

**CHINESE MIGRANTS IN AFRICA AS NEW AGENTS OF
DEVELOPMENT? AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

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Migration from China to Africa has intensified of late on the back of initiatives by the Chinese government. Despite being a significant issue there has been no systematic attempt to assess the economic, social and political impacts of it. This paper begins by setting out broad analytical dimensions covering the motivations to migrate and wider processes of development. The paper then assesses available data on migration trends, which are marked by speculation. Two further sections cover the policies of China towards internationalisation and Africa and the economic and socio-political dimensions respectively. Economically, many large-scale Chinese firms operate in key resource sectors, but for most Africans the Chinese presence is marked by traders in the markets. Socially, the Chinese have been welcomed in Africa although integration has been limited. However, tensions have arisen in some countries and been exploited by African politicians.

Keywords: China, Africa, migration, development,

1. Introduction: Chinese Migration, African development?

“How are the supposed harbingers of development – Chinese migrants – affected by their encounters with the foreign recipients of such development?” (Nyiri, 2006: 86)

From the turn of the millennium China has stepped up diplomatic and commercial links with Africa, culminating in the Forum on China-Africa Co-operation (FOCAC) meeting in Beijing in 2006. This growing connectedness has seen a wave of economic migration to Africa by state-influenced construction teams and mining and oil workers, as well as private traders (Broadman, 2007) who are arguably among the new shapers of development in Africa. And indications are that the Chinese are set to increase investment across the continent (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), 2006) leading to further migration.

However, the extent of this recent migration of Chinese to the continent is based on wild speculation and has unleashed a vociferous political debate in some countries. The first of these issues is important, because although Africa is still the least settled continent in terms of Chinese migrants the generally small size of local economies means that relatively few new entrants to a market can have disproportionate effects. So, our first task dealt with in Section 2 is to *look in more detail at the data that exists and by questioning some of its assumptions raise issues for a more robust analytical framework*. The second issue of the politicization of Chinese migration has seen, for example, the leaders of Nigeria and South Africa warning against a creeping neo-imperialism (McGreal, 2007; Trofimov, 2007).

However, we do not know if this reflects the actual tensions between the Africans and Chinese. So, it is imperative that we *determine the factors shaping the integration of Chinese migrants, and in turn how this contributes to or undermines the development prospects for Africa*. In the absence of rigorous primary research on this issue the paper sets out an analytical framework for assessing these factors, which draws together economic, political, and social dynamics.

The wider context for this paper is the linkage between ‘South-South’ co-operation and development. In understanding the implications of migration on African development we follow Hart’s (2001) distinction between ‘big D’ Development defined as a project of intervention in the ‘third world’ that emerged in the context of decolonization and the Cold War, and ‘little d’ development or the development of capitalism as a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of historical processes. Drawing upon the work of Karl Polanyi, Hart (2001) shows how the two D/d-developments are inter-connected and mutually constituting. We see Chinese flows of aid, trade, investment and people as tying together D/d-development, with low interest government loans supporting commercial ventures and other forms of ‘soft power’ encouraging good economic relations between China and specific African states (Taylor, 2007). That said we do not support the idea of a centralized ‘Beijing consensus’ where all actions of Chinese firms and individuals overseas are orchestrated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Rather the proliferation of semi-private and private Chinese firms in Africa points to the need to differentiate between different economic actors and their developmental potentials.

Politically, the state has provided development studies with its key agent of development, while the rationality that underpinned the modern project of development justified the top-down character of its associated interventions. In terms of China-Africa development relations we see a strong bilateralism, based on high level diplomacy stretching back over fifty years whereby Chinese state policy has been a key determinant in the nature and scale of migration to Africa (Snow, 1988). We address this in Section 3. However, since the reforms in China state policy towards emigration has relaxed so that many of the migrants in Africa are there independently of any state direction (Ho, 2008). As a result of this cleavage between official channels and more informal ones, Alden (2007: 128) is right to note that “The behaviour of thousands of newly settled Chinese businessmen and the conduct of the African communities in which they live and work will matter as much as the diplomacy and concessions made at the government level”. So, our framework for understanding migration and development must also be attentive to the interactions at the ‘everyday’ level; something we develop in Section 4. Finally in the conclusion we suggest further research and policy implications for the understanding and management of such flows and outcomes.

2. Dubious Data

As we have mentioned one of the key problems is that data are speculative. Here we present the available data as shown in Figure 1 and discuss its assumptions and accuracy. First, data shows sizeable and long-standing migrant communities in South Africa and Mauritius as well as Reunion and Madagascar, which date back to the colonial period as well as an expansion of Hong Kong and Taiwanese migrants in the 1980s (Li, 2005).

Second, the data also shows rapid increases over the past 7 years, which coincides with growth of Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and trade with various African countries. For 2001 the Ohio University database estimated the total number of Chinese in Africa at 137,000, the same figure Taiwan's government provided for that year. Mung (2008) estimates the current number of Chinese to be between 270,000 and 510,000 whereas the Xinhua press agency recently estimated that there may be as many as 750,000 Chinese working or living for extended periods in Africa (French and Polgreen, 2007), although it is not clear how this figure was arrived at. Below the continental level the most notable growth is found in those countries with significant oil resources, notably Nigeria and Sudan. Angolan data is patchy, but Campos and Vines (2008) report official data that in 2006 there were 15,000 Chinese with visas in Angola rising to 22,000 by 2007, which is supported by another major study of Angola (Centre for Chinese Studies (CCS), 2007).

Third, the final column shows sizeable ranges of between 100% and 400%, indicating the poorness of data. How can we account for such discrepancies? Ma (2002: 12) notes that “few nations have kept reliable statistics on them and the term ‘Chinese overseas’ is extremely difficult to define” (see also Poston *et al*, 1994: 633). From the receiving country perspective the problems with data highlights the weakness of African population data collection (Gould, 1995). Even South Africa with one of the better data collection systems has estimates varying between 100,000 and 400,000. Moreover the more speculative estimates may over-inflate numbers so as to make the Chinese ‘threat’ appear greater than it is. Besides the weaknesses in official data collection is the whole question of undocumented migrants that purposefully evade state surveillance (Mung, 2008), which would lead to an under-estimation of overall numbers.

There is also a wider set of issues pertaining to how migrants view themselves, how they are viewed by sending and receiving states, and how differences within groups are manifest. The term ‘Overseas Chinese’ has been used loosely by many scholars. There are numerous Chinese terms equivalent to the English use of ‘Overseas Chinese’, ranging from *Huaqiao* (华侨) or *Huayi* (华裔) as Chinese citizens or ethnic Chinese residing overseas, and *Haiwai Huaren* (海外华人), a more literal translation of Overseas Chinese and more commonly used by PRC¹. Moreover ‘the Chinese’ are very different culturally and linguistically. Often speaking different languages, let alone identifying as a coherent group, Chinese in Africa have flexible identities and generate greater or lesser senses of community among themselves depending on a range of factors (Wilhelm, 2006; Hsu, 2007; Ho, 2008). Clans and associations organised along the lines of dialect groups further exacerbated the problem. In Madagascar, for example, since the 19th century, the Cantonese adopted political tactics to ward off any Hakka living in the same administrative area, such as dominating the position of congregation heads (Live, 2005). Further complicating this in some countries is where recent migrants enter an arena of 3rd or 4th generation families that have strived for decades to make a living. For the long established Chinese communities in the somewhat exceptional case of South Africa there are interesting dynamics around maintaining a Chinese identity in the face of hostility and the state’s attempts to racially categorise people (Park, 2008). Here Chinese communities have sought to carve out a political space and make policy demands

¹ Harvard reference library: <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/features/reference/panenc/huaqiao.html> accessed 30 August 2008.

Perhaps more accurate estimates could come from the Chinese communities in each African country, especially the growing number of formal organisations such as business associations and chambers of commerce. This is certainly something that needs exploring on a case-by-case basis that is beyond the scope of this paper. However, preliminary data from Ghana shows quite wide estimates with some business leaders claiming around 20,000 and the Chinese Embassy and other businessmen citing 6000, which tallies with Sautman's figures in Figure 1.

This paucity of data highlights three further issues that need to be considered in any study of the Chinese in Africa. First, history matters in terms of understanding the periodisation of migration and its relationships to geopolitical forces. While migration in general has largely been shaped by the demands of the capitalist world economy, such structural analyses can conceal important ways in which capitalism worked through the exploitation of difference, particularly race and gender (Silvey, 2004). So while Mung (2008) is right to see parallels between late 19th Century Chinese contract labour migration to Africa organized by the colonial empires and contemporary labour recruitment, there are clearly important differences in terms of the decentralized coordination of recent migration, the nature of the Chinese and African states then and now, and the ideologies of development that underpin such movements (Nyiri, 2006). In turn this shapes the second issue in that we must be much sharper around the social and geographical characteristics of migrants, especially differences *within* overseas Chinese (Xiang, 2005). Third, and related to the previous issue, is the question of context. Since diasporas are bound by ethnic sameness, however fictitious, but dwell in multiple places, it is difficult to speak of a singular

diasporic identity. So, a further issue for investigation is how space and place affect the nature of the Chinese migrant community and their developmental activities/potential.

In the rest of the paper we take these challenges highlighted by the poor data and seek to elaborate at a meso-theoretical level how we might understand what Mung (2008: 105-106) terms the 'triangular' perspective in which "the Chinese diaspora does not only relate to China, but also interacts with the society where it has settled". In order to examine the geopolitical and economic contexts the next section examines China's development and its changing stance on FDI and emigration. Then we examine the nature of the Chinese diaspora and how its institutions function to link it to its place of settlement and other localities.

3. Chinese policy and the Overseas Chinese in Africa

If we are to understand the developmental implications of recent Chinese migration to Africa we need to understand the motivations for migration and differentiate between the types of migrants. The flow of Chinese migrants to various continents was for a long time determined by China's emigration policies and changing geopolitical relations. Recently, and especially in the case of Africa, migration has moved to being largely independent of state action, despite an overarching discourse from the Chinese state which treats migrants in a positive light compared to earlier periods. This section focuses on Chinese emigration policies and their impacts on the scale and types of migration flows to Africa.

As far back as the 18th Century the Chinese state had policies opposing migrants leaving China (Shen, 2006). It was after the Opium Wars of the 1840s and '50s that China was

forced by the colonial powers to reduce restrictions on Chinese emigration, which saw the beginning of large-scale movements of Chinese overseas in the form of the ‘coolie trade’ (Chang, 1968; Park, 2006). Most of these labour contracts were highly regulated and workers were sent back after their contracts expired, much like many of today’s labour contractors. However, this ‘coolie trade’ is over-represented as the paradigm of Chinese migration. There were also small, but enterprising groups of independent traders that serviced Chinese labour migrants and undertook small-scale export (Pan, 2005).

In 1949, when the PRC was formed, there was a reversal of policy and emigration was officially ended while the Kuomintang withdrew to Taiwan to form the Republic of China. Taiwan is important for the Africa migration story for three reasons. First, it is one of the most significant parts of the Chinese diaspora, around 22 million, and many Taiwanese firms operate in Africa (Pickles and Woods, 1999). Second, political tensions between supporters of the PRC and Republic of China (ROC) still exist among diaspora communities. Third, the People’s Republic of China has pursued its ‘One China’ Policy since the formation of Taiwan and gives favourable aid terms to African countries which support its claims to Taiwan.

During the cold war geopolitical strategy was played out in Africa with China challenging the major superpowers through its conspicuous targeting of aid (Brautigam, 1998). Between the 1960s and the beginning of the 1980s (with the exception of the Cultural Revolution), at least 150,000 Chinese technical assistants were dispatched to Africa (ECOWAS-SWAC/OECD, 2006). Although the numbers of aid workers was not huge and many stayed only temporarily, a significant number stayed on (Hsu, 2007) to engage in

commercial activities. At the same time, the perception of Overseas Chinese shifted from being seen as traitors to the new vanguards of Third World nationalism (Thuno, 2001) and migrants were now freer to engage in tangible activities linking them to home in the form of remittances and charity (Young and Shih, 2003).

Alongside these geopolitical concerns for the PRC were an increased number of migrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 1970s, mainly to South Africa. In general these migrants were either middle income professionals or entrepreneurs. A 'political outcast solidarity' saw South Africa and Taiwan maintaining economic and political relations (Pickles and Woods, 1999) when other states severed them. During the 1980s in South Africa some 300 to 400 Taiwanese industrialists set up in peripheral regions. At the peak there were between 30000 and 40000 Taiwanese living in South Africa (Wilhelm, 2006). In 2000 the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) also had a big impact in East and Southern Africa (Kaplinsky and Morris, 2006) and was used by Taiwanese firms to re-import into USA.

The most recent phase of migration has come in the aftermath of China's economic reforms beginning in the late 1970s which has seen a further weakening of the state's role in emigration. The economic reforms include the total or partial privatisation of SOEs and a concerted internationalisation strategy has seen overseas investment increase (UN, 2007). On top of this there has been a 'neutralisation' of emigration legislation (Biao, 2003) seeking to disentangle outward movement from geopolitical and ideological concerns. It is now much easier for Chinese business people and tourists, to travel outside China. Finally, there has been a significant deregulation of labour recruitment and a growth in private

labour contractors in populous provinces such as Sichuan, Hubei and Henan (Wong, 2006). It is estimated that 82,000 workers were dispatched to Africa in 2005, two-thirds of whom were in construction. Against this, the booming economy created massive demands for raw materials and a glut of cheap Chinese manufactures requiring markets. This has seen a wave of economic migration to Africa by major state-influenced construction teams and mining and oil workers, as well as private traders (Broadman, 2007).

4. Social, economic and political organisation of the Chinese diaspora in Africa

In order to understand the developmental potential of Chinese migrants we need to understand their motivations and relations to African populations in a way that treats neither as homogenous nor predetermined. We start this section with Kaplinsky's (2008) framework for analyzing the different channels of transmission for China's impact on Africa and the differential effects on groups within countries, which helps explain the relations between Chinese and Africans and the reactions of the latter. Six key channels stand out: trade links, investment flows, aid, institutions of global governance, flows of people, and environmental spillovers

In each of these channels of interaction, there is a mix of complementary and competitive impacts. For example, with regard to trade, China may both provide cheap inputs and consumer goods to Sub Saharan Africa (SSA), and be a market for SSA's exports. On the other hand, imports from China can readily displace local producers. Less well recognised than the complementary-competitive axis is the distinction between direct and indirect impacts. Indirect impacts occur in third country markets and institutions. For example, China's trade with the US may open or foreclose the opportunities for SSA economies to

export into that market. As in the case of the complementary/competitive access, the impact of the direct and indirect impacts can be gauged either at the country level, or at intra-national levels. The key element of these interactions is the “for whom” component. Countries may be affected differentially but these effects are not just felt at the national and economy-wide level. To explain more deeply the transmission mechanisms we turn to the sectors and organisation of Chinese businesses.

The embeddedness of Chinese business organisation

In order to understand the integration of Chinese migrants and the reactions to them it is necessary to appreciate the economic sectors they engage in and the nature of business organization since this generates different actual and perceived impacts on any given African economy. Economic integration of migrants has been examined through the idea of ‘embeddedness’. It is argued that economic practices are *embedded* in social practices. Embeddedness has been used to analyse ethnic businesses which often secure labour, contracts and inputs from members of the same ethnic or racial group. For newly arrived immigrants, "participation in a pre-existing ethnic economy can have positive economic consequences, including a greater opportunity for self-employment" (Portes and Jensen, 1987: 768). Eventually, such ethnic communities can function as a “market for culturally defined goods, a pool of reliable low-wage labour, and a potential source of start-up capital" (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993: 1329). As a normative model it is appealing, but we know relatively little about the actual organisation of Chinese businesses in Africa, although a few studies have been conducted (Haugen and Carling, 2006; Ho, 2008; Dobler, 2008)

As we have seen in the late 1990s and early 2000s, driven by the increasing Chinese state engagement with African states, there was a recurrence of temporary labour migrants employed by the 800 or so Chinese multinational companies who are usually working on designated projects with fixed periods overseas. As Gong (2007) notes, given their involvement in extractive industries and with the backing of the Chinese state it is these groups that have become the targets for more violent and criminalised animosity among Africans, such as kidnappings of oil workers in southern Nigeria². The rush to oil production drives much of this, although the western media's obsession with oil masks the significant attention being paid by the Chinese government to non-oil sectors (Bosshard, 2007).

Another major growth sector for Chinese State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and private firms is in engineering and construction, which are generally labour-intensive activities. A World Bank study (Foster *et al*, 2008) calculated that Chinese finance for infrastructure has risen steadily since the turn of the millennium, rising from around \$1billion/year to a height of \$7billion/year in 2006, China's so-called 'Year of Africa'. The Chinese now have major infrastructure projects in 35 African countries, most funded by the ExIm (Export Import) Bank at 'marginally concessional' rates, and in many cases funded through natural resource deals. However, Dobler (2008) notes in Namibia that smaller, private construction firms are competing with Namibian firms for contracts. And in Tanzania Baregu (2008) notes that out of 147 Chinese companies in the country only 22 had portfolios of more than \$1 million, marking the majority out as private Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

² http://www.china.org.cn/international/news/2008-05/09/content_15129136.htm, accessed 17 September 2008.

Like mining companies these firms sometimes bring low cost labour from China although the perception that they only employ Chinese labour is misleading. For example, in the ExIm funded Bui Dam in Ghana the agreement with Sinohydro ensures that jobs go to Ghanaians with about 700 Chinese expatriates working on the project compared with 3000 Ghanaians. In the recent China-DRC deal only one in five workers will supposedly be Chinese, but no independent monitoring has confirmed this (Curtis, 2008). However, in Angola (Corkin, 2008a) notes how even Angolan firms are keen to import Chinese labour for reasons of cost and the lack of the requisite skills locally, something Naidu (2008) also observes in South Africa. There is a semi-legal version of this, involving smaller Chinese firms, whereby labour is recruited through semi-legitimate agencies (Wong, 2006). These workers are often low-paid and work in manufacturing in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) of places like Mauritius and where they are in direct competition with relatively unskilled African labour. Because of this competition and the poor conditions of workers *per se* there have been labour disputes in South Africa and Mauritius.

In addition to these state-backed migrants are petty entrepreneurs who largely operate in trade, services and light manufacturing establishing themselves in places such as Morocco, Ghana (Colombant 2006), Angola (Corkin, 2008a), Cameroon, Namibia, and Cape Verde (Haugen and Carling, 2005; Mung, 2008). Ho (2008) rightly argues that these entrepreneurs operate independently of Chinese state agendas even though the misguided western notion of 'China Inc.' suggests the contrary. These traders have been at the heart of the marketing of Chinese manufactures in Africa, which are welcomed due to their low cost, but which have excited tensions among trade unions and business associations due to displacing local

manufacturers and traders and the poor quality of some of the goods (Sylvanus, 2007). As a result of this recent arrival, very few firms are well integrated with the domestic economy compared to Indian firms. In a World Bank survey (Broadman, 2007) about half of the firms that were owned by people of Indian ethnicity were African by nationality, whereas 93% of Chinese owned firms were run by Chinese nationals (ibid: 22).

From the start Chinese traders have been involved in cheap consumer goods, what are called in Kenya 'down street' merchandise rather than 'up market' products (Sautman and Hairong, 2007) producing in Nigeria what Ogunsanwo reports as 'illegal Chinatowns' (2008: 202). The traders tend to live quite frugal lifestyles (Dobler, 2005) and often utilize family labour, but may also be the ones that employ the semi-legal workers mentioned above. In Haugen and Carling's (2005) study of Cape Verde the typical pattern involved an initial family member, usually male, emigrating and then close family and extended family joining as required. Dobler (2008: 248) notes, however, that this pattern is breaking down in Namibia where new migrants enter through a 'more commercialized form of chain migration' involving intermediaries who are paid for their services.

These traders seem to use limited African labour, except for menial tasks such as cleaning and security. A lack of trust is often cited as the reason for employing Chinese labour over Africans, although Haugen and Carling (2005) found that one firm had helped a former African employee set up their own business in which they retained a part share and Campos and Vines' study (2008) of Angola mentions Angolans managing a Chinese restaurant due to easing staff communications and understanding customer needs. In Ghana we were told by different businessmen that one problem with Ghanaian productivity was 'culture'

insofar as Ghanaians, it was argued, were forever disappearing for funerals or clan or family events and so could not be relied on. This was exacerbated by poor infrastructure such as regular power failures and a lack of public transport so that they could not operate shift systems as they would in China.

The Chinese traders buy from China, either from large wholesalers or directly from the factories. The ability of Chinese traders to utilise networks rapidly and communicate as a co-national helps explain their ability to keep costs low, although Li *et al* (2007) have shown that African traders have been operating from Guangzhou for as long as ten years and form part of quite sizeable trading communities in some Chinese cities drawing traders from 52 different African countries. However, the recent Chinese traders in places like South Africa are not necessarily well connected to the old Chinese communities. Part of this flexibility has seen various strategies of geographical movement, expansion or diversification (Haugen and Carling, 2005). In the Cape Verde case some traders moved to new territories within the same country when local markets got tight, whereas others have relocated to another country. However, we lack detailed evidence of patterns in other localities.

In addition an emerging group are the transitory migrants. Mung (2008) asserts that these migrants often use African states as 'soft' locations where they can break their journeys on an ultimate quest to enter North America or Western Europe. Here they gather funds and the documentation (legal or otherwise) for the next stage of their journey. As such they may take up petty trading which largely keeps them solvent as opposed to becoming embedded in African economies with a view to long-term economic success.

Arising out of diversification strategies and partly as a legacy of the cold war aid programmes Chinese migrants are also involved in a range of services. This is mainly in restaurants and medicine (Hsu, 2007). Catering has partly grown out of retailing, but also to service the growing Chinese populations in Africa's capital cities and resource frontiers. In terms of medical practitioners Hsu (2007) shows how in Tanzania/Zanzibar some Chinese doctors, who had worked for aid teams in the 1970s, stayed on to set up private practices using both Chinese and 'western' medical technologies.

The Chinese presence in manufacturing has mainly been in labour intensive sectors and the longer term impacts on African economies is not clear and depends on employment practices, wage levels and government policy. Contrary to the popular story that early migrants in the 1950s and '60s were aid workers who stayed on, Ho (2008) shows in Ghana that a number came at the country's independence lured by the promise of a stable and soon to flourish economy. In some cases the factory owners set up the factories and then brought in managers from Hong Kong while they moved on to start other ventures. This not only shows a more diverse history of manufacturing start ups but also that the treaty ports and British colonial connections were important in knowledge flows and determining the patterns of migration.

Although increasingly dispersed across Africa the key countries for Chinese manufacturers are South Africa and her neighbouring states (Pickles and Wood, 1989; Hart, 1996), and Mauritius (Brautigam, 2003). In terms of business organization Chinese manufacturers have been criticized for the lack of backward linkages they create. Procurement, in

particular, has been a bone of contention with manufacturers preferring to import materials and components from China, Hong Kong or Taiwan. Most ExIm Bank agreements stipulate that 50% of procurement materials must originate in China (Corkin, 2008a).

The social organisation of Chinese diasporic communities

As we have seen recent migration to Africa builds on older trajectories laid down during the colonial and cold war periods. Although there have been no systematic studies many of the large, state-influenced construction and extraction projects are organised around quite bounded projects with technical and less skilled Chinese personnel living in compounds and having relatively little contact with African communities (Corkin, 2008b). They are also on fixed term contracts and so generally return home, but we lack detailed studies of these kinds of projects.

For the smaller private entrepreneurs, who lack formal state backing, it is important to analyse what role existing diasporic communities play in enabling integration into African society and how they are organised to facilitate connection back to China. Migrants bring with them a series of overlapping social identities, with most 'switching' ethnic affiliation on and off depending upon the relative advantages to be gained by either strategy (Zetter *et al*, 2006). In general, recent Chinese migrants in Africa remain relatively self-contained. One important upshot of this for integration and business more generally is that language and communication has been and remains a problem. Very few recent migrants speak any local languages and have rudimentary English or Portuguese at best. Some innovative solutions to this are emerging such as in Angola where firms are recruiting from former Portuguese colony Macau.

Family ties and informal networks (Xiang, 2005) are the basis of transnational private Chinese business organisation. But alongside the family and clan are more formal organisations which serve to cement communities (Wheeler, 2004) although the informal and formal are intertwined through social capital embodied in trust relations between individuals (Crawford, 2000). These formal organisations often started as social clubs for the small groups of settlers. In South Africa in addition to gambling and other recreational activities, these clubs had libraries and subscribed to Chinese newspapers and bought in Chinese language books, indicating a reasonable level of education among migrants (Park, 2006). Even today there are three mandarin language newspapers printed in South Africa, handling Chinese news and community affairs (Wilhelm, 2006).

These organisations help maintain a diasporic community in a number of ways. First, they maintain Chinese ‘culture’ for migrants and their offspring. Many organise language classes and cultural displays (Wilhelm, 2006). Like other diasporas this culture is often a partly mythologised sense of what the homeland is about, but is important for reinforcing a sense of community. Second, these organisations can function as the formal links between a migrant community and its hometown (Young and Shih, 2003). For example, The China Youth Development Foundation’s ‘Project Hope’ is funded by the Chinese diaspora through such organizations as The North American Chinese Education Foundation (NACEF). As mentioned earlier these organizations can also provide FDI to localities back in China.

However, Ho (2008) shows in the case of Ghana that formal organisation is generally less important than informal sociality. He talks about the divisions within the ‘Chinese’ community in Ghana and how it is in a constant state of flux. He argues “their social bonds are loose and uneasy and that their idea of belonging to a place and group is fluid” (ibid.: 53). In his fascinating ethnography he shows how suspicion and distrust mark the business relationships between the Chinese, built upon a sense of transitioning and moving on, yet Chinese-ness may be evoked at certain times. Dobler (2008: 247) also argues that the “Chinese who are living in Oshikango are no homogenous, close-knit community” and have not cooperated among themselves. Yet he speaks of the ‘intensification’ of social life amongst the Chinese as more traders arrive and socialisation begins to increase, possibly leading to a more unified sense of diasporic community.

Chinese migrants have generally been quite mute in political life, as is common among migrants who are treated with suspicion by ‘hosts’. However, there have been times when they entered the public realm, either through organised politics or more violent rebellion. The four states (South Africa, Mauritius, Madagascar and Reunion) which experienced earlier Chinese waves of migration saw higher integration between the Chinese and the local communities, both socially or politically. In Mauritius almost 30,000 older generation Chinese migrants have taken up Mauritian citizenship, in Madagascar intermarriages are common and at least 60% of the Chinese are mixed ethnically (Zhang *et al.*, 2005). Given that these are well established communities they may serve as a template for the gradual involvement of other migrant Chinese communities in national politics. However, there may be parallels with other ‘ethnic’ merchants in Africa such as Reno’s (1995) study of the Lebanese in Sierra Leone where politics is informalised via a ‘shadow state’ tying ethnic

entrepreneurs into circuits of state power, though empirical work is needed to analyse how these political processes unfold.

African responses: state, society and multicultural

So far we have dealt with the changes in China's geopolitical and economic relations which have influenced migration to Africa, and examined how Chinese business is organised. However, the question remains as to what factors contribute to the differential acceptance towards migrants in different African countries. Why, for example, do some countries such as Ghana appear more open and accepting towards the Chinese, while some Zambians and Nigerians perceived them as a threat? Kaplinsky's (2008) framework usefully raises the 'for whom?' issue and how groups within countries are affected differentially, which in turn helps explain the varied responses we see to the Chinese. We would argue that an important element that conditions these responses is political culture. This not only means state policy, but the ways in which histories of state formation and grassroots politics shape the responses to outsiders. However, just as we argued that any idea of a singular Chinese diasporic identity is impossible it is equally unwise to hypothesise about an 'African' perspective. As Manji (2007) warns "there is no single 'African view' about China in Africa' (vii), for reasons of class, race and power.

Earlier sections suggested that reactions are conditioned by economic competition and a sense that the Chinese are benefiting at the expense of Africans. Here the rentier state in Africa is complicit in siphoning off revenue from Chinese investment, production and trade, thus repeating a model of extraversion laid down under European colonialism (Bayart, 1993). So, in understanding the relations between migrants and Africans we need

to appreciate different models and experiences of state formation in Africa, as both Alden (2007) and Taylor (2007) argue. Clearly debates on the African state are manifold (Davidson, 1992) and it is not our intention to review them here, but to raise issues for future research. The African state was formed in a peculiar crucible of colonial expropriation and anti-colonial nationalism, which fused multiple ethnicities into single 'nations' and used development as the ideology of unity (Davidson, 1992). Given the extraverted economy, control of the state became a primary source of empowerment and wealth creation. In some polities ethnic cabals came to dominate the state and diverted economic rents to their direct benefit (e.g. Nigeria). In others a more pluralistic and proto-democratic model emerged (e.g. Botswana). So we need to understand the extent to which the reception afforded to Chinese migrants is conditioned by legacies of politics and state formation, thereby allowing for multiple forms of belonging and so a greater openness to outsiders.

Such multiple political communities are formed relationally. Zetter *et al* (2006) argue that in contrast to Putnam's consensual view of social capital, for migrants what appears as inherent social capital may be a survival strategy in a hostile society. Where the reception is hospitable, migrants may be more active economically and in the organisations embedding them into local polities. Where the reception is hostile, migrants may be tempted to organise in clandestine ways, orienting their lives more exclusively to their homelands. However, apart from South Africa, we have no detailed data with which to verify either hypothesis.

In terms of the reception migrants to African countries experience there is the obvious and important juridical sense in which migrants are conferred varying degrees of rights within the recipient state. And the extent to which they can claim these rights directly affects their well-being and hence their ability to support families back in their countries of origin. Where state policy is hostile a migrant identity may be cemented. For example, for the Chinese in Apartheid South Africa racial categorisation meant they were encouraged to hold onto a sense of Chinese identity. This urges a deeper understanding of how state policy affects migrant's self-perception and mobilisation.

Some studies certainly show that the African state of residence is important for commercial success. Ho (2008) shows in Ghana how Chinese businesses manipulated local laws regarding capital equipment and foreign exchange for overseas investors in order to earn additional foreign exchange. However, talking to Chinese businessmen in Ghana today they argued that Ghana is much stricter than other West African states in applying its investment code which sets a high minimum limit for investments and its immigration laws which delimits labour importation. In Namibia Dobler (2008) demonstrates the importance of good relations with local officials, especially local government and customs officers, through which trading permits are secured. While this is not necessarily outright bribery it shades into illegality. That said, the Chinese see this as legitimate business practice and something one would probably have to do in many countries, China most certainly included. Sometimes this protection by the local state can be problematic as in Zimbabwe where during Mugabe's Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, which destroyed the livelihoods of so many Zimbabweans, generally spared the Chinese traders (Sachikonye 2008). In South Africa the Chinese have always held a contradictory position in a highly

racialised state, but recently the older Chinese migrants have been lobbying for benefits under the BEE legislation arguing that they were treated ‘as black’ under Apartheid (Naidu, 2008)

African civil society responses to China’s activities have been relatively mute, but they are key to the future direction of dividends from this resource boom, in terms of exerting control over rentier states (Obiorah, 2007). That said, a number of Africa trade unions and business associations have led the critique of China’s role in national economies. For example, the South African TUC has organised debates around the future of African clothing and textile industries (Amankwah, 2005; Sachikonye, 2008) and in Uganda the local business organisations have spearheaded a campaign over ‘unfair’ Chinese competition (Lee, 2007). And following the Chambishi mining debacle a damning report by the Civil Society Trade Network of Zambia (Fraser and Lungu, 2007) openly accused Chinese firms of malfeasance and urged the Zambian government and mining firms to develop and enforce better standards. Ndulo (2008) reports that in response to the protests around this issue the Zambian Government in partnership with the ILO has completed the Zambia Decent Work Programme, aimed at improving working conditions and social protection. In pursuit of this one Chinese firm was closed on grounds of health and safety.

Despite the relative suppression of African civil and political society the tensions that are evidently bubbling away (Naidu, 2008; Sachikonye, 2008, Dobler, 2008) have, in some localities, resulted in protest as in the case of Zambia (Ndulo, 2008). However, here a political party – the Patriotic Front – led by Mr Sata played the anti-China card to win votes in Lusaka and The Copperbelt. While he had some success, his overall campaign was

unsuccessful, but it may signal the shape of things to come as these tensions grow. In Ethiopia and Nigeria there have been attacks on Chinese oil facilities by militias, which are linked to other campaigns for redistribution and recognition but are targeted at an obvious symbol of private gain and resource extraction (Powell, 2007). These tensions depend upon perceived levels of exploitation, although worryingly they are couched in cultural rather than class terms (Dobler, 2008). The tensions also reflect the local sectors with, in general, trading proving more contentious as it displaces African traders, but sometimes in manufacturing local businesses lack the capital or knowledge to start up so the Chinese may be more welcome for bringing the investment, jobs and goods that local needs.

However, there are other unexplored ways in which migrant/host relationships unfold. It is at this level of what Gilroy (2004) terms ‘convivial culture’, the everyday minutiae of living together, that much integration occurs. Hsu (2007) provides an interesting example of this in the case of noodle production on Zanzibar. Originally produced for the local Chinese community in the 1950s they started to become popular with locals through the restaurants on the island. Over time they have become a staple of Ramadan feasting at the same time as diasporic Chinese have shunned them for not tasting good enough, being ‘unhygienic’ and inauthentic. However, a couple of Chinese firms produce for this growing African demand, employing a local workforce.

5. Conclusion

This recent migration of Chinese to the continent has profound economic, social, cultural and political impacts, and has unleashed an equally vociferous debate. Using existing data on Chinese migrants in Africa as an entry point, we demonstrated that the figures are

extremely speculative and lend themselves to inflation and purposeful misinterpretation. While it is important to deconstruct such 'naturalised' statistics, more importantly we need to focus on the social and geographical characteristics of migrants. In this we argued that the term 'Overseas Chinese' has been used too loosely in many contexts, not least in the recent wave of migration to Africa. This term is inherently contested both within China and beyond, and tends to subsume identity, class and behavioural differences under an overarching diasporic identity.

At the same time, Chinese migrant flows overseas are also conditioned by the Chinese government policies. We observed fluctuating flows at different periods, reflecting different economic and political conditions in China and with its engagements internationally. The Chinese government's broad change of attitude towards the overseas Chinese, from traitors in the 1940-50s to investors and agents of modernization in the 1990s, saw a spike of overseas migration. Earlier migrants to Africa, mainly during the cold war period, contributed in diverse ways to African development, as they did not only enlarge the local economy, but were also more integrated and accepted into the local communities. However, recent migrants are arguably more footloose in comparison, especially in new host countries without pre-existing social structures to encourage assimilation. These later migrants, ranging from entrepreneurial to transit to illegal migrants, became 'guests' that stay, but are also more willing to move to greener pastures when the chance arises. It is this footlooseness which may determine the developmental impacts of this recent wave of migrants.

More importantly, African responses to Chinese migration have been varied. In most states the Chinese are welcomed, but in some localities and at certain times they are treated with resentment and occasionally subject to violence. It is important to understand the mechanisms for such differential reactions, but we argued that by analysing various channels of interaction, we are better able to investigate the outcomes systematically. Many African governments have taken a *laissez faire* response to China's aid and investment welcoming the infrastructure, mineral rents, and leverage it provides vis-à-vis other donors (Mohan and Power, 2008). As Dobler (2008: 254) notes "What is conspicuously absent in Namibia is a real debate on the costs and benefits of the Chinese presence and the possibilities for its regulation". As corporate relations with the Chinese mature, African governments are becoming more proactive in managing their relations with the Chinese in terms of policies around such things as local content, most notably the agreement between the Chinese and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Vandaele, 2008). Moreover if recent hostility to the Chinese persists, questions will be raised about the willingness of the Chinese to further integrate economically and socially into African countries, which could reduce the benefits of this new interest in African economic growth. Hence it is vital that we understand whether and how integration of Chinese migrants is taking place, and this call for more qualitative studies in different localities, to demonstrate the 'everyday interaction' between the Chinese and Africans.

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Figure 1: Estimates for Chinese in selected African countries, various sources.

Country	1963 (Chang 1968)	2000, unless ^ for 1989 (Chinese sources)	2001 (Ohio U. Database, cited in Sautman 2006)	Estimate for 2003- 2007 (Sautman and Hairong 2007 plus various)
South Africa	5105	70000	30000*	100000-400000 (2007)+
Mauritius	23266	40000	35000 (for year 1990)**	30000 (2005)+
Cameroon	N/A	450	50	1000-3000 (2005)+
Sudan	N/A	45 ^	45	5000-10000 (2004- 2005)***
Lesotho	N/A	2500	1000	5000 (2005)+
Ghana	N/A	465	500	6000 (2004)+
Liberia	27	45 ^	120	600 (2006)+
Nigeria	2	10000	2000	100000 (2007)
Mozambique	1735	500	700	1500 (2006)+
Ethiopia	18	8	100	3000-4000 (2006)+
Algeria	N/A	30	2000	8000 (2003)+
Cote d'Ivoire	N/A	1300	200	10000 (2007)+
Zimbabwe	303	500	300	10000 (2007)+

^ Zhang (1993)

QiaoQing (2005)

+ Sautman and Hairong (2007)

* Poston et al (1994) put the number in 1993 at 36,000

** Poston et al (1994)

*** Abdalla Ali (2007) puts the number in 2004 at 24,000

Figure 2: A framework for assessing the impact of China on SSA

Channel	Impacts			
	Complementary		Competitive	
	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
Trade				
Investment				
Aid				
Global governance				
Migrants				
Environment				

Source: Kaplinsky 2008: 10