



RUNNYMEDE

# Young Chinese Migrants in London

Caroline Knowles



## About the study

This report is based on a study funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 2012-2014 under its Hong Kong Bilateral Programme (ES/J017272/1).

It is part of a larger, three city, project based also in Hong Kong with UK and Mainland Chinese migrants and in Beijing with UK and Hong Kong migrants.

The findings for each city are reported separately: this reports the London findings only. With funding from the ESRC equivalent research council in Hong Kong the research is conducted in collaboration with Dr Ho Wing Chung, Associate Professor at the City University of Hong Kong, who is the other party in the authorial 'we' used in this report.

The study's research methodology is outlined in the appendix. In order to protect their anonymity the names used in this report are not real names. They are suggested by the informants and anglicised by them to make life in London easier.

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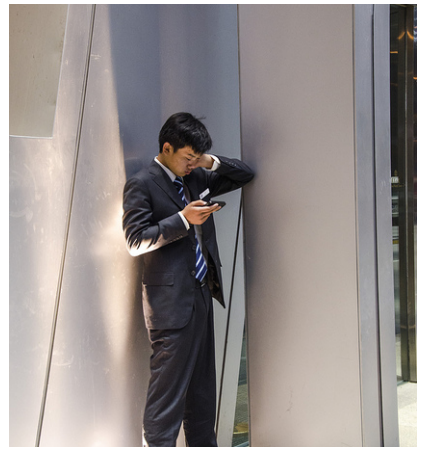
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## Foreword

For some time we have known that the experience of different ethnic minority groups varies significantly in the UK. This has not meant, however, that research and policy has always responded effectively to the diversity within Britain's various Black and minority ethnic groups.

This report by Professor Caroline Knowles goes some way towards filling that gap for Chinese people, a community that continues to be less understood among policymakers and indeed the wider public. In general government has sharply reduced research on particular ethnic groups, but it is striking how infrequently policy documents discuss the presence of Chinese people in Britain – unless it is in the context of the rise of China as an economic power.

One of the key arguments of this report is that the British Chinese 'community' is itself highly differentiated. This report focuses on younger, wealthier migrants, and Professor Knowles is careful to note her research may not capture the full experience of Chinese people living in Britain.

Nonetheless, her findings that young Chinese migrants have a more transnational approach to their identity and future employment and resident plans is likely shared across many British Chinese people, and indeed with many younger people growing up in a more globalized world. The concerns respondents expressed about migration policy are also an important finding and appear to have had some effect on policymakers – at least when it comes to high-skilled and student migration from China.

Two challenges must be tackled more directly to build on this report. First is a question of research, or our understanding of the British Chinese experience. Because of the nature of the Chinese population, and in particular its more even geographical dispersal, quantitative methods such as surveys are less able to capture their experiences, whether in terms of employment, voting patterns, or social outcomes more generally. The Census is perhaps the only such dataset and while it certainly could be analysed further, it only occurs every 10 years and so is typically slow to catch up with the reality of the current British Chinese experience. But because quantitative methods are more difficult one key finding is that researchers must continue to do the sort of in-depth qualitative studies of particular aspects of the Chinese community in Britain, and these findings should be better disseminated across British society as well as within the British Chinese community itself.

The leads to the second challenge, namely to ensure that the British Chinese community is more directly involved in policymaking and public debate. Partly because of their dispersal, and partly because of their relative economic success, the Chinese have not been a prominent focus of policymakers, and government must do much better to address this relative lack of attention. At the same time, there remains a challenge in terms of mobilisation within the Chinese population in Britain, again partly because of their dispersal and partly because of the diversity within the populations (so that Malaysian, Hong Kong, Mainland, and of course British-born Chinese people may not share experiences and views).

The General Election in 2015 was a notable landmark in seeing Alan Mak elected as the first British Chinese MP, and there are wider signs that the British Chinese community is much more engaged in social and political debates than in previous decades. By building on these developments within the community, and through the example of this report, we can further our understanding of British Chinese people and ensure their voices are better heard across Britain's social and political institutions.

**Dr Omar Khan**

Director, Runnymede

## Overview and summary of key findings

This research updates our understanding of Chinese migration to London; it focusses on young people (aged 23-39) in the early stages of their working lives. The Chinese are the UK's fastest growing ethnic group<sup>1</sup> and yet we know little about them. It asks who these young migrants are, why they are in London, and how they think about and strategize migration. It explores how transnational mobility configures life and career planning in the current generation of young elite mobile professionals. Its focus on the traffic between three cities — London, Beijing and Hong Kong – highlights a region with gathering economic and geopolitical significance and explores its connections with London. Beijing is now the capital of the world's second largest economy; and Hong Kong is a significant Asia-Pacific portal with strong ties to both the UK and China. Routes between these three cities are significant to UK government policy and commercial interests, which encourage Chinese investment in the UK and underwrite UK companies' quests for opportunities in Chinese markets. Those who travel these routes constituting these immensely significant human fabrics of global connection remain largely unknown. Cities, rather than nation states, route migrant lives, bringing the right scale to these matters in a city optic: lives are lived in, through and between cities and non-city hinterlands.

- Current knowledge of the Chinese in the UK and in London urgently needs updating.
- New, dispersed, affluent and gentrifying Chinese geographies are reconfiguring Chinese London, displacing Soho's Chinatown as its centre.
- Schools and prestigious universities draw young Chinese migrants to the UK. Their conceptions of the resources provided by migration bring them to London.
- A strand of migration shaped by increasingly monetised architectures of UK border control, these young migrants are highly educated and skilled; they work in elite professional positions and they are investors and innovators.
- Our findings indicate the significance of cities in understanding migration, and strongly suggest that departure, as well as arrival, cities are important.
- Our findings suggest a particular ontology of migration viewed from the standpoint of young Chinese practices and perceptions of London. The young migrants in our study:
  - Are well integrated into what they perceive as an international city. Their easy absorption and difficulties with Chinese neighbours and co-workers arising from current circumstance in China call into question the term 'Chinese community' and suggest instead more fractured associations.
  - Are resistant to life and career planning. For them the future is uncertain and problematic.
  - Conceptualise migration through a shifting set of resources through which they hope to develop advantage over others. These intersect with each other and priorities shift over time.
  - Conceptualise migration resources as furnished through various kinds of work; individual self-development; and securing accumulated political and financial assets in London. Transfers of Mainland Chinese capital are problematic for China as losses and they impact on London property markets contributing to the unaffordability of property in the capital city.

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1. ONS 2011 Census

## Chinese migration to Britain

Despite the presence of Chinese sailors in Liverpool, Cardiff and London for over a hundred years, by the end of the Second World War there were less than five thousand Chinese in Britain. A small stream of arrivals from Hong Kong throughout the 1960s, both underwritten by the business of empire and restricted by the (1962) Commonwealth Immigration Act, generated chain migration into the restaurant trades as one of few openings. This consolidated Chinese Britain in the public imagination and researchers<sup>2</sup> probed sites of everyday Chinese life and identity making in restaurants with British born Chinese youth. But beyond these efforts the Chinese were largely overlooked in UK ethnicity and migration scholarship<sup>3</sup>.

Two factors account for this. The Chinese are one of Britain's smallest minorities: 156,938 in the 1991 census<sup>4</sup> and still under 400,000 by the time of the 2011 census. Secondly, unlike the more numerous Asians and African Caribbean populations, the Chinese are widely regarded as a successful minority. Chinese children over-achieve educationally at all levels relative to the white British population. Adults show high rates of entrepreneurial activity<sup>5</sup>, are over represented in professional and skilled occupations and under represented among the unemployed<sup>6</sup>. Their success excluded British Chinese and, by extension the new migrants who joined them, from government policy agendas: except one.

With other migrants the Chinese are drawn into the British post-war political consensus on immigration. In this all migrants are problematic: and the fewer and the more integrated the better. Aligned with less successful migrants as the object of state exclusion and integration, Chinese migrants are included in a defence from these judgements which under estimates them. In this they are victims of racialized poverty, exclusion and isolation; circumstances appropriately addressed through service provision<sup>7</sup> by local and national state agencies and charities. These judgements address a subset of Chinese lives: principally undocumented migrants and traffickers, which came to prominence in 2004 with the tragic deaths of 24 undocumented and gang-driven Chinese Morecombe Bay cockle pickers. This and similar subsequent incidents, exposed an exploited, downtrodden and invisible Chinese migrant population<sup>8</sup> as a counterpoint to the successful minority story. Today it is important to hold these two interpretations of Chinese migration – success and exploitation – together: they are artefacts of contemporary border controls, of which more later.

2. Parker, David (1995) *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain*, Aldershot: Avebury; Song, Miri (1996) *Family, Work and Cultural Identity: Children's' Labour in Chinese Takeaway Businesses in Britain*, PhD, London School of Economics

3. Brody, Maurice (1958) 'The Chinese in Great Britain' in Morton H. Fried ed, *Colloquium on Overseas Chinese*, New York: Institute for Pacific Relations; Watson, J (1977) 'The Chinese: Hong Kong Villagers in the British catering Trade' in Watson, J ed. *Between two Cultures*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell; Jackson, Brian and Garvey, Anne (1974) 'Chinese Children in Britain' *New Society* 30 (no.626) 9-12

4. Cheng, Yuan (1996) 'The Chinese: Upwardly Mobile', in Ceri Peach ed. *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, London HMSO pp161-180

5. Ng, Kwee Choo (1968) *The Chinese in London*. Institute of Race Relations & Oxford: Oxford University Press; Parker, David (1995) *Through Different Eyes: The Cultural Identities of Young Chinese People in Britain*, Aldershot: Avebury; Pang, Mary and Law, Agnes (1998) 'The Chinese in Britain: Working Towards Success?' *International Journal of Human Resource Management* vol. 9 (5) pp862-874; Cheng, Yuan (1996) 'The Chinese: Upwardly Mobile', in Ceri Peach ed. *Ethnicity in the 1991 Census*, London HMSO pp161-180

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8. Chak-Kwan Chang, Cheung, Tom, Adamson, Sue, Cole, Bankole, Smith, Luna, Law, Ian, Law, Carmen (2009) *Hidden from Public View: Racism Against the UK Chinese Population*, [www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/cers/min/20Quan/02Finished/Report.pdf](http://www.sociology.leeds.ac.uk/assets/files/research/cers/min/20Quan/02Finished/Report.pdf); Pai, Hsiao-Hung (2008) *Chinese Whispers*, London: Penguin; Lam, Tom, Sales, Rosemary, D'Angelo, Alessio, Montagna, Nicola and Lin, Xia (2009) *The Changing Chinese Community in London: New Migration, New Needs*, Final Report [www.mdx.ac.uk/assets/The-Changing-Chinese-community-in-London.pdf](http://www.mdx.ac.uk/assets/The-Changing-Chinese-community-in-London.pdf); Pharoah, Robin (2009) *Migration, Integration, Cohesion: New Chinese Migrants to London*, London: Chinese in Britain Forum

## Chinese Britain

The Chinese are one of the great Diasporas. The World Bank identifies China as the fourth largest country of emigration in the world, with 33 million ethnic Chinese living outside of Mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong by the end of the twentieth Century<sup>9</sup>. This definition of China and the Chinese is controversial. Hong Kong struggles to maintain its (limited) Special Administrative Region (SAR) autonomy agreed in the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) the basis of its (1997) reversion to the Mainland. The Hong Kong pro-democracy and Occupy Central movements pursue a vigorous street-presence debate with Beijing over the terms of this agreement. Migrants from Hong Kong – and this shows up clearly in our research — refer to themselves as ‘Hong Kongers’ in order to mark important political and cultural differences with Mainland Chinese. This study respects these claims in referring to Chinese migrants in London as either Mainlanders (or Beijingers) or Hong Kongers. Taiwan too pursues its independence in the face of Mainland efforts at incorporation. When applied to Mainlanders the term Chinese covers a multitude of ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences. Ethnic Chinese also come from Singapore with complex migration histories and genealogies. Although a diaspora of this magnitude is impressive, it is but a small proportion of China’s (1.3 billion) population.

The Chinese diaspora favours the US, Canada and Australia, over Britain. But destination preferences are sensitive to conditions in these countries. Canada recently scrapped its immigrant investor programme<sup>10</sup>. The US requires disclosure of foreign assets and enforces tax regimes globally on its passport holders. These interventions have shifted new Chinese migrants towards Europe and opened new routes to London.

New and long settled migrants and British born Chinese are only one constituent of Chinese Britain. The influence of money circulating through various channels, students and tourists are further constituents. While traces of these things surface in this study their investigation is beyond its scope. Instead we focus on migrant bodies and lives while insisting that these are part of a bigger story. 0.72% of the population of England (a little over 53 million) or 379,503 people identified themselves as Chinese in the 2011 Census. A mix of new migrants and long settled British Chinese, this is slightly larger than the population of the city of Bristol. Most importantly it has more than doubled since the 1991 Census, implicating new migration as a significant source of growth. Figures released by the ONS show that 40,000 Chinese came to the UK last year. This is more than from any other country and is in part due to the large number of students<sup>11</sup>.

Britain’s Chinese population is highly dispersed. The Scilly Isles are the only local authority (in England and Wales) with no Chinese residents. At the greater level of granularity offered by electoral wards only 6.4% of wards have no Chinese residents (2011 census data). Some have a single resident, a couple, or what may be a small family or a small number of families or individuals. Electoral wards with single and double digits are not uncommon. The highest concentration – but not the highest number — of Chinese in England is in Cambridge where they constitute 3.6% of the population (4,454 people). Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Exeter, Liverpool, Sheffield, and Southampton - cities with Russell Group universities<sup>12</sup> – also have high concentrations indicating the importance of students, and prestigious universities in Chinese dispersal. Of this more later. In numerical terms the West Midlands (with a Chinese population of 31,274) especially Birmingham; the North West (48,049) and particularly Manchester; and the South East (53,061) constitute Chinese Britain’s main hubs. But it is London, with a Chinese population of 124,250 that lies at its centre<sup>13</sup>. Chinese migrants and British Chinese settlers are an integral, subtle and dispersed thread in the UK’s human fabric, distributed across urban, suburban and countryside locations, concentrated in the key cities, around the more prestigious universities and most especially to be found in London.

9. Skeldon, Ronald (2011) China: An Emerging Destination for Economic Migration, Sussex: Migration Policy Institute. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/china-emerging-destination-economic-migration>

10. Ley, David (2010) Millionaire Migrants: Trans-Pacific Lifelines, Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

11. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10480785/Most-immigrants-to-the-UK-now-come-from-China-figures-show.html>

12. The Russell Group is the collective name given to the UK’s 24 leading universities as measured by the prevailing metric assemblage.

13. ONS 2011 Census



## Chinese London

Cities are crucial arenas in condensing the challenges we face in migration and transnational research. Although nation states are crucial in the regulation of migration through border controls and other means, lives are lived hyper-locally in the houses, workplaces, schools, healthcare facilities and neighbourhoods of cities and their footprints beyond. In cities migrant (and other) lives are generated, sustained and played out in the routines of daily life. Cities are composed in their human fabrics as well as in their architectures, planning regulations and infrastructures. They display the traces of these fabrics in bodies and in architectural, commercial, religious and in the other surfaces constituting the collages we call urban life. Crucially, cities are nodes through which local, national and transnational journeys are routed. Significant volumes of Chinese migrant-journeys – past and present as the data shows — are routed through London. Tracing, as this study does, the contours and cartographies of Chinese London brings these ethnic migrant cartographies and their surface traces to our attention.

The 2011 census estimate of the Chinese population of London (124,250 or 1.52%) is expanded by adding estimates of undocumented migrants, suggesting a population closer to 300,000. Dispersed throughout inner and outer London boroughs, the highest concentrations of Chinese residence are found in the city of London (263 or 3.57%), the boroughs of Tower Hamlets (8,109 or 3.19%), Camden (6,493 or 2.95%), Southwark (8,074 or 2.80%) and Westminster (5,917 or 2.70%). At a postcode level the 2011 Census data reveals that Soho's Chinatown, a Hong-Kong Cantonese/Fujianese space and an icon of Chinese London, corresponding with the postcodes with the highest intensity of Chinese residence (26.2%) in the country. But rising real estate values — driven in part by Chinese investment in London — are forcing Chinese businesses, crucial in supplying Chinese food in restaurants and supermarkets, as well as other services, out of Chinatown. London neighbourhoods to the East, including Canary Wharf – the Eastward extension of London's financial district – has a Chinese population of 15.6%. London's disappeared 19th century Chinatown in Limehouse has a new numeric intensity of Chinese residence (1792) and a significant concentration (12.3%). This neighbourhood, once occupied by Chinese sailors, now houses Chinese students at Queen Mary College, University of London and young Chinese professionals working in financial services: a reoccupation of Limehouse only this time not by sailors. Chinese London, like the rest of the city and its other ethnic-migrant populations, is of course, a work of city making in progress.

If boroughs and neighbourhoods offer an imperfect proxy for resources, significant numbers (and concentrations) of Chinese are to be found in London's wealthier areas. The boroughs of Camden, Westminster, Islington and Kensington and Chelsea – which have high property values and substantial clusters of high net worth individuals (HNIs)<sup>14</sup> are in the top eight local authorities in England for high percentages of Chinese residents. Shifting scale, the top ten postcodes for Chinese residence are in areas with higher than average London housing prices. This picture inevitably excludes undocumented Chinese residents, and in doing so skews this rough and imperfect estimate of resources. A more detailed analysis of postcodes and property prices would be necessary in order to comment on the real estate and capital resources of Chinese London through the optic of neighbourhoods. While this is beyond the scope of this paper, Chinese clusters around what the mosaic system identifies as London's alpha territories<sup>15</sup> — areas with high property values occupied by HNIs with particular characteristics – are important in developing a more subtle and contemporary picture of Chinese London than the one provided by a focus on undocumented migrants alone. Apart from undocumented residents who live as sub-citizens<sup>16</sup> Chinese London is materially rather well off.

Chinese London is a mix of long settled residents with migrant genealogies including several British born generations and new – China born – migrants who outnumber the long-settled by about 2 to 1 (2011 Census). The gap between UK and China-born populations is highest in the City of London (10% versus 85%), Camden (15% versus 74%) the Islington (21% versus 70%) and Kensington and

14. HNIs have no precise definition and vary from country to country. The financial services industry uses this term to refer to investors with more than a million pounds in liquid assets to invest and so excluded property.

15. The alpha territories are classifications based on a variety of big data sources collected by Mosaic Experian to identify consumer behaviour. It identifies types of residential neighbourhoods. The alpha territories comprise areas of West, SW and North London containing some of the highest value housing stock and the city's wealthiest individuals. [http://www.experian.co.uk/assets/business-strategies/brochures/Mosaic\\_UK\\_2009\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.experian.co.uk/assets/business-strategies/brochures/Mosaic_UK_2009_brochure.pdf)

16. Pai, Hsiao-Hung (2008) *Chinese Whispers*, London: Penguin

Chelsea (15% versus 79%)<sup>17</sup>. New (China born recently arrived) migrants are important and they show a preference for the wealthier boroughs identified earlier. They are also well represented among those clustered around the better universities, a pattern identified earlier. While the census distinguishes Hong Kong from Mainland born Chinese, we know that these new migrants are from the Chinese Mainland rather than from Hong Kong (2011 Hong Kong Census), as was historically the case. The historic Hong Kong Cantonese connection with Britain has been substantially reconfigured, taking Chinese London and Chinese Britain in new directions. Chinese London is predominantly formed by Mainland Chinese and Chinese born migrants.

To the bodies and cartographies of Chinese London we can add the aspirations of intending migrants. New visa applications show brisk Chinese-UK business. In the 1990s the visa section of the British embassy in Beijing operated with a dozen staff; by 2012 more than 250 staff were processing 300,000 applications<sup>18</sup>. Before entry visa applications (of all types) for 2011 show that China, with 283,008 applications, ranks second to India (top with 462,507 applications) while Hong Kong generated a further 8,574 applications. The changing role of China in the world has produced a new kind of Chinese migrant to Britain<sup>19</sup> and elsewhere as new routes open up across China as well as in Chinese lives.

Two key macro-factors are responsible for these circumstances. The new architectures of UK border control, which facilitate the entry of wealthier migrants while restraining others. And, secondly, changes inside China that extend the liberalisation of market reforms inaugurated by Deng Xiaoping and the social changes accompanying them, along with China's rising geopolitical and economic prominence.

## Millionaire Migrants

New and emerging cartographies of Chinese London are underpinned by recent changes in UK border controls. The new architectures re-embed old ones: border controls continue to implement the post-war political consensus that immigrants – even successful ones are problematic and their numbers must be strictly controlled (even while successive governments fail to do this). Pulling in the opposite direction is the competitive desire, common among OECD countries to attract the free good of a mobile global elite, defined in 'skills' and 'financial terms' as innovators and investors: perceived as the lifeblood of global competitive edge. As the Home Office itself declared: 'The objective of these (immigration) policies is to attract the brightest and best migrants to the UK, that is those who can create growth, jobs and investment'<sup>20</sup>. In adjusting the architecture of immigration policy to admit elite migrants, London is in competition with other cities across the US, Canada, Australia, and, most importantly, East and South East Asia.

From 2008 (fully implemented in 2011) UK border control shifted from an historic focus on permanent migration for settlement to temporary migration. At the same time it shifted from 'unskilled' to 'highly skilled' migrants. This evaluation of skill is misleading. All migrants are skilled in the sense in which skill involves practical knowledge of the world and how to operate it in navigating landscapes of new settlement<sup>21</sup>. But only some migrants' skills count and only some skills transfer to new places without the requirement of re-qualification/re-registration etc. In these (implicit and explicit) evaluations of skill, the racial and ethnic grammars of global migration are constituted as outcomes of the way race and ethnicity operate through migration. These conventionally privilege whiteness<sup>22</sup> while making brown lives more difficult. While these circumstances persist, they are slightly reconfigured by recent immigration rule changes. In prioritising particular kinds of resources and in monetising migration as we will see, these changes rework race and ethnicity through the prisms of wealth, elitism and particular forms of skill – 'talent'. Crudely put, this is a small shift from a race/ethnicity bias to a financial bias in UK immigration favouring elite groups with particular kinds of resources.

17. All figures from ONS 2011 Census.

18. Border Agency Magazine Spring 2012

19. Pharoah, Robin (2009) *Migration, Integration, Cohesion: New Chinese Migrants to London*, London: Chinese in Britain Forum

20. [http://emnukncp.org/uploads/Highly\\_Skilled\\_Report.pdf](http://emnukncp.org/uploads/Highly_Skilled_Report.pdf)

21. Ingold, T. 2000. *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. London: Routledge; Knowles, Caroline, and Douglas Harper. 2009. *Hong Kong: Migrant Lives, Landscapes and Journeys*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

22. Knowles, Caroline (2003) *Race and Social Analysis* London: Sage

The new rules and the points-based system they implement explicitly favour wealthy, elite migrants. 'High value migrants' meet the criteria for what the UKBA calls 'tier one' visas issued to those who display 'exceptional talent'. These migrants must be 'internationally recognised as world leaders or potential world-leading talent'. They will be entrepreneurs who want to set up or take over a business; graduate entrepreneurs with 'world class' innovative ideas or business skills wishing to establish business in the UK; investors who want to make a 'substantial financial investment in the UK'. This provision is aimed at HNIs with a minimum of a million pounds to invest.

Tier two visas facilitate inter-company transfers 'for employees of multinational companies' wanting to deploy staff in their UK operations, and skills transfers to the UK through graduate traineeships. Ministers of religion and sports people, including those who fill football's premier league, are eligible for these visas. So are a small number of skilled workers (on a quota basis) earning between £35,000 and a £150,000 a year. The 2012-13 quotas for this category were 20,700. Those earning over £150,000 are not subject to quotas. Particular forms of elite status are embedded in these rule changes.

Alongside these changes the 2-year post study work visas, which UK educated young people from overseas were eligible for has been phased out. Access to the bottom, so called 'unskilled' end of the labour market, (for example catering,) which traditionally provided migrant-starter-jobs for those whose skills and qualifications don't translate in new locations are squeezed-out as this channel closes. Migrants joining family already settled in the UK are subjected to increasingly stringent English language tests and income checks that demand proof of (formal) income above £18,600 a year in support of family sponsorship: another squeeze on poor settled migrants. This reorientation shifts migration away from established directions: from the post-colonies and from claims of belonging and long-established association, to claims based on temporary association and accumulated assets of various kinds: capital, inventiveness, elite qualifications and skills.

The reconstruction of UK border controls around wealth, elite status and internationally recognised skills has important and far-reaching consequences. It leaves those who do not qualify under the new regime at the mercy of traffickers, profiteers, and exploiters of various stripes. It leaves them travelling by unsafe methods: sometimes it leaves them dead in the back of trucks. In cutting off legal channels of entry, the new border controls can only increase illegal migration. UK Border Agency raids on Chinese neighbourhoods harass undocumented migrants. Requiring health, social services and education agencies to check passports brings borders into everyday life and creates sub-citizens of the city. The dilemma posed by Chinese migration to Britain is aptly summarised by the Border Agency magazine. 'China is now the world's second largest economy, but there are more failed asylum seekers in the UK than most other nationalities, and illegal migration from China remains a threat'<sup>23</sup>. The new architectures of border control polarize Chinese London: they privilege elite migrants and punish the rest forcing them into undocumented channels and tenuous lives.

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23. UK Border Agency Magazine Spring 2012.

## Connections to China

With Chinese migrants the free good of highly educated professionals produced at no cost to the destination country comes with still bigger benefits. These benefits — artefacts of China's growing economic and political influence — include the prospect of large scale Chinese investment in the UK<sup>24</sup>; and business opportunities in vast, expanding, lucrative Chinese markets for UK companies, especially markets for luxury items<sup>25</sup>. Anxious to forge all sorts of connections with China, UK business and border agencies must tread carefully through Chinese London. The connections they seek inevitably operate through interlocutors: through bilingual, talented, business savvy people who know how to operate in both places – mobile, elite Chinese migrants, some of whom are captured in this study.

China was transformed into a world production centre following the Deng Xiaoping economic reforms in the late 1980s. These far-reaching changes inaugurated the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as semi-autonomous areas designed to route foreign investment and leading edge technology to the Eastern coastal areas<sup>26</sup>. These changes unleashed what has been described as the biggest peacetime movement of people in history<sup>27</sup> as peasant farmers left the land for the factories and great cities of the East. Rural to urban migrants reformulated Chinese cities from 1990: the speed and scale of Chinese mobility and urbanisation is unprecedented. Beijing has a population that exceeds 21 millions and rising, Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta area (adjacent to Hong Kong) form the largest urban area in the world with a population in excess of 50 million. Chinese cities are about rapid change and unparalleled scales of mobility.

Among these rapid social changes — and despite the fact that land is owned and leased by the state — cities have become engines of growth; as speculative land markets have developed<sup>28</sup> and housing costs soar beyond incomes. Spectacular economic growth, consolidated the socialist-private-enterprise-hybrid<sup>29</sup> raised living standards, generated the largest middle class on the planet with a surplus income for consumption, lifted eight hundred million people out of poverty and widened the gap between rich and poor<sup>30</sup>. But rapid urbanisation and industrialisation and the far-reaching social changes they bring forge multiple uncertainties in the lives of Chinese citizens<sup>31</sup>. These are manifested in the lives of young Chinese migrants in London, of which more later.

24. London's mayor Boris Johnson welcomes a billion pound Chinese investment in London's Royal Albert Docks in Docklands, East London, for example <http://abp-london.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Boris-Johnson-unveils-plan-for-£1bn-Chinese-business-district-Telegraphy-Online.pdf>

25. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/may/09/boris-china> London's Mayor also lead a 2014 trade delegation to China looking for business opportunities for UK companies.

26. Ota, Tatsuyuki (2003) 'The Role of Special Economic Zones in China's Economic Development as Compared with Asian Export Processing Zones: 1979–1995', *Asia in Extensio*, [www.iae.univ-potiers.fr](http://www.iae.univ-potiers.fr); Goswami, Bhaskar (2007) 'Special Economic Zones: Lessons from China', 13 February, [www.countercurrents.org](http://www.countercurrents.org) (accessed January 2009)

27. Murphy, Rachel (2002) *How Migrant Labour is Changing Rural China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Feuchtwang, Stephan (2004) 'Curves and the Urbanisation of MEIFA Village', in Stephan Feuchtwang (ed.) *Making Place: State Projects, Globalisation and Local Responses in China*, London: UCL Press

28. Zhu 2012, Zhu, Jiangnan. 2012. "The Shadow of the Skyscrapers: Real Estate Corruption in China." *Journal of Contemporary China* 21 (74): 243–260; Dutton, Michael (1998) 'Life on the Outside', in Dutton (ed.) *Streetlife China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press pp. 144– 147; Park, Wooyeal and Lee, Kihyun (2012) 'I Want to Be Expropriated! The Politics of Xiaochaquanfang Land Development in Suburban China', *Journal of Contemporary China* 21(74): 261–279.

29. Wu, Fulong (2009) 'Neo-urbanism and the Making of the Chinese Market Transition', *City* 13(4): 418–431; Ramo, Joshua Cooper (2004) *The Beijing Consensus*, London: Foreign Policy Centre, p. 20.

30. World Bank (2003) *Gini Coefficient Study*. Also, Shankar Gopalakrishnan 28 April (2007) 'Negative Aspects of Special Economic Zones in China', *Economic and Political Weekly*, both cited in *The Beijing Consensus*, published by the Foreign Policy Centre, London p24

31. Xiang, Biao and Wei, Shen (2009) 'International Student Migration and Social Stratification in China', *International Journal of Education Development* 29 pp513-522 (p516)



## Internationalization and Uncertainty

These circumstances opened China to multiple streams of globalization in its society, cultures and economy: producing 'an increasingly cosmopolitan life'.<sup>32</sup> New geographical and social mobilities within China opened the prospect of more distant mobilities beyond it<sup>33</sup>. Sojourns overseas were made easier by the passport reforms of 2001 and 2002 and working or studying abroad was reinterpreted as a self — and by extension a nation state — development strategy and not as flight or disloyalty<sup>34</sup>. A growing middle class seeks overseas education for its children and new destinations for themselves as tourists. Assets newly accumulated through privatisation and commercial opportunities bring new possibilities within China and beyond.

These circumstances also brought uncertainties. China's hybrid Socialist-Capitalist system contains no real safeguards for private property and these matters concern successful Chinese with accumulated assets. Uncertainties rebound in (a lack of) neighbourliness between Chinese people in London as our study found: disclosure of assets among neighbours in London could have repercussions in Beijing, as we will see. Conspicuously displayed consumption and accumulation of wealth can constitute evidence of corruption especially as the Communist Party leadership now targets corruption at all levels. The most spectacular public example of the dangers posed by the consumption of wealth emerged in the trail of politburo member Bo Xilai, whose wife was given a suspended death sentence for the murder of UK businessman Neil Hayward in 2011. Hayward had brokered various foreign investments on behalf of the family, including the lavish lifestyle of their student-playboy son. Leader Xi Jinping's current campaign against corruption has led to a spate of convictions of top and minor Chinese Communist Party officials as numerous reports in the Chinese media suggest. New regulation of receipts and hospitality has recently closed top restaurants in Beijing. These circumstances impact the calculations of young migrants in our study.

Hong Kong reverted to China in 1997 when the British colonial authority's lease on the territory it seized in the Opium wars (1841 and 1856), intended to maintain the transit of opium grown in British India, expired ending a long colonial connection. A vibrant commercial and financial portal, Hong Kong was incorporated into the one country two systems formulation in 1997 as a semi-autonomous Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Mainland China. It has its own mini-constitution in the Basic Law, its own Legislative Assembly (LEGCO), a Chief Executive appointed from Beijing (C.Y. Leung at the time of writing) and a pro-democracy movement demanding a greater say in the governance of the SAR. Compact and densely populated, Hong Kong's land area supports a population of just over seven million<sup>35</sup> (in comparison to 1.3 billion Mainlanders) providing some of the world's highest urban population densities.

The reversion of Hong Kong to China was a source of anxiety and exit throughout the 1990s. This fuelled large-scale emigration to Canada, principally to the Pacific Rim city of Vancouver, but also to Australia and the United States and, to a lesser extent, to the UK. Much of this turned out to be circular migration with business people returning to Hong Kong when it seemed that reversion meant business as usual. Return was also fuelled by the difficulties in translating business practices generating success in Hong Kong, into successful business practices in Canada and Australia, where things worked in a more formal fashion<sup>36</sup>. This de-skilling of 'successful' and 'skilled' migrants needs to be properly investigated.

Hong Kong is 92.6% Chinese<sup>37</sup>. This reflects current, recent and past immigration: Hong Kong is composed through immigration, principally from Mainland China, although a small number of foreigners also live there.

32. Pieke, Frank (2002) *Recent Trends in Chinese Migration to Europe: Fujianese Migration in Perspective*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration (p6)

33. Pieke, Frank (2002) *Recent Trends in Chinese Migration to Europe: Fujianese Migration in Perspective*, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration

34. Xiang, Biao (2003) 'Emigration from China: a sending country perspective, *International Migration* 41(3) pp21-28

35. <http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/population.pdf>

36. Ley, David (2010) *Millionaire Migrants*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

37. According to Hong Kong's 2011 Census



1.

Throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first century waves of migration from Mainland China register key developments in Chinese politics and in the aspirations of migrants wanting to live new lives in new places. The Communist Revolution (1949), the Cultural Revolution (1969) and the Tiananmen Square protests (1989) boosted the Mainland Chinese migrant presence in Hong Kong.

One hundred and fifty Mainland migrants a day, over fifty-four thousand a year, have moved to Hong Kong since 1997. This policy is controversial with long-term Hong Kong residents: once Chinese migrants themselves. Critics claim that the distinctive Hong Kong Chinese character of the SAR is changed forever by migration from the Mainland. Complaints, voiced in the press, frequently detail uncivil behaviour by Mainlanders. Hong Kong considers itself culturally and politically distinctive from the Mainland. Its art and cinematic traditions, its comparative freedom of political, and other forms of individual and collective expression chart a different path, and provide a distinctive version of Chinese-ness from those which hold on the Mainland, with which it is nonetheless intertwined. At the time of writing there is a widespread discontent in Hong Kong public life at the relationship with Beijing, which will select the list of candidates from which the Chief Executive of the territory will be elected for the first time in 2016.



2.



3.



4.

1. Caroline Knowles
2. "Chinese businessman" by catedomac is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0
3. "CHINESE NEW YEAR LONDON.06.02.2011" by Haydn is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0
4. "Gerrard Street" by Rob Schofield is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

## Who are these young migrants?

In describing these migrants we drew on what appear to us to be key dimensions of migrant life arising in our interview conversations. These include the routes by which they first arrived, the ways in which they later extended these routes in building adult working lives and relationships, their navigation of border controls, their abilities in manoeuvring through London; and their skills in establishing themselves among locals and other migrants in the city.

While the Hong Kong group was evenly split between men and women, two thirds of the Beijingers were female. The Beijing group were slightly older: 85% were under 35 and in the Hong Kong group a similar proportion were under 31. Both groups were single: (91% Hong Kong and 70% Beijing) commonly without long-term relationships and childless (100% Hong Kong, 81% Beijing). They are highly qualified with the majority holding a masters' level qualification. In occupational terms they were oriented towards the financial services in which London specialises with the Beijing group leaning towards business. The Hong Kong group is more occupationally diverse, working in education, health and HR in addition to financial services. They are well paid relative to average London salaries, with the Hong Kong group earning slightly more – few earned under £35,000.

While we differentiate the migrants in our study by their departure cities, in practice things are not so clear-cut. Being from Hong Kong – a small compact city – is relatively straightforward, but high levels of internal mobility complicate coming from Beijing. These complexities are worth relating because they reveal how this city and the migration routes connected with it actually work. Three types of connection between the London based Beijingers and their city surface in our research. First are those who were born in and grew up in Beijing. Informants' relationship with Beijing is straightforward in these cases. Second are internal migrants from other parts of (Northern and Central) China who arrived in Beijing alone or with parents to take up university places or job opportunities: moves which positioned them for later international migration. Jan suggests that Beijing is a 'move up' from second and third tier cities: hierarchies it seems operate as much in relation to cities as to universities. In this regard Beijing operates as a resource: it routes opportunities and provides a platform for further overseas moves. Third are connections with Beijing that are routed through London. In these Beijing becomes a place of return between or following periods lived in London. Some Chinese migrants become Beijingers via London as it opens a route to their own capital city.

## Student routes to London

A recent UNESCO report<sup>38</sup> suggests that China is a key source of international university students worldwide. In 2011-12 there were 78,715 Chinese students in UK higher education<sup>39</sup> a substantial rise on 2010-11 (67,325) making China the UK's top source of international students. This is boosted by a growing number of school students taking up places in the UK's independent school system: seen as a passport to elite university entry. Chinese school students make up a third of the (26,000) non-British pupils in the UK's independent schools<sup>40</sup>. Recent surveys suggest that 80% of wealthy Chinese – those with assets of £1 million and upwards – want to send their children overseas for education<sup>41</sup>. Our study found that UK education is highly significant in shaping young migrants' journeys: virtually all of our informants first entered the UK through schools and universities

We excluded school and university students from our study in order to capture young people's independent migration decision-making in the early stages of working lives. In practice things were less clear-cut. Informants suggested that student routes to London were not theirs but their parents' decisions in which they were complicit. The youngest arrivals came as child-migrants with guardians appointed to take care of them. Even older students like Kwi (Hong Kong) said: 'I wasn't part of the conversation'. At university and in their choice of occupations these young migrants lived with the consequences of their parents' decisions. Education routes from Beijing and from Hong Kong show small but significant differences in our study which are worth noting.

38. Cited Shen, Wei (2005) 'A Study on Chinese Student Migration in the United Kingdom', *Asia Europe Journal* vol.3 pp429-436

39. <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2013/UKandChina.pdf>

40. [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4abc6490-838c-11e3-86c9-00144feab7de.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4abc6490-838c-11e3-86c9-00144feab7de.html) 22 January 2014

41. [www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4abc6490-838c-11e3-86c9-00144feab7de.html](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/4abc6490-838c-11e3-86c9-00144feab7de.html) 22 January 2014

Hong Kong migrants arrived in the UK at an earlier age in order to prepare for the examinations which are significant to university entry (GCSE and A Level). The youngest of these, Penny, who wanted to stay in Hong Kong, said 'They (parents) dropped me off in Harrogate' (aged 11). A small number of Beijingers arrived in order to prepare for A Levels in UK schools, but most came for university and some arrived for Masters' or PhD level study. From Hong Kong, UK education is a well-trodden route: an obvious choice, often seen as less competitive and stressful than the local education system. 'London is a very natural place to come for a Master's degree' (Jim). Some of our informants' parents were ex-colonial civil servants and a subsidised education in the UK is a colonial perk which has now been phased out. It is also worth noting that their parents are in professional, often government occupations rather than in business.

The Beijing group's parents, on the other hand, were from the new business classes. Pluto points out that these routes to London are inaccessible to most Chinese: 'it is extremely expensive for an average Chinese family' to invest in a UK education. Unlike other informants in the study she describes herself as being from a humble background lifted by a suddenly business-rich uncle. For Beijingers a UK education was often a second or third rather than a 'natural' choice. Their first preference — for top tier Beijing universities — often involved intense competition for places. Chinese scholars<sup>42</sup> suggest that upper middle class interest in overseas education results from developments rooted in the social polarities of contemporary China. The extension of university education to broader sections of the population has increased demand and competition for places, especially in the most prestigious Chinese universities. Several young Beijingers in our study suggested that it is easier to get into a good UK university than a good one in Beijing. Second preferences point to a foreign education and favour the US. However, the required SAT scores are not particularly accessible to foreign students, and, post 9-11 there are often complications with visas. Overseas education provides distinction from outside of the Chinese system for those who are not part of its concentrated elite with close party connections and privileged positions in the logics of wealth accumulation<sup>43</sup>. Rather than seeing overseas education as providing 'a new elite with symbolic political capital'<sup>44</sup> we think it provides the new elite with new routes to social mobility in the new China through the acquisition of resources developed through migration. Chinese students expect to deploy assets accumulated in the UK in navigating the complexities of Beijing employment markets.

What are these education arrivals like as individual experiences? Despite the prevailing view in migration studies that migration works through social networks, less than half of the Hong Kong arrivals in our study had a close friends or family members in the UK on their arrival; and only a third of Beijingers had these connections. More likely were meet and greet services and taxis from London airport to universities all over the UK. UK entry, it seems, is often a solitary business. Because entries are linked with education most young Chinese migrants return on graduation. This was the intention behind the withdrawal of the post study work visa in 2011. Those in our study – many of whom only expected to be in the UK for between 3 and 6 years — are exceptional in staying on, gravitating to London to explore its opportunities. Luo considered returning to Hong Kong when he finished university, but he says, and he is not alone in this 'one thing led to another'.

42. Xiang, Biao and Wei, Shen (2009) 'International Student Migration and Social Stratification in China', *International Journal of Education Development* 29 pp513-522

43. Xiang, Biao and Wei, Shen (2009) 'International Student Migration and Social Stratification in China', *International Journal of Education Development* 29 pp513-522; Huijan, Xue (2008) *Cultural Adaptation and Personal Capital Formation: The Experiences of Chinese Students in UK Higher Education*, PhD University of the West of England.

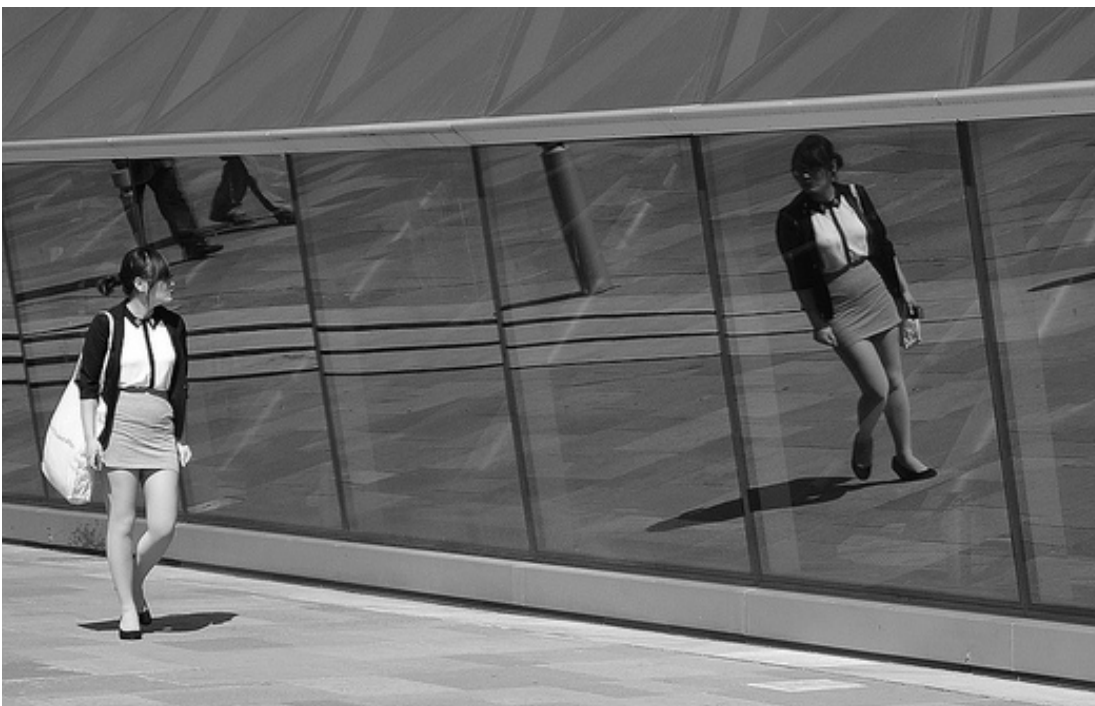
44. See Xiang, Biao and Wei, Shen (2009) 'International Student Migration and Social Stratification in China', *International Journal of Education Development* 29 pp513-522 (p514-5). Research on Chinese students in France similarly points to education as a path to social differentiation and to the significance of accumulations of social and employment capital. See Shen, Wei (2009) *Chinese Student Circular Migration and Global City Formation: a relational case of Shanghai and Paris*, PhD Loughbrough University



If the UK wants to attract elite talent in the cause of developing a global competitive edge over other OECD countries, and UK schools and universities are the main route through which these young migrants are produced, then scrapping the post study work visa was a bad move. Universities are also the source of the UK-China business matrix which extends student connections into the world of commerce and culture. The London Business School, the London School of Economics and the Cass Business School and others have a China Business forum and active alumni networks. They run elaborate networking events showcasing high profile speakers from the Chinese Embassy, from UK business especially those representing luxury brands, and inspirational stories from young (UK educated) Chinese entrepreneurs successfully pursuing business opportunities in China. The China-Britain Youth Association (CBYA), networks students and young professionals through its branches in London, Oxford and Beijing. The Britain-China Accountancy Association, the Chopsticks Club, the Association of Chinese Financial Professionals in the UK, Chinese Entrepreneurs Global, China-Dialogue, the Future Leaders in Asia Group and many more organisations consolidate an elite commercial matrix. On the cultural front the Confucius Institutes in British universities raise China's profile overseas through Chinese studies. Universities are important UK-China portals.

We expected to find temporary migrants. But permanent residence or British citizenship was common in the Hong Kong group. This is an artefact of privileged access to UK passports through colonial civil servant parents and the 1997 reversion arrangements in which some Hong Kongers were given British passports. It is also an artefact of length of residence. Between school, university and brief periods of work, many Hong Kongers had been in Britain long enough to qualify for permanent residence. The shortest UK stay among our informants was 15 months; the longest 19 years; but only a small proportion had been in the UK for over 10 years.

Unsurprisingly given the new architectures of border control, the Beijing group were tier 1 investor migrants with some tier 2 inter-company transfers. Two had UK passports, one through marriage, and one through length of residence. They will have to renounce their Chinese citizenship when they renew their passports, as China does not allow dual nationality; and this is a cause for concern among them. Border controls define the legal status of migrants and are important in defining who they can be and how they can live in London.



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## Navigating London

How migrants navigate London also defines who they are through their spatial relationship to the city. The young migrants in our study fit into the broader statistical picture of residence described above. The ONS statistics and their narrative accounts are, of course static snap-shots of residence. They have all moved around the city in response to jobs, public transport routes, rooms available in friend's flats and, as they gain competence in navigating London, preference for and attachment to different parts of the city. The young migrants in our study fall into three groups: those who live in cheaper suburban areas; those who live in some of the most expensive parts of London; and East End gentrifiers living in places that are becoming expensive.

Suburban residence is about housing costs and preference for a quieter life or more space: Dan (Beijing) chose Feltham in SE London, Cara (Beijing) Streatham, SW London (her UK husband's choice), Carrie (Hong Kong) Willesden Green in NW London, Jen and Jim (Hong Kong) the SE London suburb of Hither Green and Luo (Hong Kong) the East London suburb of South Woodford.

Jee (Beijing) lives in Pimlico, one of the most exclusive parts of London, because the State Owned Enterprise in which he works has offices nearby. Jon (Hong Kong) lives in the same area because he likes its older type of housing. Penny (Hong Kong) prefers upscale Wimbledon. Zoe (Beijing) likes trendy Notting Hill which came to her notice because of the film by that title, and Christina (Beijing) likes Marylebone because it is central and pleasant. Jan (Beijing) describes why she chose Chelsea:

*'Well, we knew Chelsea, even before I came to the UK... Chelsea, the football team... And even before that, I knew Hampstead...'*

*My ex-boyfriend, in China, he's a university teacher as well, an English Major. We read a lot of English literature, or something, and we know that the professionals, like the lawyers and doctors, they live outside of London, or just like Hampstead. They go to downtown, central London to work, and that's the end: and here, Chelsea. We know these are good areas. So we just tried to find somewhere nice... We would Google all the information. We know Hampstead, Chelsea, South Kensington, those places, are posh areas. We know that...'*

*In China, those places have a big name we notice them... that's why in Imperial Wharf a lot of rich Chinese bought their flats. They bought the flat as an investment, but they don't live there, that's why Imperial Wharf is more than two thirds, I think, empty. We call it a ghost city... Imperial Wharf, the name is like from the emperor. It sounds like, if you live in those kinds of places, you've got something special. And also that's why they like to have the name, like a riverside home. There is the new development, near Sainsbury's. People say half of the people who bought off-plan are from Asia, and the majority are Chinese. There will be here maybe a bigger Chinese society.'*

Here we glimpse the translation from London to Beijing of elite-status-through-neighbourhood and the emergence of an affluent microcosm of Chinese residence in newly built properties on the Chelsea section of the Thames.

The gentrifiers in our study live in the newly built towers of East London's regenerated docklands, in the E14 postcodes around Canary Wharf, close to London's original Chinatown in Limehouse. Lilli, Kei, Pluto, Candy (Beijing) and George, Val and Kwi (Hong Kong) all live in this area, chosen as convenient for working in financial and related services, and for its familiar (to Hong Kongers and Beijingers) modern high-rise architecture. 'It reminds me of Hong Kong every time I go there' (Carrie). It appeals to Lilli (Beijing) who hates London's old buildings. Others dislike it for the same reasons. 'It looks like bloody Beijing and I hate it' (Tian). Zoe (Beijing) describes it as 'where Asians live'. Luo (Hong Kong) doesn't like it because it looks like Hong Kong: 'there is no character(istic) to it... it could be anywhere... its about generating GDP'. Those who live there report and the 2011 census support this, large numbers of Chinese neighbours they don't particularly interact with.

London geographies are more than residence; they are about past residence, friends' geographies and places where activities, hobbies and interests are pursued. Runners, cyclists and football players gravitate towards certain kinds of spaces. Those in pursuit of London's high culture need access to museums, art galleries, theatres, and concert halls. Entertainment and social activities of various kinds took most interviewees to the same parts of central London to its bars, restaurants and cultural events to meet with friends.

Chinatown in London's Soho was occasionally used for dining and food shopping: 'I have a Chinese stomach' (Dan, Beijing) and Carrie (Hong Kong) likes to eat and speak Cantonese in Chinatown. But the young migrants in our study little use this iconic piece of Chinese London. James (Hong Kong) prefers Mayfair fine dining. Beijingers (Jan and Zoe) showed weak connections with what they see as a South China, Cantonese, Hong Kong or Fujianese space. But even Hong Kongers told us: 'I don't think Chinese people cluster in Chinatown any more, and it's getting too expensive for most people' (Jim, Hong Kong). Although Jon (Hong Kong) eats in Chinatown he dislikes the archetypal red lanterns it presents because they are 'negative' and 'degrading' and because they turn China and Chinese culture into a tourist attraction or museum piece. Pluto (Beijing) avoids Chinatown 'because it's Chinese'. Chinatown draws their criticism and ambivalence: it doesn't feature very much in their lives.

## Integration

That Chinese migrants live Chinese lives is a common popular perception and a view sustained in academic studies. It refers to everyday things like food, friends and family: Chinese eating habits and social networks. Integration has many meanings but is used in our study to refer to these everyday things. Our study didn't find this. Diets included European foods. Connections with Chinatown are at best ambivalent. Friendship groups are more Chinese at the start of migrant journeys – although this depends on the numbers of Chinese students in particular schools and universities and on particular courses – but they broaden during university studies and become more mixed still on employment. Inevitably this reflects the return of Chinese friends to China. Most informants reported a 50/50 split between Chinese and non-Chinese friends. Chinese friendship included Taiwanese, Singaporeans and British born Chinese. Non-Chinese friendships draw on London's diversity to include Europeans, South and South East Asians as much as white-British Londoners. Only a minority have non-Chinese partners. James (Hong Kong) expresses London's diversity in everyday life when he says:

*'The people I can really call as really good friends, some of them are not Chinese. One of my really good friends is... I don't know how to classify him. He's interesting: his dad is Indian and his mother is Finnish. He was born in Sweden and he studied in America. And he has a Chinese wife. And he speaks many different languages. He is one of my best friends'.*

Young Chinese migrants in our study are integrated in a London cosmopolitan way. They don't lead particularly Chinese lives, nor do they live in what is referred to as the Chinese community. Hong Kongers are not disposed towards association with Mainlanders in London for reasons which reflect the current tensions with Beijing, described as differences of 'culture and mentality'— 'they are all about money... Brainwashed' (Kwi). Tensions and a lack of conviviality between Mainlanders is reported by the E14 gentrifiers at Canary Wharf and by Jan (Beijing) from Chelsea who says they don't even acknowledge each other in the street:

*'I know (see) lots of Chinese that don't even show they are living in those areas. Actually, they are not. You see, when they come, they drive their car to the car park, and they come out from in the block, and the other people don't see them. I have a friend who lives in Imperial Wharf, she told me; I have seen quite a few Chinese neighbours. But I said how did you see any Chinese because those rich are in the car, not like me walking in the street? I am the person working hard'.*

Their unease, as they confess in our interview conversations, is a fear of others' judgement of their circumstances — a reaction in London to recent actions against corruption in Beijing — and this militates against social interaction between Beijing neighbours and co-workers. The term Chinese community does not describe Chinese residence in 21st C London as far as our study is able to determine.

Discrimination and racial hostility inhibit integration even in cosmopolitan London. Hong Kongers — but not Beijingers — were acutely aware that being Chinese in the UK carries stigma. They share this knowledge with British born Chinese according to recent press reports<sup>45</sup>. Our informants' experiences of racism range from the polite: being overlooked in restaurants by staff presuming they can't speak English. To the abusive: being accused of all looking the same. To male racial violence as 'Chinky' or 'Jackie Chan' are tackled in the streets after the pubs close. 'There's definitely a lot of racism here, on a regular basis... they get abusive... I try not to confront them... I don't really care... at work not so much...' (Luo). The two groups trained in racial politics identify racism: Hong Kongers and British born Chinese are experienced colonial/racialised subjects. Beijingers are not – yet.

## Why London?

Migration is place specific. Whether we target the motivation driving migration or its execution in the practices of daily life, we are looking at the neighbourhoods and work places in which it is first anticipated, and then lived. It seems to us that London carries particular anticipations and lives: while Istanbul and Cape Town for example carry others. Migration means different things in different places<sup>46</sup>. So what does it mean in London? How is London anticipated and lived as a destination city by young people from Hong Kong and Beijing? We decided we could get at these issues by probing their choice of London. We have already assembled in earlier pages some sense of how it is lived spatially and in terms of social relationships and what follows reveals more.

Migrants' location choices are always multi-dimensional: there is never a single reason for choosing a place but many. Their reasons are interconnected, often without clear ranking and priority, and shift over time. Pauline (Beijing) expresses this well when she said that her reasons for migrating to London keep changing as her life unfolds from being a masters student to working in international trade. Speaking for many of the others, James (Hong Kong) says he likes the 'whole London package' by which he means job, finances, city and family.

In our study we are interested in motivation as a route to meaning or ontology: to grasp what migration to this city means to these particular young people. We approach meaning through its operation: through the ways in which it works in configuring young mobile lives. From the many conversations we had with young migrants about why they are in London we developed a list of resources they think migration provides. Although these are interconnected we have divided them for clarity into those related to work, those related to personal development and those related to securitisation. We offer these as an exploration of what migration means in practice in these young mobile London lives.

45. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/30538929>

46. Noel Salzar's (2014) work on imaginaries of a better life, Michaela Benson's (2014) accounts of the British in France and Panama, Mari Korpela's (2014) work on Westerners living in Goa as well as in my own work on the British in Hong Kong (Knowles and Harper 2009) suggests that migration can only be understood in specific contexts. See Knowles, Caroline, and Douglas Harper. 2009. *Hong Kong: Migrant Lives, Landscapes and Journeys*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Salazar, Noel B. (2014) 'Migrating Imaginaries of a Better Life... Until paradise Finds you' (119-138); Benson, Michaela (2014), 'Negotiating Privilege in and Through Lifestyle Migration' (p47-70); Korpela, Marie (2014) 'Lifestyle of Freedom? Individualism and Lifestyle Migration' (27-46); all in Benson, M and Osbaldiston, N (2014) *Understanding Lifestyle Migration*, London: Palgrave



## Employment and Business Resources

Work occupies a privileged position in most migration studies. Ours too finds it to be important, but as a resource offered by migration, one of the ways in which migration works in configuring mobile lives. Reminders of works' interconnection with other resources offered by London – most important to this age group – is provided by George (Hong Kong) who also wants to ski:

*'I wanted to work in a bank, in investment banking or finance-related. This is the area, which I applied for, but first of all, it's very hard to apply for jobs in Hong Kong because you're not physically there, but I didn't get an offer in London, nor Hong Kong. But for the UK, I knew that I wanted to stay and go to London, because it's the place for finance jobs. Eventually I thought, maybe if I go back to Hong Kong, I'd never come back to London to work, so I thought, why don't I give myself three years of time to find something I like, maybe, or to just broaden my horizons and I want to travel around. I want to keep on skiing, because in Hong Kong it's hard to find a place to ski. So that's the main reason. I want to see more'*

From our conversations with young migrants in London we developed a three-point typology of work resources: these are the resources of competitive advantage; work systems and cultural familiarity advantages; and work-life rebalancing resources.

Competitive advantage resources come from what development economists call uneven development. Work skills and expertise developed in areas which are already well established in London can be reworked in fledgling enterprises in Hong Kong and Beijing, putting young migrants ahead of the curve in China where they will have competitive advantage over locals. Jewellery, designer clothes and wines (Zoe and Pauline); art markets (Kai) and film production (Tian) are resources in which London is thought to have — perhaps for a limited time only — a head start on Beijing. Although collecting resources for later use, a number of Hong Kongers in our study are taking advantage of financial expertise and experience they are gaining London's financial markets, which they believe will be well regarded in Hong Kong. They include resources developed in private equity (George), investment analysis (Val), financial risk modelling (Kwi and James), investment (Pluto) and executive recruitment (Penny, Jen and Jon). London's ranking as a global financial centre produces and confirms these resources.

All migrants have work system and cultural familiarity in different measure. They consist in detailed insider knowledge of how the work and life world of UK and Chinese business operates, technically, bureaucratically and in terms of content. They know how to develop contacts and social skills. They are well-positioned bilingual experts who can operate in complex cross-cultural contexts connecting London with Hong Kong and Beijing. They broker Chinese property and business investments in London (Candy and Lilli, Beijing). They do marketing analysis for Chinese clients wanting to invest in London, and for UK and European luxury goods companies wanting to access Chinese markets (Zoe and Pauline Beijing). They teach Chinese to London business people wanting to work in China (Carrie and Dan, Beijing).

Work limitation resources are about curtailing work in favour of other priorities such as leisure, entertainment and quality of life, while still maintaining a viable work profile. These resources exploit differences between work cultures. They address young migrants' approaches to work in the broader context of a work-life-balance, strongly suggesting that work is not the most important part of their London lives; and that they seek trade-offs in migrating.

*... the prospects in Hong Kong are probably better for what I do... :China's getting wealthy. I work in real estate; it's just the demand thing. And then here, a lot of friends working in the industry are earning money, but I do envy that, but I'm doing okay here and I have a life here. I think the work/life balance is what's making me stay here. You can have a proper lunch and in Hong Kong, probably everyone has to eat at their desk. And then you work till, I don't know, eight, nine, ten every night. Every night. And then it's just crazy and of course, you earn loads of money, but you don't get to see your family, you don't get to see your friends, unless you don't sleep (George, Hong Kong).*

A party member working for a major Chinese SOE in London, Jee appreciates the simplicity of commercial principles in London and his release from the consultation, politics and connection building that smooth business in Beijing. He was sent to London without consultation. He says :

*'[they] just send you off, they don't care where you work... Back in the 1980s, the management of ... (SOE) were appointed by the central government, and now the situation is getting better, but some orders are taken directly from the government, the government sometimes will affect the operation of the company, of the freedom of the company. If it's a private company you can operate as you like, and in London we act like other private companies.... Like when I was in university, the teacher always told us the purpose of a company is to maximise its profit, and in London we are doing what we can to maximise profit, if we think this cargo will give us a profit, we'll take this cargo, we'll buy this cargo, but in Beijing sometimes the government will tell you that you need to buy this cargo, maybe for the smoothing of production, but because of the nature of your company you need to follow the orders'*

These resources are about respite and personal space rather than competitive advantage and active cultural translation. They are familiar to migrants who move from busy cities to rural France or India.

## Self Development Resources

In young migrants' talk the self is a work in progress. It is well served by the travel migration involves: by the journey from China and by the personal capacities that living in London develops. Self-development doesn't work in a linear fashion – quite the reverse. Its direction and content cannot be known in advance but must unfold within the trajectory of a life. 'It just happened to me' and 'unplanned' were frequently used and give a heightened sense of adventure through the serendipity<sup>47</sup> of the trail. Travel's self-improving capacities are a well-established trope in travel writing in which geographical and personal boundaries are simultaneously advanced. 'I'd never been abroad. ... I needed to extend my boundary and explore the unknown'. (Pluto, Beijing). Jim (Hong Kong) suggests that the freedom to roam is an extension of youth – recognised as a vital stage in the unfolding of the self.

*'I didn't plan much on moving here: in fact I'm not sure if I have moved here ... even if we have bought a flat... We wanted to explore living abroad. It's somewhere else, somewhere other than my hometown... I felt that I was still young... and we took the liberty, to sort of just wander a bit...'*

These youthful wandering selves will be curtailed by the arrival of children and Jen and Jim's return to Hong Kong because of the need for 'more of a connection' (Jim) that a child entails. While his journey to London is less unplanned than Jim suggests – the historical connections between Hong Kong and the UK provide a well-trodden route — the developmental impact of mobility on the emerging self is taken for granted.

In our conversations with young migrants self-development resources had four dimensions: encounters with the unfamiliar, opportunities to live a bigger life, intimate relationships and the benefits of a Chinese childhood.

Migration provides multiple opportunities to encounter the unfamiliar and extend the self to meet its challenges. In Hong Kong Jen grew up believing that 'you have to soak in salt water for a while' by which she means that it is important to feel the challenges of unfamiliar environments. Her husband Jim likes being 'somewhere else'; George (Hong Kong) craved the 'excitement... of a new environment'. But exactly what resources do the unfamiliar, the unknown, the unanticipated bring to the project of the self? The young people in our study had two ways of thinking about this: the first concerned the city they moved to, the second the city they moved away from. Both reiterate the importance of cities.

Despite claims about the randomness of their travel we suspect that not just any source of the unknown will do. These young migrants seek certain kinds of unknown environments and with them certain forms of personal extension. Paris or New York might do instead of London; but Jakarta or Delhi we suspect would not. London was often described as being the 'centre of the world', by which these young migrants mean a place where new trends begin, a place of cultural innovation and significance. Being on the pulse was important in a choice of city for its positive impact on the self as abreast with current trends: London hones the competitive cultural self. This is not about a West to East axis. Londoners in Beijing, in an extension of this research not yet reported on, insist that Beijing not London is the centre of the world.

London hones the cosmopolitan self:

*'I really like London in terms of the cosmopolitan mix of ideas, perspectives, because it is positively challenging the mind I can develop as a person by engaging with those different ideas. At the same time there is that aspect of the city is driving me crazy and I've been here for three and a half years and I want to see other parts of the world. Perhaps its opportunities in other parts of the world which are also economically rewarding' (James, Hong Kong).*

And London facilitates the practice of cosmopolitanism. For George (Hong Kong) it is a hub in a matrix of budget flights all over Europe. He travels frequently and has made new friends extending his personal connections, and his cultural and linguistic resources.

47. Vered Amit, a top analyst of youth travel writes of the significance of serendipity and improvisation. See Amit, Vered (2013) 'Serendipities, Uncertainties and Improvisation in Movement and Migration' in Collins, Peter and Galliant, Anselma (eds) *The Ethnographic Self as a Resource*, Oxford: Berghahn Books

Living a bigger life young migrants associate with moving away from Beijing and Hong Kong: away from the constraints of obligations and anticipations of the familiar and its social rules and familial constraint. Alan, a Catholic, wants to develop his devotional self beyond the constraints which the Communist Party impose on him in Beijing. London, he thinks provides him a more authentic church. In London George (Hong Kong), who likes meeting new people can develop his social self in new ways. In Hong Kong, he says, people are reserved,

*'mind your own business and don't speak to random people.... I like the fact that I can actually meet someone. Of course it might be dangerous or risky, but what the hell?'*

Luo agrees.

*'I'm not the typical person from Hong Kong.... There's a lot of pressure to conform, whether in terms of education or financially... You just have to follow a path. I think it's quite strict.'*

In London Pauline (Beijing) says she can be more than Chinese, by which she means not confined to living a traditional Chinese life: *'here you learn different things, you learn freedom, you enjoy life...'* In London, says Christina (Beijing) *'People don't judge you; people won't pressure you. People won't say you have to do this, you have to do that.'*

Women migrants particularly feel the weight of family pressure and tradition pressing on the self.

*'In China ... you need to get a job, start a family... like you look after your family, your husband, your children, you have to look after everyone in the family. It's quite stressful... here you do whatever you want: take holidays...'* (Lilli, Beijing).

Intimate relationships both develop and constrain the project of the mobile self. They are particularly important to this mid twenties and early thirties age group who — single and childless with fledgling significant intimate relationships — are actively engaged in negotiating them. They are important to women who are constrained by the temporalities of reproduction. Migration brings new possibilities in intimate relationships at the same time as constraining migrant futures: they are tricky to navigate in mobile lives. A mid thirties woman from Beijing unhappily married to a white British man with whom she has two children provides the most poignant example of how intimate entanglements restructure selves and migrant journeys. She says, 'I am a bird that cannot fly' by which she means she feels trapped as her British children complicate her desire to return to Beijing. At an earlier stage in the relationship process, Val wants to return to Hong Kong but will stay in London with her UK boyfriend and his family. Anticipating marriage and kids, which she sees as a personal development she will have to trade against her return she says: 'he's not saying an absolute no at the moment' to her wanting to raise their children to be bilingual in Hong Kong.

Intimate relationships are a self-grounding resource in migrant journeys where they work in tandem with other kinds of resources. Tian (Beijing) entangles the film-making opportunities London offers with her relationship with her Irish boyfriend who is settled in London. Val likewise attaches her relationship — also a resource — to the benefits of London work experience.

*'He is from Malaysian, but he's Malaysian Chinese. So I guess I should have gone... I did think of going back but because sometimes when you're in a relationship, you just think that, oh, we want to stay together. I think that's actually one of the main reasons that I tried to stay and look for a job. But then there are also other reasons. I was thinking it would be good to have some working experience here because a lot of people in Hong Kong came to the UK or the US or other parts of the world to study, but not many of them actually have the work experience like compared to the number of students or the number of people who actually have work experience. I think the latter is a minority. So I think if I can work here for a few years and then go back, I will probably have an advantage over the others in terms of work. Yes, so there are many reasons why I want to stay (Val, Hong Kong).'*

Other women disentangle relationships from other resources and prioritise differently. Pluto (Beijing) has a 'flexible' approach to intimate relationships, by which she means they don't organise her life: she stayed in London to pursue her own pathway when her boyfriend returned to China.

A Chinese childhood, developed through migration, appears as a key personal resource in young migrants conversations. Growing up in China equips the success-driven young migrant in resilience. Pluto's parents, replicating their own forced relocation in the Cultural Revolution, sent her to live in the country. She thinks this has built character, industry and resilience that have served her well.

*'It's not the level is a bit lower, it's just that people have different standards. So for me the getting up ... I was used to sort of like getting up at seven o'clock. As a 10 year old getting up at seven o'clock, you have a full day class, finishing, you know, around six or seven pm, come home have a nap and get up, you know, around midnight to do another few hours of studies. And also, you know, living in the rural school as well, that has given me a level of discipline I can apply in the work, in my other studies that I do.'*

With other Beijingers she notes the absence of these qualities in local Londoners whom she thinks need to up their game in order to compete more effectively in the global system.

*'I think ... young people in the UK, I somehow feel they need to gear up a little bit; otherwise they're going to be out competed by the immigrants. Not just Chinese immigrants, but from other parts of the world as well. There is an element of, you know, in UK ... I sometimes feel things have been too good for too long, and growing up in that environment almost narrows one's perspective. You know, each thing that we do and experience, we sort of create our spectrum for sympathy, for understanding, for compassion, for knowledge, for experience, and the more one could experience, the further you could stretch out that experience, the better of a understanding you could develop for yourself. It positions you well when you are presented with new challenges in one's life I think.'*

Migration extends the resilient Chinese self.



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## Navigating Insecurity

We noted earlier that rapid social changes in China bring their own insecurities to Chinese lives in London, deflecting neighbourhood conviviality. Securitisation is a major migration resource for these young migrants. Securing accumulated assets (Beijing) and hedging political futures (Hong Kong) constitute the meaning of migration (in concert with other resources) in these young migrants' lives; and points once more to the significance of sending cities.

Young Beijing migrants in London relocate and secure family resources. Private property – financial, business and real estate – has no real protection in China and need to be secured elsewhere. In Xi Jinping's recent clampdown on corruption accumulated assets often constitute evidence of corruption.

*'The new leader is clamping down on corruption, so lots of people tell me this is not a good moment to be wealthy in China' (Tian).*

*'In China, you see, that money is not clean. It's not clean money. So it's not safe if you leave it in China. If one day you lose power, then the government is starting to take it back. So if they invest the money in a strong market, in a safe place, they're safe' (Jan).*

Alan's family have four properties in Central Beijing, where they have lived for the last three generations. Like all property in the PRC, the state holds the title to the land and the property owner has a 70-year lease. Alan says it's not clear what will happen after 70 years and so his family have sold one of their apartments to fund his tier 1 investor visa. His fledgling business involves advising other Chinese migrants on how to navigate tier 1 routes to London. Along side his advice business he looks for lucrative investment opportunities as a way of placing further family resources beyond the grasp of the Chinese state. Candy's family are recycling profits made in their chemical factory through her London teashop start-up; and their money underwrites her investor visa. Lilli, who describes the dangers of being rich in China through the story of Bo Xi Lai, the high ranking party official who is in prison for corruption, is in London between visas (Post study and tier1) looking for places to park her uncle's money. He funds her stay and she provides trusted (family) input on investment opportunities in return. She describes the more lucrative, if less secure methods of accumulation available in Beijing as extensive and complex. In London, she thinks 'life is more naïve'.

London housing markets are another way of placing Chinese assets beyond reach.

*'Chinese rich, when they buy property overseas, they're different from the European or Western rich. Western rich, for example, if they buy a holiday home in Italy or France, it's for a good time; skiing time or summer beach time. They go there for holidays. Meanwhile, they possibly are not as keen as the Chinese rich about their rights, their property value. But the Chinese rich, they always pay attention. They say, how much more money am I going to get from my investment? So if you look at those Chinese investors, they're more interested in London, because they believe the London property market is strongest. That's why more and more Russians and Chinese are buying here. I have a friend who has a decoration team. Two years ago he was decorating a house, bought that year in cash. £5 million just paid in cash. ...in South Kensington. It's a terraced house.... Chinese, from Sichuan province, bought that house, in cash. And they were taking out everything, taking out all the wallpaper, and they're doing everything new' (Jan).*

This is of course a familiar London story repeated in the actions of migrants and non-domiciled investors from all over the world, especially from those places where resources must be secured against various forms of seizure. The issues posed by Chinese investment in London property are problems of scale. If only a small proportion of 1.3 billion people move tiny amounts of assets to London it will have a big impact on property markets in London — already stretched beyond incomes — and beyond.

The young migrants in our study began their migration trajectories as students and there is evidence to suggest that students too are conduits of capital transfer. Education is a socially approved avenue of family expenditure and students need places to live and cars to drive while they are studying in the UK. Our investigations at the London Business School Chinese network events showed that they were the targets of luxury brand advertising of jewellery, cars and handbags. A Chatham House Survey<sup>48</sup> showed that Chinese students in Britain pay £479 million in living expenses and £300 million in tuition fees. The relationship between Chinese students and residential property markets in London is clearly an area for further investigation.

London is not regarded a place to make money. Better returns and greater opportunities are considered by the young migrants to be available in Beijing and Hong Kong. But London is a good place to secure money. Pluto who works in banking and investment dealing with Chinese money transfers says:

*'I can see enormous investment opportunities in London for Chinese money... more and more Chinese capital will need to be invested in London (because) ... the domestic investment options are somewhat limited... the housing market (safe) is very attractive here at the moment'.*

There are a number of channels for moving money from Mainland China. There is a quota of \$50,000 US per head per year and families wishing to make a modest investment in a property might pool the allowances of friends and family. Bigger sums, by definition attached to big investors (under £10 million), until recently could go through a special channel at the Bank of China to a foreign account. Technically against the rules but frequently used, this has now been closed as a competitor bank complained to the government in a way it could not ignore given its clamp down on corruption. Large listed Chinese corporations can move money overseas for investment purposes. Complex authorisation systems surrounding this method have been simplified, but disclosure rules make it unattractive to cash rich small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Black market routes have been working for many years. They are run by companies and well connected individuals who take in RMB and pay £s into designated foreign accounts. These routes are risky and involve trust: there is no recourse to the authorities if they fail. Moving money from China is a complex and risky business which needs further investigation in order to understand better the financial textures of Chinese London.

The need to secure accumulated assets of various kinds meshes perfectly with developments in London. The new architectures of UK border control favour wealthy, elite and investor migrants. London property markets actively seek overseas investors. Estate agents are dispatched from London to property fairs throughout Asia to sign up buy to let investors. As UK middle class wages stagnate and private schools become unaffordable, Chinese students take up the empty places. And as successive UK governments withdraw funding to universities, gaps in university finances are plugged by Chinese students. London and Beijing are symbiotically connected.

Young Hong Kongers secure political, rather than economic futures in London. The idea of a Hong Kong swamped by people and political cultures from the Mainland features prominently in young Hong Kong migrants' calculation of the resources migration provides and thus it's meaning in their lives. They all thought that the city to which they might return would be radically different from the one they had left: 'it's still home... but the quality of home is falling away...' (Jon). Each had their list of grievous changes impacting the quality of daily life in the SAR fed by their own return visits and updates from friends and family. 'The government wants to dilute the population of Hong Kong which has a really strong free will mind... We were quite British minded...' (George). Diluting the population, in George's estimation, erodes the strength of political protest against the editing of history in school textbooks, against growing social inequalities, and against Beijing's selection of candidates for the post of Chief Executive in the forthcoming elections. Higher house prices result from the pressure Mainland migrants put on space and the city's housing capacity: Hong Kong is seen to be getting more crowded. Also diluted is Hong Kong's cultural distinctiveness as a particular kind of Chinese city, popularly regarded as more sophisticated than Mainland cities.

48. Cited in Xiang, Biao and Wei, Shen (2009) 'International Student Migration and Social Stratification in China', *International Journal of Education Development* 29 pp513-522 (p516)

Dilution arises from Hong Kong's absorption of what are popularly regarded as less cultured lives that display uncivil behaviour (Jim). Numerous popular press and TV reports catalogue the uncivil behaviour of Mainlanders in Hong Kong as shoppers, tourists and as new residents. George thinks Mainlanders are narrow in their outlook; in their pursuit of a restricted life centred on careers and money. James puts it more strongly and places his views in an historical context in tracing his own anti-communist ancestors who left China in the late forties to escape the revolution. He describes the government in Beijing as a 'dictatorship'; ... a colonial oppressor but they have a Chinese face. ... I can never accept a government appointed by Beijing anyway...'

Inevitably this impacts on James' willingness to return. He says, friends have returned and regretted it. 'I wouldn't bring my kids up there' he says emphatically. His fiancée's family are long settled in London providing him with an alternate family-base from which to articulate his objections. Others, equally critical, will return. This is a group of migrants with UK passports allowing them a hedge against Hong Kong's political future. They have the option of staying in London and waiting to see how things develop in both cities. Meanwhile like all young people, they will meet new people, fall in love and develop intimate relationships which then reconfigure their strategies for dealing with these constantly unfolding political landscapes. They share this and a sense of an unsettled future with young Beijingers. They also share the resource migration brings to future plans.



"A Chat in Chinatown" by Garry Knight licensed under CC BY 2.0

## Conclusions: Bridging Futures

These young migrants reveal the meaning of migration in the ways in which they live it. Migration presents them with resources through which they can operate and which make sense of what London offers them. These resources intersect and their prioritisation shifts because they are context driven. Work-derived resources offer comparative competitive advantage, insider knowledge of both cities and the opportunity to rebalance life-work priorities by taking advantage of differences in work practices and cultures. Personal development resources secure an unfolding self through engagement with the unfamiliar, and the prospect of living a bigger life beyond the anticipations of the sending city. They open young migrants to new possibilities (and constraints) in intimate relationships; and they reconstitute the strengths of a Chinese childhood in new circumstances. Further resources offered by migration facilitate the navigation of political uncertainties in Beijing and Hong Kong. Migration secures accumulated assets and hedges against the future. This is what migration means to this group of young migrants from these cities. Other migrants would bring other meanings to the practice of migration.

These young migrants share an unwillingness to plan futures — noted earlier as a key plank in their migration strategy — preferring instead to see what happens, letting matters unfold along with other things in their lives such as job opportunities and intimate and family relationships. Futures are problematic for them. Pressed on long term plans in our larger online survey, half of the Hong Kong group revealed that it is undecided about whether to remain in the UK or return to Hong Kong: only a quarter plan to return. A third of the Beijing group is in this undecided position with the majority favouring returning to Beijing.

The young migrants in this study are one of the fabrics of transnational connection between London and Beijing: we can think of them as Bridgers. Despite their reluctance in future planning, most had some idea that they would continue to operate between cities in positions that make use of their knowledge of both. In seeing migration as a resource in dealing with uncertainty most of them are already doing this whether they are aware of it or not. Whilst between the Beijing assets-shifters bridges between cities are in active construction, the Hong Kong group is gathering resources and deferring it's bridging for later. They are either filling-in so that they can live in London and pursue various forms of personal over professional development; or they are accumulating job credentials in financial services or executive recruitment, which they anticipate cashing in when or if they return to Hong Kong. Beijingers on the other hand are already moving money from Beijing to London, and they are already brokering access to Chinese markets for UK companies. Future plans involve consolidation of these bridges and plans to live part of the year in Beijing and part in London. Both groups hold in and through their lives the future of connections between London and Hong Kong and Beijing. But these bridges are not always comfortable positions to live in. Giving them the last word, George and Dan explain some of their dilemmas.

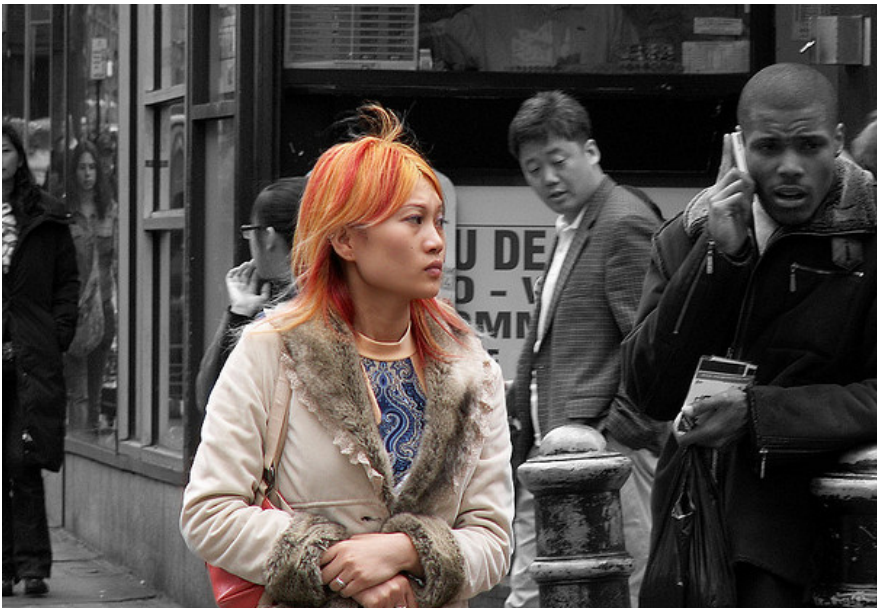
*'I said I wanted to give myself three years of time. Now it's been nearly seven years since I graduated and part of it is because I couldn't make a decision whether to go back or not. And part of it is, I really enjoy working here. The only thing to hold me back from saying I'm staying here for good is first of all, my family, because my mum wants me to go back. (George, Hong Kong).'*

*'So far, I think I will stay in London. As I said, I like the countryside, so maybe when I get old enough and rich enough to buy a house... But my parents want me to go back home, go back to Beijing. On the one hand, for someone to look after them, because I'm the only child, and there is an old Chinese saying which means when the leaves fall off the tree they go back to the root. So everyone has to go back to their roots, so my roots are in Beijing, they think' (Dan, Beijing).'*



## Appendix: Note on Methodology

This report comes from a three-city investigation of young migrants funded by the UK ESRC and the equivalent Hong Kong Research Council. The cities are London, Hong Kong and Beijing: in each city migrants from the other two cities were the focus of the investigation. This report concerns young migrants from Hong Kong and Beijing living in London. London participants were contacted through university Confucius Centres, universities and business schools with China associations as well as various networks, Great Britain China Association and China Dialogue for example, connecting young Chinese professionals for help with circulating an online questionnaire. This was intended to gain a bigger survey sample — 100 from Mainland China and 100 from Hong Kong — and to provide a subgroup for detailed interviews. Largely unsuccessful, this strategy produced only 12 participants from Hong Kong and 27 from Mainland China. Detailed interviews, sometimes walks and photo-elicitation sessions were conducted with 10 young people from Hong Kong — 4 women and 6 men and with 13 young people from Beijing – 9 women and 4 men.



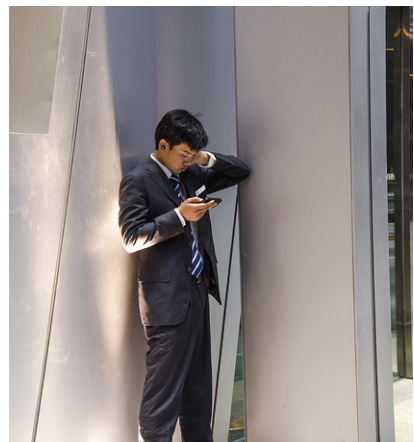
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