Transnational Student Migrants in Globalizing Cities
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Abstract

China has a long history of international migration and a large stock of diaspora around the globe. Nowadays, the availability of energy resources and adequate supply of human capital are now vital for the economic development in the emerging economies and developed nations. Overseas Chinese professionals and students have become an important development source for China as more of them are returning to explore economic opportunities. This metaphor of return migration is now often termed as China’s ‘Sea-turtles’ and regarded by the Chinese government as ‘irreplaceable’ and have ‘historical mission’. This paper draws on the scholarship of transnational mobility by analysing the strategies of Chinese student migrants circulation between global cities. In particular, it addresses the practice of transnational migrants and their impact in/on global cities, such as Shanghai and Paris, as their sending, receiving and transiting points through interviews of Chinese student migrants in both cities.

Chinese Migration and Diasporas

On the eve of the Presidential Elections in Taiwan in 2008, almost every single seat on the flights from Hong Kong to various airports in Taiwan is occupied by home returning
Taiwanese nationals, including businessmen, professionals and students. They come home not for family reunification or taking the Easter break from Shanghai, Vancouver or Shenzhen. They are returning home to cast their vote for the election on 22nd March 2008. Among them are the two daughters of are Mr Ma Yingjiu, KMT’s candidate, the favourable winner of the election according to public pool. His two daughters are travelling back to Taiwan to support their father’s final countdown to the Election Day. Coincidently, the issue of citizenship and nationality has become one of the battlefield between the as Mr Ma was accused by his opponent of possessing an overseas passport and was proved later not guilty of such accusation.

Earlier this year, Mainland China suffered from one of the worst winters in the history. More than 130 people lost their lives in the 19 provinces effected by the winter weather crisis, and a total damage of 151.65 billion Yuan (21.36 billion USD) are reported by the official media. As the unfold of disaster in China, donations flooded to China from Chinese communities across the world. The total donations from overseas Chinese has reached 170 million yuan (24 million USD) by the end of February, according to the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council. The office had received 130 million Yuan in cash and 40 million Yuan worth of materials from Chinese student groups in Japan & UK, Chinese association in Pakistan and Thailand, Chinese communities in Spain, Scholars group in the US and many more.

These two phenomena are not new in Chinese contemporary history. The transnational relationship between Chinese diasporas and their homeland, such as political participation in the first case and financial assistance in the second case, both are very rather common. The term of Chinese diasporas or overseas Chinese is often ambiguous. In this paper, for simplifying the definition, it refers to those of (ethnic) Chinese birth / origin / descent who is currently living outside of Mainland China, including those who has already obtained foreign nationalities or for an extended period. Chinese diasporas play a very important role in the development of China, in politics, economics and social and cultural spheres. For example, The Chinese revolution in 1911 were partly funded and led by overseas Chinese. Since the economic reform since 1978, Chinese entrepreneurs from Hong Kong, Taiwan and other parts of world provided much of the Foreign Direct Investment in China. In the past two decades, there has also been increasing circular and return migration of Chinese professionals living abroad, to seek economic potentials in China.
There has been a long history of Chinese migration, both internal and international migrations. As early in ancient China, emperors in China send citizens to explore neighbouring regions and develop trade links. Among the earlier international migration waves, one notable outbound migration was led by the visit of Zheng He to South East Asia in Ming Dynasty. The majority of the migrants from China in the 19th Century were economic migrants under the colonial power, and usually worked as hard labours – ‘coolies’, to South East Asia and North Americas. Nowadays, South East Asia host the largest diaspora population from China, in some countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, ethnic Chinese is a substantial component of total local population.

In the mid and late 19th Century migration from China is more diversified, Western Europe, Oceania and North America became the popular destinations for Chinese migrants, to seek better economic and living opportunities. After World War II and the establishment of the People’s Republic China, international migration from mainland China was largely disrupted because of PRC’s isolation policy from West while migration from Hong Kong and Taiwan was not affected. After the de-regulation of the PRC’s restrictive policy on the movement of citizens, there have been more intensified migration waves from China, through both legal and illegal channels. Nowadays China has become the largest migrants sending country, according to the International Organisation for Migration, there are 350 millions of Chinese living abroad, that is more than 18% of the total migrants globally, much higher that the other top three sending countries (India 200 millions and the Philippines 7 millions). Comparing to the earlier international migration, the recent migration has a few features: more diverse destinations and migration categories. Skilled migration of Chinese professionals, student migration (both public and private financed) and investment migration have become more pertinent. The choice of destination countries has also been extended from traditional Western developed countries to even newer frontiers like African countries.

**International Migration between Global Cities**

The linking of cities with the process globalisation is a critical area of research (many of the key works on Globalisation and World City (GaWC and network) can be found in Friedmann 1986, Hall 1984, Sassen 1991, Knox and Taylor 1995, Clark 1996, Short and Kim 1999, Short et al 2004) and reveal some of the physical features of economic globalisation such as
concentration of headquarters, emergence of global financial capitals, clustering of advanced producer services etc.

From 1960s, social scientists like Hall (1966) and Friedmann (1982, 1986) have set the research agenda in global city research by placing emphasis on control power and the ‘functional reach’ in the changing organisation of the global economy. These great cities are where international capital is concentrated. The globalisation of production has important implications for international migration and eventually resulted in the so-called ‘new international division of labour’. Global capital and corporations use some key cities in advance economies as their ‘basing points’ and assign them with functions in the re-structured spatial division of labour, production and market. Furthermore they are interconnected in a complex and hierarchical urban system, ranked by their functions, control and command power.

With the transformation of information technology and increasing multilevel of flows of information, knowledge and services, Saskia Sassen (1991) underlines the new strategic role for major cities in a highly connected society. The key features of global cities can be reflected on the concentration of investment, high-proportion of (advanced) producer services and their strategic controlling power in the global economic and city network. This ‘interlocking’ network was further explained by cross-sectional study (Taylor 2004) of advanced producers services firms and their global location strategies, where world cities are conceptualised as the nodal points of the network.

Despite the well developed theories in global city hypothesis, one long existed problem still lies in the relative lack of empirical evidence and statistical proof. Past researches have predominantly focused on the simple attributes of cities, such as number of companies and corporations headquarters (O’Connor 2005). Size, power and control functions are the major factors in measuring cities in a hierarchical model. Attempts are nevertheless made by Taylor (summarised in Taylor 2004) to identify the relations and interconnectedness of cities, but again only a limited of sources (six advance producer services) are consulted. In both approaches, the economic measures are central criteria. As a consequence, the social-cultural factors (the human side) are largely neglected (Benton-Short et al 2004) and even their rectification is still attribute based.
Similar data problem also affects research on migration. Migration can be the movements of people within a nation state, namely internal migration such as rural urban migration. It can also be the population movements between nation states. This research mainly deals with the latter case, international migration. The physical movement of persons is considered as the human face, key aspect of globalisation and global mobility in our contemporary world (Smith & Favell 2006). In the ‘age of migration’ (Castles and Miller 2003), migratory flows have affected more and more countries on a global scale in tune with the accelerating trade liberalisation. Without doubt, international migration has become one defining factor in shaping our world politics and societies. In the new Millennium, the ever accelerating globalization process has transformed our economies and societies through the rapid exchange of information, trade of goods, and flow of financial capitals and lastly the movement of human beings. However, even with the improvement of transportation links and better information technologies, the physical mobility of people is still the most restrictive globalization stream. Scholars have thus called international migration as the most regulated, complex and even controversial mobility (Meissner et al 2006, Neumayer 2006).

Due to the complexity of migratory process, Brettell and Hollifield (2000) has concluded that past and current migration research is intrinsically interdisciplinary, involving theories and studies from sociology, political science, history, economics to geography, demography, psychology and law. The growth of global cities attracts large influx of immigrants. Consequently it has been proved to be impossible to have a detailed survey of migratory theory (Massey et al 1993) given the different approaches and research methods.

Nevertheless, Castles and Miller (2003) have summarised three main types of approaches in dealing with contemporary migration:

- Economic theories: migration is an economic behaviour and driven by the aim of utility maximisation (Borjas 1989). That explains the South-North migration because of economic disparities, i.e. people from the poorer countries migrate to rich countries hoping to have a better career and life.

- Historical-structural approach: This approach is rooted from political economy and the inequality in world system theory. It stresses the unequal distribution of economic
and political power in the world economy. Labour migration was seemed as the ‘legacy of colonialism and the result of war and regional inequality’.

- Migration systems theory: Based on the critiques of previous two approaches (both of them are studied in a ‘simplistic way’ and only one-sided), a migration systems theory adds new dimensions and interdisciplinary approach to migration research, incorporating the sending as well as receiving contexts and focus on the links between the two sides (states) of the migratory flow. Fawcett and Arnold (1987) categorise these linkages as ‘state-to-state relations and comparisons, mass culture connections and family and social networks’.

Nevertheless the above three approaches of migration research are not applicable to all types of migration. For example, the economic theories cannot be used to explain student migration in general as in fact many student migrations are North-North migration rather than South-North migration. Comparing with the well-developed research on low-skilled migration, the studies on (highly) skilled migration are still under-developed despite the fact international migration of skilled persons has assumed increased importance in recent years reflecting the impact of globalisation, revival of growth in the world economy and the explosive growth in the information and communication technology (Abella of ILO, in Findlay and Stewart 2002).

Lastly, international migration is researched mainly on the nation state levels. In a ‘de-territorialised world (Elden 2005) thanks to the economic globalisation, migration research may require new analysis, maybe a more decentralised approach. This is shown on the research on elite migration and inter-company transfer of skilled personnel. In Beaverstock and Boardwell (200)’s research on transnational service firms professionals, migration is pronounced between global cities. For instance, the mobility of bankers and financial professionals are constituted in the flow between international financial centres such as London, New York, Tokyo, Singapore, Frankfurt and elite (business) student migration are also articulated in the spaces and flow between their hosting cities of their institutes. Thus research on the inter-city flow of migration will play a complementary role in understanding and the flows and spaces of contemporary international migration.
One recent research by Price and Benton-Short (2007) illustrated the connections between global cities through empirical data on international migration and number of foreign-born in major cities across the world. Their findings showed that there are 20 cities with a population of over one million foreign born. Some of them are highly placed in the world city connectivity of Taylor (2004), while some other cities especially those in the Middle East (like Riyadh, Dubai and Jeddah) which topped the list of foreign born population but not so well in the world city list. Cities like New York, London, Toronto, and Hong Kong are all featured in the top 20 immigration cities and recognized as both global cities and migration gateways.

Therefore, this research paper hopes to understand the relationship of the emergence of global and world cities and their relationship with international migration. A key way to understand is the issue of transnationalism of migrants in the world city network. The research on transnationalism has undertaken approach to migration, which ‘accents the attachments migrants maintain to people, traditions and causes outside the boundaries of nation state to which they have moved’ (Vertovec 2002, also Schiller et al 1992 Smith and Guarnizo 1008, Portes et al 1999). In addition to migration research, the issue of ‘transnationalism’ has also become a paradigm shift for research on urbanism (Schiller 2006). Ethnic diaspora is considered as one of the key landmarks of transnationalism, whom embody a variety of historical and contemporary conditions, characteristics, trajectories and experiences (Tololyan 1996, Cohen 1997, Van Hear 1998) and its ‘triadic relationships’ (Sheffer 1986).

The coming of Information Society and improvement in the internet and other communication tools also help with the mobilisation of resources, and help to strengthen the existing diasporas network. Many of world’s diasporas live in major cities across the world, and there are various networks (economic, social, personal and cultural links) connecting them and interacting with one another. Their transnationalism does not limit to the strong ties between the diasporas and their country of origin, but among them, the common cultural heritages and group solidarity. There are diverse forms of diasporas networks, from cultural groups, homeland associations, advocacy groups to the highly contentious networks such as global terrorist organisation and organised crimes. The study of these networks have given a new (social) networks perspective for researching international migration (Kearney 1986, Portes 1995, Massey et al. 1999, Vertovec 2002). These networks provide the platform for information sharing (such as recruitment advertisement for labour migration, school
information for student migration), personal and group support (psychological and emotional), financial assistance (remittances and aid), and other cultural, economic and social information.

Transnational Chinese Student Migration between Global Cities

One visible and dynamic group of diasporas are those who left their countries of origin to pursue education in another country. Globalization of education, especially of the higher education sector has transformed greatly within and outside the campuses. Student exchanges and faculty exchanges, joint bachelor, master and PhD programme, overseas expansions of universities, and recruitment of international students, are just a few features of the global education. There are external and internal reasons for education sectors to make such decision, lack of students and financial resources (like limited university budget, demographic change) – many European countries need fee-paying students not only for filling the extra places but also keen having them as ‘cash-cows’ for gaining funding (Shen 2005, 2008). Governments in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and most European countries and some other Asian and Pacifica are now putting ‘education export’ as the a service sector and promote them worldwide. Since its foundation in 1987, now the Erasmus (formerly the Socrates programme), an university student exchange initiative has become one of the most successful student mobility programmes in the world, and one notable as well as tangible achievement of the European project.

Despite all these, research on student migration is still limited in the academic literature. On the conceptualisation of student migration, Findlay et al (2006) differentiates between mobility and migration. The Erasmus programme is widely considered as a mobility programme, as the exchange is pre-arranged by other actors rather than the migrants (him/herself), although they do have a say in the choice of country and university. The students will need to go back to home university to complete the degree after their studies and sojourn in the exchange partners. The student migration however traditionally refers to longer type of migration, in length and travel distance. Comparing to the former type, student migration is more or less an open-end migration, there outcome of the sojourn is usually not predictable.
King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003) summarised three ways in framing the conceptualisation of student migration: as product of globalization (such as the globalization of higher education sector, and development of export-oriented education economies of standardised training programmes). International and institutional process like the European integration also led to the creation of Erasmus/Socrates programme; secondly viewing the student mobility as part of wider youth mobility cultures and geographies of consumption (Mansvelt 2005); lastly and more relevant for this research, student migration as a subset of highly skilled migration. Indeed, student migration is often argued to be the precursor of highly skilled migration (Skeldon 1992) based on case studies from Australia, USA, and Canada. Those so-called traditional migration countries have seen a great number of foreign students particularly from Asia changing status to economic migrants, right after studies or at a later stage (Hugo 1996). The outcome of this movement is not predictable and often unexpected. Therefore in traditional migration and development studies, this is viewed as potential brain drain for developing countries suffering from the loss of their talents (Zweig 1997, Lowell 2002, Solimano 2002, 2004), although there also existed smaller scales of academic staff exchange and student migration between the global core economies (Findlay 2001).

Furthermore, in the nexus of migration and development theory, both permanent and temporary migration is viewed as development tools (IOM 2003, 2005; UNDP 2003). On one hand, remittances from overseas diasporas (who usually migrated permanently) have gained substantial praises in helping the economic development of sending countries. But this economic impact of remittances is shown largely to be dissipated in the housing sector and or used for immediate consumptions (Jacobs 1984, King 1986). On the other hand, return migration\textsuperscript{ii} of temporary migrants are said to be both sustainable and attractive (Ghosh 2000). The knowledge transfer and brain gain (Solimano 2004) through return migration is far more productive than the increase in consumitional financial capital. This is particularly the case with return student migration, because of their huge embedded intellectual assets and knowledge, i.e. human capital.

Recent research has also suggested a potential win-win situation for both sending and receiving countries through the transfer of knowledge, financial and human capital of returning students and diasporas as well as benefiting from transnational migration networks (Xiang 2005, Vertovec 2004, Sørensen et al 2002) through the way of circulation. According to the OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (SOPEMI 2002),
Student migration has been considered as one of the dominating sources for skilled migration between OECD countries. On the one hand, advanced level students working at research level often engage in lab work and academic projects as skilled labour. On the other hand, the high costs of studying abroad have led them to seek part-time jobs to defray tuition burdens. Due to the nature of their work and low pay, they could be considered as a form of the low-skilled migrant labour in the global cities as defined by Saskia Sassen (1992).

Student migration is also said to provide a new research agenda for understanding the global city hierarchy in O’Connor’s (2005) recent studies on international students and global cities. Education, through the internationalisation process can be seen as ‘tradable activity’. Educational institutions are seen as the specialist producers who trade academic learning and training in a global market. Also, leading scholars like Peter Hall (1997, Hardy in Elliott et al 1996) have shown universities (students) are strongly associated with urban communities and contribute greatly to regional growth. As a result, the flow and movement of students have now given ‘an alternative stream of global connections’ (O’Connor 2005) to global cities and even smaller cities with concentration of educational organisations.

What are the role of cities in this escalating migration process? At the frontier of national economy, cities and urban area also now join the battlefield for brains. Global cities are now not only home to financial capital and merchandises but also favourable hotspot for talents and ideas.

![Top 10 Metropolitan Areas for International Students 2005-2006 (and their percentage per State / US total)]
Cities are the focal point for the mobility of talents, located between the nations and firms, states and educational institutions. Geographic selectivity in the movement of students is said to be associated with the differences in urban development (O’Connor 2005). Education is a new emerging industry for many countries. The global trade in educational services has grown very fast in the past few years. Different from other trade, overseas education is traditionally supply driven, i.e. the clients (the students) are driven to the place where good and high quality education is available. This research focuses on the business student migration. With increasing internationalisation in education, business education providers are setting up new campus or starting joint programmes abroad to offer MBA and Master courses close to the students’ home-base.

Interestingly, new initiatives as we have seen in the airline industry like Star Alliances, One World are now taking place in the education sector, with names like TRIUM MBA (which involves New York University, London School of Economics and HEC in Paris), One MBA (an alliance of premier business schools in Rotterdam, Hong Kong, São Paolo, North Carolina and Monterrey). Some leading business schools have even moved one step forward to set up overseas campus, for example, INSEAD and Chicago’s Asia campuses in Singapore. Cities play an important role or business schools besides being the hosting site. They offer cosmopolitan lifestyles and extensive working and networking opportunities for business students. Therefore it is not surprise to see many top business schools are advertising their ‘urban advantages’, such as the ‘New York Edge’, ‘London Advantage’, ‘Downtown Advantage’ as well as more relaxing and specific lifestyles like ‘Bay Experiences’. To conclude, just like other advance producer services, business schools are also expanding their geographical coverage to increase their ‘globalness’ in today’s education market. At the same time, the exchange programmes and overseas campus / courses they established will enable better student mobility across the world’s major cities. As a result, new, complementary and alternative world city network is again articulated, formulated and enhanced by business schools and their students (alumni).

Top business schools and twenty-two cities are included in this study. Cities were given scores from 0-3 according to their status in relation to the business schools (3 as the being the location for Headquarters, 2 as the location for joint programme and strategic alliances

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1 The selection of business schools were based on the rankings of Financial Times, see more detailed information on: [http://rankings.ft.com/rankings/mba/rankings.html](http://rankings.ft.com/rankings/mba/rankings.html)
schools, 1 as the location for regular executive forum and established partner schools, 0 as no presence of activities by chosen business schools). After the data were collected from the websites and brochures of the top 10 business schools, they were analysed by the connectivities macro developed by Rossi and Rossi.2

The early data exploitation showed great similarity to the results of the ESRC project, putting Paris again at the top of the world cities league and most of the top cities in both projects are the same, despite the different industries sampled (GaWC / Taylor project used six advance producer services, law, accountancy, finance/banking, consultancy, advertising).

Table 1: 

Top Twenty-one GaWC Cities (Taylor et al 2004) compared with result of MBA schools city rankings

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<th>MBA School Cities</th>
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<td>London</td>
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<td>Cambridge (USA)</td>
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China is one of the largest sending countries for international student migrants. Since the economic reform in 1978, when the border gradually becomes open for Chinese students to study abroad after years of near isolation, more than 1 millions of students have left China to study abroad. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education (MoE China), around 134,000 Chinese students went abroad to study, 155 times of the number of outgoing students in 1978 which is 860.

There is a strong network of Chinese students abroad, linked by various governmental and informal associations. For example, there are 58 education sections, part of the Chinese Diplomatic Missions abroad in 39 countries. These Education Sections are staffed by government officials from the Ministry of Education, to assist students abroad, and provide support for firstly state-sponsored Chinese students but now extended its service to all students, whether public or privately financed. Chinese students are required to recommended at these education sections as part of the accreditation and verification of their overseas diplomas. At the same time, there are more than 2,000 overseas Chinese students associations, and 300 professional bodies of Chinese students abroad. The informal networks are located almost in every major university in different parts of the world, organising social activities and provide peer support as well as welcoming new students. Furthermore, there is also the State Scholarship Council and China Overseas Studies Service Centre, which offer financial support, professional advices on studying abroad. Alternative information and assistances of applying for overseas institutions are also generally obtained by paid services of the countless education agents found in both rural and urban China.

Transnational networks are important for the decision for studying abroad as well as the choice of destination. Educational opportunities and employment prospects have driven youths from across China to major cities to study and seek jobs. Internal migration, rural-urban movement is a prominent feature of China’s economic reform. Millions of rural workers started to work at factories of coastal cities in Southern China from early 1980s. Peasant workers are now found in every medium and large cities in China, whether on the construction sites or as babysitters at the homes of China’s nouveau riche. The below analysis
is based interviews of 60 graduates and returnees of French business schools in Shanghai and those who are still currently studying or working in Paris.

Over 90% of interviewees have either worked or lived China’s three metropolises, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. The rest 10% also lived in big cities like Shenzhen, Wuhan, Zhuhai, Nanjing and Chongqing. Out of the returnees in Shanghai, more than half are from Shanghai originally. Therefore, when we look at their city of undergraduate studies, it is not surprising to see 80% of the interview group have either studied in Beijing or Shanghai. The two cities have some of the best educational institutions in the whole country, like Beijing, Tsinghua and Fudan Universities. In addition, for those, who were born in Beijing and Shanghai, convenience and comfort of studying close to the family is also an important factor.

For others outside born outside Beijing and Shanghai, the cities are a signal of promising, of good education and graduate jobs. One interviewee said:

‘I was born in a small city in a poorer province. I knew I had to go to a good university to change my fortune. I cannot decide my birth place but I can choose where I want to work. Honestly speaking, I do not think there is not much opportunity here (in my province), I need to have a good education to have a good job. And the only way to do it is to study hard and go to a big city. My family have the same belief and they supported me throughout the way’. Indeed, a big city like Shanghai is seen as the gateway to the success and university education is the first step for the ‘long march’. A blue or white collar job has become the dream of millions of Chinese students and their families (many of them who did not have the opportunities for higher education due to the Cultural Revolution).

For many of them, the National University and College Entrance Exam is the key step:

‘My parents could not go to the universities while they were young. They often told me how sad they were and how ‘useless’ they feel when comparing themselves with the younger generation. They told me they do not have the academic knowledge that these younger staff have, they learned things by doing them. But now, it is not enough, one day they will be kicked out the company. My parents put their hope on me; I feel I have a lot of responsibilities. They really gave me everything they can, from private tuition to computer
equipment, as long as I asked, I will get them. So I must not fail the Entrance Exam, it is not the just the home for me, but also for my mum and dad and their mum and dad!"

The above interviewee said that most of his classmates in high school (in Shanghai) did not have any holiday for the final year of the senior high school, preparing for the Exam. It is even harder for those outside Shanghai:

‘You know, everyone wanted to go to big cities, like Shanghai and Beijing. It is the entrance exam is like a bridge, in fact a narrow bridge, but we have a lot of people want to cross over it. And the result is self-evident, the more people there are, the more difficult to cross it. Shanghai is like a dream place for me, you know, I was naïve, I do not know much about the business world before (as I was concentrating on my studies), but you read everyday on the newspaper about the stock market in Shanghai, the new HQ of an international company moved there, how many Fortunate 500 companies now have an office in Pudong. They are very tempting for us, who do not have these opportunities at home or nearby. You also read about the cultural and night life there, the interesting stories encounter with foreign bosses, and of course the high salaries (and I know, the expensive living costs) – these are what I want to experience and I worked towards my ‘Shanghai dream’.

The choice of city for most of interviewees is important. Out of the interviewees, around 60% had their first job in Shanghai; while 25% chose Beijing and the rest (15%) chose other coastal cities. There is a further concentration when locating their second or third jobs in China (before their study in France), the number of interviewees worked in Shanghai has increased substantially, as shown in the chart below:
There are even already overseas experiences by some interviewees, such as job relocation to Hong Kong, France and Belgium all by intercompany transfer or diplomatic post. As far as the interviewees are concerned, Shanghai is certainly the main sending city for overseas education and the first step for their forthcoming international journey of academic and professional exposure.

It was in these big cities, those graduates had the contact with globalization, through their studies at universities, working at foreign companies, in the education and corporate networks which shaped our globalization. These contacts in return effected their view on the outside world and their colleagues, friends who are already studying abroad are the source of information and more important inspiration, for instance one student migrant said:

‘I got to know the school because of recommendation of my French colleagues at Schneider. The reputation of the school is very important for me and also the location of Paris is equally important, since in France everything is centralised.’

Also Interviewee’ decision to study French are linked to their family situation:
'Well, my father was a diplomat at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. He wanted me to study French and later go to study in France. But I do not have any French language ability of nor UN sponsorships. For a long time, USA has been my number 1 choice for studying abroad, because of the cultures, movies and the subject I want to study. France was to me, like a jump-board, for my future career in either USA or back to China.’

He was not the only one who seemed to study French unwillingly, a female interviewee also did not intend to study French at first, but was later persuaded by her father: ‘My father is connected to the diplomatic cycle. They (my parents) suggested me to study in France and told me that French education and language will help me to find a good job in international affairs. You know, in China, we must consider parents’ voice carefully. So I followed his advice, and so far it has not been a wrong decision, at the moment I am quite happy I did.’

Another student also shared the same thought:

‘After working three years as the product manager for Lancome, I resigned and went to study for MBA at Insead. The reason for Insead as a self-financing student is because of its international reputation and diversity. It is one of the highest ranked B-Schools and not a single country has more than 10% of the total numbers of students. I also had the preference of Europe over the US, as I feel more closely associated with its cultural identity. There were also alumni from Insead at L’Oreal who recommended me Insead.’

Studying abroad is a very strategic long term planning, a main investment in the career of a Chinese student, hence location and prospects of the education programme is critical in the decision making. Among the consideration factors, the reputation of school, importance of networks (of alumni), and the city lifestyle are stressed by all interviewees:

‘Insead also offers a wider selection for jobs after the graduation. Being in Paris is definitely a plus too. I feel traditional schools like HEC are more French centric, Insead offers a more international vision, right from the tight selection of diverse student pool. Most of the students share similar career experiences (as we are in our early/mid 30s), we have also access to good resources such as foreign exchange programme (I did it with Wharton Business School in the US for 2 months), fieldtrip to emerging markets and countless
networking events. Within my MBA, I also managed a two month internship on B2B Marketing with Johnson & Johnson in Brussels, Belgium.’

Reputation and international education exchange possibilities are important to the interviewee below, in addition business schools also differentiate among each other with the types of students and academic environment:

‘HEC has a very good reputation in France and China. The location of the school is also famous – Paris gave an immediate good impression for me. Therefore in 2000, I joined the two year bi-lingual Grande Ecole programme at HEC as a self-financed student. People who chose Grande Ecole are usually younger than those who went to Insead. We also have a higher level of French language. There are also a lot of joint programmes between French Grande Ecole and Chinese universities. Insead crowds are more usually more experienced but whose French command is not very good.’

Again, the following interviewee’s comments nicely summarised the impact location, contacts and urban environment when discussing his decision for a MBA at Insead, and why not at other business schools:

‘I think opportunity cost is very important for me when choosing a business school. Insead’s one year only MBA programme therefore is very appealing. I also care a lot about the opportunities of school exchange and alumni network, which are both Insead’s strengths. IMD of Switzerland and LBS were also among my choices. However, IMD’s class and alumni pool are much smaller, only around 90 graduates per year – there are far less networking opportunities. For LBS, London I think is too expensive to live in. LBS and Insead are very known here, but living in France could allow me to study luxury products market better (which is booming in China). Therefore I chose Insead and was the first Roland Berger sponsored MBA student at Insead from China.’

Another Insead graduate also reconfirmed the importance of business networks and alumni relationships as well as issue of family matters:

‘I chose Insead because of its extensive alumni network and wide varieties of employment opportunities. I can also find people around my own age at the MBA programme who has
similar level of maturity and experiences. I also thought of RSM, Michigan and IMD, mainly according to rankings. For me, Paris was not a reason for me to choose Insead, although because my wife is living in Germany, France for example is closer than USA to my wife’s place. It took me 7 hours to travel from Insead to my wife.’

After moving to Paris, another global city to study, their transnational networks are not terminating but rather expanding. The contacts in China are well maintained for personal and professional interests, while they encounter new business contacts in and outside the classroom. Keeping in touch with China and updating knowledge of Chinese economy is considered as the preparation for eventual return migration, as one interviewee said:

‘I always maintain good contacts with my previous employer in China and pay good attention to my industry, just get myself prepared for the future.’

For those who is interested in working in Paris, their Chinese networks and experiences seem highly desirable with French employers which need the expertise of Chinese staff in expanding business in China:

‘I was looking for a job in Paris, then I found this industry association. They are looking for someone to deal with membership matters/services with China. Because of my Chinese background and technical experiences, I was the ideal candidate.’

Although the student life is not always perfect as the following interviewee pointed out, and culture shock do exist, studying abroad has been regarded as a very good learning experience and adding social capital and maturity to their life course:

In the 1990s, work and studies are not separable. At that time, it was also easy for us to take part time jobs, from teaching Chinese to babysitting. It gave me good balance of life and get to know French life and family. The years in France have taught me a lot of lessons and remain a very important part of my life. From a civil servant at a Chinese Ministry to a student with a part job is a challenge. The life sometimes can be bitter and the quality of living can be low. Even though I understood about the situation and was prepared before I left, sometimes it is still hard to accept. It took me to half year to become accustomed to the local life. There were a lot of misconceptions of China and Chinese in the beginning of 1990s, I tried to speak to people about the realities in China.
Comparing to the earlier Chinese migration which Chinese migrants tends to stay and settled in a place, city or country for a long time, the new waves of economic migrants are more mobile and actively seek to fully utilize the opportunities of globalization, across boundaries between the global economic hot spots:

‘During my studies, I also had the opportunity to working on a marketing project in St Moritz for a luxury brand as my stage. After that, I went to study English in the UK – London and Shrewsbury. I want to have an English accent as well as a European outlook.’

Another one went to even outside Europe as part of his ‘European/French’ MBA:

I did not undertake any internship or training project, firstly because I feel I already have enough working experiences, secondly, and more importantly I want to visit my wife in Germany as well as job seeking in China during the course break. Nevertheless, I took an exchange to Insead’s Singapore Campus for 4 months. Singapore is closer to China and I think it would be easier for me to look for a job in China, in terms of travel and meeting with companies.’

Stay or remain in Paris is the question many students wonder when they graduate. Where to go afterwards? The general statistics trend show that more Chinese students are now beginning to come back to China after their studies. This move back is more permanent than the previous temporary return migration for teaching fellowships or consulting projects organised by the Chinese Government in the 80s and 90s. Most returnees made their mind by themselves in light of the booming economy in China. The MoE statistics show that till the end of 2006, there are a total of 275,000 returnees back in China, more than one quarter of the total outbound migration. The trend is increasing dramatically, for instance in 2000, there were 9,100 returnees, and it doubled to 20,100 in 2003, and again doubled in 2006 till 42,000. With this triple jump of return rate, Chinese returning students play a major role in Chinese development. MoE reveals that 77% of the University Rectors of MoE directly administrated universities are returnees, and 94% of the prestigious Yangtze Scholar is overseas Chinese.

After their graduation, these students are usually equipped with advance qualifications and language skills, and will be the key factor in expanding China’s service sector and filling the
important managerial positions in public and private sectors, particularly in the services industry. Swiss Bank, UBS’s report (Research Focus – China and India 2004) suggested that Indian diasporas invest much more to home regions in terms of Foreign Direct Investment than Chinese diasporas. However, it also highlighted the growing new wave Chinese returning students from abroad to become entrepreneurs in the homeland. So for China, the main concern is the return of students, because if recruitment policies succeed, it will produce the most important asset for China and will not only improving China’s scoring on human resources in the World Competitiveness Index but also increasing its FDI particularly in high-tech sector (for instance, enterprises set up by returning students from Silicon Valley). In order to do so, Chinese central administration and local governments have implemented a series of preferential policies for attracting overseas students to invest and work in the homeland. These policies seem to be successful (Xiang 2003). But where do they go?

The return patterns show strong intercity connections, as they intend to concentrate in urban areas and within multinational companies. The most reliable and recent survey conducted online by a leading Chinese newspaper (Elite Reference) and governmental agency (www.haiguiss.org 2004) revealed Shanghai (37.3%) and Beijing (31.8%) as the leading destination cities after study by 3097 Chinese students from 49 countries. Among them 47% chose multinationals as their career ambition. It also shows the satisfactory integration of returnees based on the employment rate, 71% of returned students found a job within 6 months after arriving back in China.

Most of the returnees either come from Shanghai or have studied or worked in Shanghai made the city a favourable destination. All returnees agree Shanghai is the commercial centre for China while Beijing is the administrative capital. Certain sectors are also concentrated in Shanghai, such as the luxury products, consultancy, advertising and other advanced producers services. One graduate working in the cosmetics industry highlighted the importance of Shanghai in her sector:

‘At least in my opinion and industry, Shanghai is the Chinese centre for cosmetics products. Girls here love fashion and are great trend followers. They are also very daring when it comes to dress and clothing. It is a truly commercial city, the street is the T-stage for modelling. Although Beijing and Guangzhou may have more buying powers, but the main sales channel there is department store, while in Shanghai, the more popular ones are
specialist and boutique shops. P&G’s HQ is in Guangzhou, mainly because of the tax benefits they receive from the provincial government. However, much of the marketing work is done in Shanghai, hence that is why I am here, not in Guangzhou. Last year, the first Sephora shop in China also was opened in Shanghai.’

The return migration is also influenced by the corporate global strategy and network. Companies use their global networks for recruiting and assigning staff in their office in major cities. Intercompany transfer is quite common in this case:

‘At the end of my master studies, I have to do an international consulting project. I was informed about the opportunity at my current employer though my Professor of Finance. They asked me to do sales marketing and especially research on China. After almost half year of work with them, firstly as stagiare then full time employee, I was finally sent back by them through to set up the company in Shanghai.’

Career fairs and job offers are made in Paris and the work is done in Shanghai. This intercity network is commonly used by big companies like McKinsey which has now two Asia Houses in Frankfurt and Paris respectively for recruitment, training and working of Asian graduates and transfer them back to Asia. Price WaterhouseCoopers has also developed a new China Talents Recruitment Plan which enables the HR Managers of Chinese offices to reside in other PWC agencies in London, New York, Los Angeles, Sydney and other global cities, with a common goal to recruit international oriented university graduates, with local Chinese knowledge and languages competence as well as working experiences. This exercise is said to a supplement to the human resource localisation strategy of PWC in China. Intellectual talents are wanted in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and any other cities in China, and they hunted both domestically and internationally. So far, Shanghai has set up 7 student recruitment agencies in 7 strategic locations worldwide, London, Los Angeles, Paris, Düsseldorf, Hong Kong, Sydney and Toronto.

Shanghai is also said to be closer to the standard of a global city which meets the demanding business environment and cosmopolitan lifestyle:
‘Shanghai is the only global city in China. Southern China is not as professionalised as in Shanghai and social order there is also not good, for example, the taxi drivers also want to cheat you. Beijing is the capital, it is less commercial and the weather there is terrible.’

An interviewee made a similar comment:

‘Shanghai’s software is better. I feel Shanghainese are closer to Parisian, very cosmopolitan…’

Shanghai’s a dynamic city, at the end of Yangtze River and entry to the East China Sea. It is just a two hour flight to everywhere, and close to Seoul, Taipei and Tokyo.’

Another interviewee also compares Shanghai’s position over Beijing, Hong Kong, Guangzhou on a wide range of issues such as business and personal environment:

‘Shanghai is a very good base for my and our company. It is an international city and very welcoming for foreign staff. Many of my colleagues from abroad often tell me they feel comfortable and like being at home. I also have strong feelings for Beijing, but it is more the political heart and cultural centre for China, the service awareness is still not at the same level as in Shanghai or even Southern China, like Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Moreover, the living environment and transportation is also better here in Shanghai than Beijing. One missing thing for Shanghai is the lack of nature here, not enough green space, diverse landscape, and not as many as heritage and monuments like in Beijing. Although the life in Shanghai is already becoming as fast and stressful as in Hong Kong, Shanghai’s service sector still needs to catch up with the level of Hong Kong. Last not least, the quality of residents remains an issue which needs to be tackled.’

Last not least, family connections and hometown advantages are also pertinent as one interviewee simply said: ‘Shanghai is my hometown. Naturally it becomes my first choice. It is also a comfortable and convenient place to live’. Interestingly, almost everyone interviewed expressed the cultural shocked when they returned to Shanghai. Environment and quality of people are among the biggest concerns. When comparing to Paris, most returned students pointed out the lack of deep and sophisticated cultural base in Shanghai. Of course, overseas returnees are only a small group of people who could not change this situation
alone, but they are definitely adding more diversity in the cosmopolitan of Shanghai by spreading their ideas appreciation of other cultures to colleagues, friends and family.

**Some Concluding Remarks:**

There is a correlation between global cities ranking, education and labour migration. Student migration and global cities both lead to the de-territorialised world. Global cities are strategic points for transnational elites, interconnected in the dynamic process knowledge accumulation, contacts making and network creation. In the so called ‘war’ or ‘race’ for talents, student migration can be viewed as ‘potential unfinished talents’ or ‘precursor of skilled migrants’. Student migration favours global cities for the opportunities, while also adding the creativity and attractiveness of the city. For some of the student migrants qualities of education and cities, existence of networks are more important decision factor rather than the country. Hence ethnically diverse, cosmopolitan cities which are located in the business, educational and cultural system are more attractive to the so called ‘creative class’ (Florida 2007) including student migrants. Place does matter for the mobility and circulation of talents, attractiveness of cosmopolitan living environment, quality of life, business, employment and education opportunities all play crucial role in bringing talents to global and regional cities around the world.

Students are very pragmatic migration group, which has clear capital accumulation strategy and works hard towards realising it. More and more Chinese diasporas are coming back home to work there rather than contributing financial capital and donations. (Foreign) Passport is not anymore the key, as now education and experiences is the new gate to the borderless business opportunities. For many of them, migration is now less between countries but a city-to-city mobility; rather than a single migration route, to a more polycentric, circulating migration. Their transnational student migration network can be viewed as an inter-city network as shown through the interviewees. Student migrants and returnees are transforming the cities. Student migrants are actors and agents of the network, cities are their node point in the global business network. In the case of Chinese student migrants, global cities like Shanghai, Paris, Beijing are being articulated as sending, transiting and hosting nodes. Chinese diasporas first engages in the transnational networks at global cities in China, through overseas contacts and work related activities. Migration is influenced by their international networks, such as peers pressure, family and business necessities which lead to
their migration decision. Other cities in Asia (Hong Kong and Singapore) and Europe (Geneva, London) and USA are also used as temporary ‘mobility stations’ in the lifecycle of some hyper-mobile talents strategy for global exposure.

Migration of Chinese students once again confirms the complexity of international migration and strategic decisions making of migrants. The returning of Chinese students from abroad is not the end journey, but rather the start of creating transnational business and personal networks. Chinese returnees from Paris maintain strong professional links with French enterprises and personal relationships with friends and alumni in Shanghai, Paris and beyond. For cities in the emerging economy, highly qualified and internationalised human capital is vital in securing the development and sustainability. Shanghai benefits from the knowledge, financial capital, professional networks as well as transfer of technology from overseas returnees. ‘Sea-turtles’ in Shanghai also transnationalise the city by enhancing the diversity and cosmopolitan urban setting.
One of the negative effects for the country of origin in migration process is the problem of ‘brain drain’. It refers to the loss of human capital, skilled/trained and professional workforce for migrants sending countries. To the contrary, it gives ‘brain gain’ to the receiving countries.

In fact this idea was not raised from developing country, but from UK in 1950s, when the Royal Society was worried about the outflows of British scientists to the United States. Since then the topic has been put on the discussion tables of the United Nations and governments around the world. Thus for a while, (labour) migration was not seen as a development tool for many countries because of the possibility of ‘brain drain’. However recent migration studies have shown many positive sides of (labour) migration especially the remittances that migration has brought to home countries are now considered as very important sources of income and development resources.

In some cases, student movements to developed countries are still, however, viewed as part of the brain drain because the fact that many students choose to overstay or look for jobs in developed countries after their graduation.

Officially refers to the movement of a person returning to his/her country of origin after one year or more, this may or may not be voluntary (IOM 2005).

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