business operation.

Chinese migrants in Poland - evolving strategies, community and ties

Zhou has arrived in Warsaw in the early 1990s as an employee of a Chinese state-owned company looking to invest in the region. At that time wholesale trade centers served as foundation of activity for Chinese entrepreneurs and investors in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. In Poland, an early trading hub was located in the disused sports stadium (Stadion X-lecia), which after 1989 became the largest open-air market in Europe. It was gradually overtaken by a trade center established by Zhou's company in Wólka Kosowska, right outside of Warsaw.

Zhou was a fresh college graduate when the company has sent him to Poland and he thought of the assignment as a chance to build-up his international work experience. His wife is Polish and when they decided to stay in Poland, Zhou had to develop his business activity from scratch, with a career trajectory typical of the local Chinese community – trading from a booth in the sports stadium, and later working as a wholesale supplier to supermarket chains in Poland. He also continued to expand his trade interests at the Chinese center in Wólka Kosowska, which by 2007, following Poland's access to EU and Schengen zone has peaked in activity. Ideally positioned to distribute goods across CEE region, the center drew Chinese entrepreneurs from neighboring countries, such as Hungary or Italy, but also from China itself, who saw Poland as a new, well connected market and a business hub. Within several years, however as the competition grew and the 2008 financial crisis made its full impact, the traditional business model focused on wholesale imports began to fade.

“In the late 1990s and early 2000s, when importing goods, we could easily fill a dozen containers with single type of product - say one color of shoes. These days each container has dozens of different products,” said Zhou, when describing the business environment. “My estimate is that only 30% of traders in the center are currently able to make profit.”

The impact was significant. The original traders who once formed the core of Chinese presence in Wólka Kosowska have either moved abroad or diversified, using their capital and contacts to branch out into opportunities ranging from business services, tourism, gastronomy and education, to such ventures as pig farming. Zhou has invested his earnings to develop a chain of restaurants, a foods factory, and a private Chinese school. Such efforts have taken place in the shadow of the increasing number of new transnational investors; global Chinese companies; and managers tied to large infrastructure projects under the ‘New Silk Road’ initiative. Some, like Mr Hu, have arrived in Warsaw only this year, with no previous contacts, and aiming to explore opportunities for a future business operation. Mr Hu runs a large clothes factory in northern China and for many years he has lived and conducted business in Moscow. At the moment he hopes to build a regional sales operation spanning Poland, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania.

“We now try to work in partnerships, where everyone brings in different skills and resources,” explained Zhou. “It is a time of large companies and venture investors, and

change from the older model is inevitable... When we meet with our old friends in China, the scale, speed and style of their business are completely different, it's even hard to compare."

While Zhou is married to a local and his children were raised in Poland he has never sought to acquire Polish citizenship. He returns to China every several months to spend time with his parents and relatives, and says he could not imagine a situation in which he has to apply for a visa to see his family in China.

Meanwhile, a new generation of Chinese also begin to mark their presence in the country. In many cases this group is composed of university graduates completing Polish language programs offered in China, or international degree programs at Polish universities. Their trajectory of development and integration is shaped by a new globalized dynamic, but often forms a mix of traditional emigration behavior with modern opportunities and resources. Here too, the transnational ties are often key to their plans and activity.

One such example is Huang, who came to Poland five years ago as a student with a strong desire to develop his own business. At the time of his arrival, Huang was 20 years old and did not have any contacts in Poland. He obtained his student visa through an intermediary in China, and chose to come to Poland only after failing to obtain a similar visa for Spain.

While he studies and communicates largely in English (and has a basic command of Polish), he invested several years of effort and went through several business failures to understand the business culture and industry know-how, and to form essential business contacts in Poland. He has then set-up his own company exporting high-quality Polish food products to China. Huang doesn't live in Warsaw, and his business model is based on contacts at 'home' in southern China, where old classmates engage their employers or their own companies to arrange for marketing and distribution of Huang's products. His company relies heavily on a traditional network of personal contacts (*guanxi*) but his market niche and mobility are largely a result of new business dynamic - China's international expansion and an opening for foreign-made (and thus higher quality) foods products in the domestic market.

A very different but telling example is a young Chinese woman, a professional working for an international company in Warsaw. In her late 20s, Ming is a graduate of Polish-language major from a university in Beijing. She has moved to Warsaw about five years ago, soon after her graduation, and took up work with a small Chinese company where she handled accounts, communications, and translation services. After several years she was head-hunted and recruited by an international firm which offered her a double salary and an attractive project portfolio.

In all of the above cases ties play a significant role to long-term integration. Many of the original traders in Wólka Kosowska who moved further West (in total over 80% of original Chinese community in Poland) did so for the sake of children's education prospects, as much as for business opportunities. Those like Wang and Zhou, who both remained, have local wives and often strong personal connections in the country. But like many Chinese in Poland, including Mr Hu and new entrepreneurs just establishing their presence, they are straddling family and business ties in several different countries. It is common to see persons commuting between Hungary, Poland and China for example, where their children have been

sent back to attend school. While they maintain companies here, they are often undecided about their long-term plans and look at Poland as a business hub as much as a place of settlement.

Both Huang and Ming, members of a young generation who migrated with different resources and opportunities, are part of a very similar dynamic. Huang has completed his studies in Poland and invested years to understand the local business environment, but his loyalties are largely tied to the next business opportunity and his goals are remarkably similar to those of 'traditional' diaspora members - to make good money and return to China. While he has built his company from scratch in Poland, he continues to look at new opportunities in Italy, Spain and Czech Republic, and ultimately hopes to manage his business from 'home' where his parents and the circle of closest friends are still present. He is ready to move where needed, and inevitably relies on his closest relations based in China - for both business and personal support.

Ming is professionally accomplished, fluent in Polish and English, and perfectly at ease living in Warsaw and interacting with both Polish and Chinese community. Yet, she confesses to not having any deeper sense of attachment to her life here and is often considering whether or not to return to China. This is partly due to closest friends, her fellow college classmates, gradually moving away from Warsaw. But the ultimate motivation to return is also the result of expectations from parents and family members, who all remain in China, and apply constant pressure for her to come home. In their perspective, Ming's stay abroad was always meant to be temporary.

Both Ming and Huang enjoy considerable resources which were not available to the older generation of Chinese in Poland. They benefit from fewer restrictions on their mobility (Schengen visa), better education and language skills, as well as new opportunities created by China's expanding economy and often good professional prospects. But the relative ease of pursuing their goals in Poland does not always translate into easier integration. Their sense of place, motivation and future plans continue to be significantly influenced by existing community ties which often reach beyond Poland. This is even more so as they struggle - in the era of frequent, global mobility - to build up new, local relationships, which could allow them to gain a stronger sense of local identity. As such, some of the main challenges faced by the new professionals and entrepreneurs can often resemble those from the past - that is establishing deeper and more durable relations with the host society, and breaking out of the traditional migratory patterns.

Conclusion

While the Chinese community in Poland continues to grow and to change its profile - from wholesale trade to global business and white-collar professionals - its sense of place and integration dynamic remains far from settled. The traditional personal networks, defining an individual's social role and position (*guanxi*) as well as customary approaches to migration (ethnic enclave and labor migration), are met with modern realities of transnational capital and mobility - with both old and new generation of migrants looking to adapt their strategy to

new opportunities and challenges. The sense of community and home is highly subjective and conditioned by relations and activity beyond Poland, and often Europe.

The result is often a mixed phenomenon, with integration frequently being an outcome of broad opportunity structure as well as of personal ties and resources. While the entry of Poland into EU (2004), Schengen zone (2007) and the onset of financial crisis (late 2008) have all marked gradual turning points in the shape and dynamic of the local Chinese community, few, if any of the people described above have a linear integration story centered solely on Poland.

The relationship they have (or often haven't) managed to develop with local host population needs to be analyzed in the context of broader, transnational community connected at least in part to global Chinese diaspora. In addition, new resources and opportunities offered by globalized economy and by China's economic expansion might not be fundamentally changing the patterns related to mobility and integration, but often serve simply to intensify them.

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