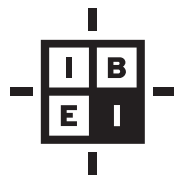


LABOR MOBILITY OF THE CHINESE GRADUATES FROM BRITISH AND SPANISH UNIVERSITIES:

What Happens to the “Talent Migration”?

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LABOR MOBILITY OF THE CHINESE GRADUATES FROM BRITISH AND SPANISH UNIVERSITIES: WHAT HAPPENS TO THE "TALENT MIGRATION"?

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Abstract: The scholarship on migration in Europe heavily focuses on the integration of economically vulnerable migrants. In the age of commercialization of education, however, the European Union attracts a rising number of highly skilled non-EU migrants that take up studies across the continent. Despite economic downturn, the EU universities experience a rapid growth in the number of Chinese students, many of whom settle in Europe upon graduation. Surprisingly, although the number of Chinese students in the EU increases, scholars largely ignore the labor paths that these highly skilled migrants take upon graduating from European universities. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the variation in the Chinese graduates' labor incorporation patterns and in their spatial mobility. In this project, I also examine macro-level hypotheses predicting that the EU and host states' labor market institutions, changes in the EU policies on the highly skilled and the outburst of economic crisis matter for the Chinese highly skilled social and spatial mobility. Seizing on surveys, interviews and on the bodies of literature on stratification and social mobility, economic incorporation, social capital and human capital, I look at the Chinese students that graduated from universities in Great Britain and Spain. These states differ in the university tuition fees, migration policies towards the highly skilled workers and in the period of the Chinese students' influx, thus providing an economically and socially diverse sample. My research will contribute to the literature on the relations between migrants' social mobility, class and status background and spatial mobility, at the same time adding a transnational level perspective to the study of highly skilled Asian migration.

Key words: Chinese Highly Skilled, Labor Mobility, Spatial Mobility, Migration, Spain, the United Kingdom

1. INTRODUCTION

The scholarship on migration in Europe heavily focuses on the integration of economically vulnerable migrants (Appleyard 1995; Kolb 2006: 160-161; Kolb and Ebert 2008). In the age of commercialization of education, however, the European Union attracts a rising number of highly skilled non-EU migrants that take up studies across the continent. Despite economic downturn, the EU universities experience a rapid growth in the number of Chinese students, many of whom settle in Europe upon graduation. As OECD indicates, the share of “stayers” among the international students varies cross-nationally, ranging between 17 to 33 per cent or higher (2011:68). Surprisingly, although the number of Chinese students in the EU increases, scholars largely ignore the labor paths that these highly skilled migrants take upon graduating from European universities. Thus far, the literature on the Chinese in the European Union mainly focuses on the low skilled immigrants, employed in the informal ethnic catering and trade business.

Accordingly, lacunae in research on the migration trajectories and social mobility of Chinese graduates in Europe call for scholarly attention. This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the variation in the Chinese graduates’ labor incorporation patterns and in their spatial mobility. Following Abbott (2001), I explore the conditions of immigrants’ temporal and categorical status change. In particular, I am interested in addressing the causal relations between social mobility, defined as changing labor status, and a set of independent variables. The explanatory factors include migrants’ class and status origins, human capital, spatial mobility and social capital (networks). I also examine macro-level hypotheses predicting that the EU and host states’ labor market institutions, changes in the EU policies on highly skilled and the outburst of economic crisis matter for the patterns in the Chinese highly skilled social and spatial mobility.

Seizing on surveys, semi-structured interviews and on the bodies of literature on stratification and social mobility (e.g., Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000; Nee and Sanders 2001; Breen 2004; Chan and Goldthorpe 2004, 2007; Chiswick, Lee and Miller 2005), economic incorporation (Kloosterman and Rath 2001; Bommess and Kolb 2006; Portes and Rumbaut 1996), social capital (Zhou 1992; Portes 1987; Light and Bonacich 1988; Waldinger 1996) and human capital (Salt 1983; Salt and Findlay 1989), I look at the Chinese students that graduated from universities in Great Britain and Spain. These states differ in the university tuition fees, migration policies towards highly skilled workers and in the period of the Chinese students’ influx, thus providing an economically and socially diverse sample.

By exploring how the positions of the Chinese graduates’ families in the class structure and in the status order channel the ways in which migrants amass human capital and carve their careers in Europe, this research will shed new light on the classic sociological questions rooted in the Bourdeusian tradition (1984). These questions tackle the relative importance of economic, cultural, human and social

capitals for social mobility. I will also contribute to the sociology of migration by linking social mobility with spatial mobility, variables that are rarely analyzed together (see Favell and Recchi 2011 for a notable exception). In detail, my research will help reveal the role that spatial mobility plays in helping the highly skilled get one foot on the career ladder.

The article first examines the theoretical and policy-driven reasons for focusing on the highly skilled Chinese in the European Union. Second, I discuss the academic literature in the social mobility field, identifying main hypotheses that I evaluate in the project¹. Third, I map diverse agendas that intersect in the highly skilled migration field in the EU and I outline the historical background of the Chinese immigration to Europe. Next, I justify the selection of Great Britain and Spain as my case studies. Finally, I describe the methodological strategy.

2. JUSTIFICATION OF THE PROJECT

The overall number of Chinese students in relation to the native EU undergraduate population is small. Why then bother and focus on a group whose share in the total figure of EU students is negligible? I argue that exploring the highly skilled Chinese mobility patterns offers an opportunity to build theory in the stratification and spatial mobility field. While one could expect that the foreign-born skilled migrants find it more difficult than the intra-European highly skilled to move in Europe in search for better employment opportunities, precisely the non-EU migrants' spatial mobility accounts for the rise in the overall mobility rates in the European Union (Breen and Luijkx 2004: 401-402). Research on the Chinese migrants in the EU indicates that both the low and highly skilled display elevated spatial mobility levels (Guerassimoff 2003; Laczko 2003; Thunø 2003; Pieke 2004; Shen 2008). Before 2000, China often supported its students with generous grants what decreased the young Chinese incentives to combine work with studies. Those without scholarships co-financed themselves (Guerassimoff 2003), working in multinational companies or setting up their own businesses (Shen 2008). In contrast, after 2000, most Chinese students are self-financed, career-oriented and highly mobile (Shen 2008). In addition, they were raised in a culture rooted in Confucianism that highly praises educational achievement, career advancement and, on the other hand, puts a strong accent on moral parental duty. This category of migrants thus provides a fruitful ground to examine the links between spatial and social mobility and to build the scholarship on the relations between labor incorporation and migrant's family position in the class and status orders.

1. In the theoretical section of this draft article, I shortly address the possible ways in which my independent variables impact on social mobility. I leave an in-depth discussion of the influence of class and status origin, spatial mobility, human, social and cultural capitals on social mobility for further versions of this article.

The Chinese highly skilled migration in the European Union is a neglected topic (Favell and Smith 2006, Kolb and Egbert 2008, Shen 2008) despite its potential role for global economy, EU-China relations and scholarly theory-building. The current body of knowledge on the Chinese highly skilled immigration in the EU yields findings on the new sending and destination countries but abounds in gaps on the highly skilled migrants' social and spatial mobility. We also know little about the human capital and geographical mobility of graduates prior to their embarking on the university path. In addition, scholars ignore the impact of political, social and economic context on the highly skilled labor attainment. Meanwhile, novel economic and social profile of the highly skilled Chinese immigration deeply changes the character of the Chinese diaspora in the EU and transforms the European citizens' perceptions of the Chinese immigrants.

Exploring the highly skilled Chinese mobility patterns has also compelling policy-based justifications. First, the European Union needs highly skilled migration to bridge the gap between the high demand for skilled graduates and the inadequate supply of them among the EU citizens. As scholars suggest, "the highly-skilled migrants contribute to innovation and economic development in the economically more advanced destination countries" (Venturini, Montobbio and Fassio 2012:1). Second, systematic knowledge about the labor integration of the Chinese highly skilled is important because in the age of China's rapid economic growth these graduates, working as autonomous or employed in multinational companies, act as brokers between Asia and Europe. Third, non-EU students and graduates pose a significant challenge for the European education and immigration systems. That is, the rising presence of non-EU students contributes to the Europeanization and unification of the EU education framework and forces the policy-makers to rethink the visa policies controlling the access of the highly skilled.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Gaps in the Literature on Social Mobility of the Highly Skilled non-EU Migrants

As mentioned above, social mobility of the highly skilled non-EU migrants has attracted little scholarly attention. The Chinese highly skilled migration in Europe is not an exception in this trend. On the other hand, academic literature on skilled immigrants has mostly an economic and policy-driven character (Borjas 1985; Salt 1997; Lowell 1996; Lowell and Findlay 2002; Peri 2005; Millar and Salt 2008, Salt 2009). Also, research on highly skilled migrants' labor trajectories remains largely descriptive (Zhang 2003; Szelényi 2006).

In contrast, theoretically rooted scholarship on the social mobility patterns of the low skilled and relatively less wealthy migrants proliferates on both sides of the Atlantic (Portes and Bach 1995; Zhou 1992; Nee and Sanders 2001; Enneli, Modood and Bradley 2005; Bommess and Kolb 2006; Thomson and Crul 2007; Gans 2009). Nevertheless, theories that explain the mechanisms of labor incorporation of the low skilled only to a limited extent help account for the dynamics of the highly skilled career advancement. This is because the skilled migrants are often conspicuous by different class and status background. They also nurture distinct ties, face diverse socio-political constraints and amass different stocks of capitals, thus following dissimilar labor incorporation paths than the low skilled.

Second, the literature on social mobility is dominated by quantitatively-oriented studies that detect general intra- and intergenerational mobility patterns (e.g., Breen 2004; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; Li et al. 1996; for the criticism of quantitatively oriented research on migration and social mobility see, e.g., Singleton 1999; Bertaux and Thompson 2006). While gaining a general insight into the quantifiable changes in social fluidity of today's societies, we hardly know the mechanisms of the highly skilled social mobility. Scholars also largely ignore the meanings that mobile migrants assign to their labor trajectories. Whereas academic literature has begun to ask these sorts of questions to uncover the native Europeans' social and spatial mobility patterns (see Favell and Smith 2006; Favell 2008; Recchi and Favell 2009; Favell and Recchi 2011), silence envelopes the voices of the highly skilled non-EU migrants trained at the universities in Europe.

Noteworthy, when focusing on migrants' social mobility patterns, scholars dedicate careful attention to the fortunes of the second and third generations (Alba and Nee 2003; Thomson and Crul 2007; Attias-Donfut and Dimova 2012; Bean et al. 2012), correctly assuming that these cohorts provide a test for the effectiveness of host states' incorporation policies and a fruitful ground to verify hypotheses on immigrants' economic performance. The mobility patterns of the first generation remain less explored and yet again most studies in this area look at the low skilled migrants. However, the first generation of highly skilled that completes their graduate education in Europe faces different labor opportunities and constraints than the newly arrived low skilled migrants or highly skilled migrants that underwent academic training outside the EU (see Nee and Sanders 2001). That is to say, studying at European universities affords opportunities to non-EU students for the acquisition of human and cultural capital essential to succeed at the EU labor markets upon graduation. Second, the study time in Europe offers the highly skilled chances to build social capital embodied in strong and weak ties that help in career development (Granovetter 1973). Besides filling an empirical lacuna, an analysis of the career patterns of the Chinese highly skilled first generation offers a vast potential for theory-building in the social mobility and migration fields.

I now turn to discuss key premises identified in the scholarly writing on social mobility and I evaluate the theories' explanatory potential when applied to the labor trajectories of the highly skilled.

3.2 Core Independent Variables Channeling Immigrants' Social Mobility

This section focuses on central mechanisms identified by the scholarship on labor incorporation. In the following paragraphs, I briefly sketch two ideal type scenarios of highly skilled migrants' mobility paths built on the basis of this literature. The models serve to highlight the restricted potential of existing theoretical premises to account for the labor paths of the highly skilled. The scenarios reflect a fundamental need to rethink theories on social mobility in order to better explain the mechanisms of highly skilled migrants' labor incorporation.

To illuminate the variation in foreigners' labor outcomes, scholars underscore that migrants' class backgrounds shape the ways in which individuals acquire human, cultural and social capital thus influencing their access to the labor market, wages and occupational status (Bourdieu 1984, Boudon 1984, Alba and Nee 2003, Portes, Fernandez-Kelly, Haller 2005; Attias-Donfut and Dimova 2012). Labor-incorporation approach suggests that diverse combinations of capital stocks at migrants' disposal upon their arrival to destination countries largely depend on their families' financial standing, closely related to parents' position in the class structure back home (Nee and Sanders 2001). Importantly, besides financial capital serving as a source of remittances to a newly arrived migrant, family privileged position endows foreigners with a "feeling of legitimacy" (Santelli 2001), easy confidence that facilitates career advancement. Consequently, equipped with human, cultural and financial capital, foreign students have better access to social capital in the form of weak ties (Granovetter 1973) that open up opportunities at the international and national labor markets after graduation (Aguilera 2003; Aguilera and Massey 2003; Lin 1999).

3.3 Two Ideal Type Social Mobility Scenarios

Applied to the topic of labor incorporation of the highly skilled, the above-mentioned perspectives suggest two career models for the foreign-born graduates that settle in Europe.

The theoretical premises that highlight the role of class imply that class position enables and constrains as the function of financial resources of the family. Thus, high class and considerable financial assets of a young migrant starting her studies in Europe may affect her labor trajectory through various mechanisms. First, high financial standing enables prospective students to choose destination country, university and discipline that altogether offer bright long-term career prospects. Also, thanks to remittances that render work in ethnic enclaves during studies needless, a foreign-born student can dedicate to the accumulation of human capital and to unpaid internships in local or multinational companies. Importantly, work in the primary market dominated by the host country's citizens (Piore 1979) offers migrants a vital source of weak ties that may bear fruits after graduation. Moreover, resources allow high class families to invest in their children's early socialization

and cultural competences, such as careful education, extra-curricular training and foreign languages acquisition (Chiswick et al. 2005), what transposes into the offspring's better labor chances upon graduation.

A contrasting scenario suggests that migrants of lower class origins acquire reduced amount of human and cultural capital throughout childhood. If, against the odds, less well-off family succeeds in sending their offspring abroad to study², the family may face mounting debts and young adults may have to work full- or part-time in secondary ethnic market before and/or during studies to cover tuition and living costs. While ethnic niches provide key initial capital and solidarity links that boost migrants' confidence and facilitate integration (Portes 1987; Light and Bonacich 1988; Light and Roach 1999; Waldinger 1996), employment in ethnic markets (Bonacich 1973; Portes and Manning 1986; Zhou 1992, 2004) and living with relatives (Nee and Sanders 2001), limit students' ties to co-ethnics. Such students risk developing bonding at the cost of bridging social capital (Putnam 2000), what may negatively shape their social mobility upon graduation.

The above-mentioned scenarios outline two opposite and extreme ways in which an overseas highly skilled Chinese migrant's life may unfold. Nevertheless, the potential paths that a highly skilled non-EU may take are far more diverse. The models show that the social mobility literature, engaged primarily with the low-skilled migrants, overlooks the whole picture of the highly skilled immigrants' labor trajectories.

3.4 A Need to Reexamine the Explanatory Potential of Social Mobility Literature

I argue that we should disentangle the impact of highly skilled migrant family's positions in the class and status structures to move the scholarship on social mobility forward. Building on Chan and Goldthorpe (2007), I call for a clear conceptual and empirical distinction between the two major social structures because they impact upon individuals' labor paths in different ways. Also, we need to take culture more seriously (Vermeulen and Perlmann 2000; Levitt 2012). Next, scholars could more systematically explore how the variation in host states' socio-political and economic conditions impacts on the class and status characteristics of highly skilled immigrants and on their labor incorporation paths. Further, closer examination of the links between labor trajectories and spatial mobility can significantly contribute to the literature on immigrants' career advancement. I dedicate the following paragraphs to discuss the selected topics in the above-described order.

2. This pattern is in fact common for Chinese families because of several factors. First, "one-child policy" and the widespread among Chinese society perception of China as an unstable economically and politically country renders the investment in the only child's career strategic for the whole family in the long-term (especially for the middle and lower-middle class ones) (see, e.g., *The New York Times* 1 November 2012). Second, as Nee and Sanders note, East Asians' cultural capital includes "the cultural legacy of Neo-Confucianism, which espouses family and education as core values" (2001:392). Thus, lower class families, despite lacking substantial economic assets, might still invest all possible resources in the only child's education due to historically rooted social values.

First, social mobility literature frequently oversimplifies the causal relationship between migrant's family position in the class structure, the newcomer's human capital accumulation and her labor trajectories. This is largely because scholars seldom distinguish between class and status, analyzing overall migrant's family "socioeconomic" standing instead. In this project, I follow Chan and Goldthorpe in conceptualizing "class structure as one formed by the social relations of economic life or, more specifically, by relations in labor markets and production units" (2007:513). In contrast, using again the Chan and Goldthorpe's critical distinction, I conceive of status order as a system of "relations of perceived, and in some degree accepted, social superiority, equality, and inferiority among individuals" (2007:514). Importantly, positions in the status structure vary in the level of "social honor" that fluctuates as the function of occupational or "purely ascribed attributes (e.g., birth or ethnicity)" (2007:514). Therefore, although, after Chan and Goldthorpe, I operationalize both class and status orders with the help of the occupation variable, these two structures only partially overlap (e.g., individuals can occupy high positions in class order and at the same time low in the status structure and the other way round).

As Chan and Goldthorpe remind us, class and status structures are "different forms of stratification that exert their effects through quite distinct social processes, or mechanisms" (2007:513). Applied to this topic, it is crucial that migrants occupying distinct class positions in the class structure "may be advantaged and disadvantaged in differing and, perhaps, not entirely commensurable respects as a result of the employment relations in which they are involved" (2007:514).

My conceptual approach to class and status differs here from the one proposed by the Oxford scholars in one important aspect. While the authors conceive of class structure as affecting life chances and of status order as impacting upon life styles, I argue that values and norms attached to positions in the status order also deeply influence life prospects. Importantly, Chinese less privileged families that nonetheless occupy middle or high ranks in the status order (e.g. parents working as teachers) may pool their entire close and extended family's resources to invest in the offspring's education and to send the only child abroad to study. Put differently, family position in the status order channels the ways in which future migrants accumulate human and cultural capital equally strongly as the family position in the class structure does, but through different mechanisms. As Bertaux and Thompson note, "families are differentiated not only by the extent of economic, cultural, relational, and other resources which are available, but also in the degree to which they exploit them. A relatively poor family may concentrate its resources on promoting the educational advancement of a selected child, while on the other hand a more favoured family may throw greater resources into immediate consumption" (2006:20). In other words, while class endows migrants with financial resources, family status (or perhaps even simply aspirations to higher status) induces parents to commit scarce assets to one child, help him attain cultural and human capital, and create in him a desire for educational and labor success. Similar pooling of resources occurs when a family decides to educate their children in the West, creating a safety net for the whole family in case economic and political conditions in

China deteriorate. The decision to devote a family's all resources to one offspring's career is a long-term investment in the future of the whole household as the student abroad provides a first link in potential migration chain.

It is worth to add at this point that I do not study the Chinese highly skilled to solely test the existent bodies of literature. On the contrary, I take the theoretical perspectives as a point of departure that structures my approach without blinding me to a discovery. The interviews that I carry out address the entire migration experience of the young Chinese. Besides the role of status-class positions, the questions evolve around contextual variables, such as national, EU-level and local politics, networks, and attitudes towards the Chinese. Such approach allows me to trace the relationships between the factors specific to the Chinese group and the socio-political and economic framework where the graduates' lives unfold.

The variation in class and status dynamics closely interlinks with the cultural Confucianism legacy. Namely, Chinese culture highly values collective family welfare, educational and occupational success (Nee and Sanders 2001; Ting and Chiu 2002; Hui 2005; Wu 2009:11). Raised in a cultural setting where both family and career play distinguished roles, the highly skilled Chinese may carve out different labor paths than those of other EU and non-EU skilled migrants, thus challenging our theoretical assumptions on social mobility. That is, a mounting tension between a historically embedded moral obligation to support elderly parents back home, a concern about spouse's and children's prospects and, on the other hand, an anxiety about one's career progression, can distinctively shape the Chinese graduates' labor paths. This is not to say that other groups of migrants are not under similar strain. Rather, I posit that the undue pressure intensifies in case of the young Chinese. The reasons are manifold. Apart from the already mentioned shadow of Confucianism, the one-child policy combined with scarce retirement benefits for the China's elderly put enormous burden on the youth whose earnings have to substitute state pensions. Third, the economic boom in China and the emergence of the private sector created a populous "new social strata (*xin shehui jieceng*)" (Wu and Chang 2012:1) with a growing purchase power but shallow social roots. Stemming from families with lower class backgrounds, the new rich seek an ostentatious display of class markers. One social indicator of a family's position in the class order is the offspring's success on the educational and labor market. As currently more and more Chinese middle class families value a degree obtained abroad, this puts additional pressure on children forced to satisfy their parents' hopes and aspirations.

Finally, I argue that we should explore state institutions and destination country's socio-economic condition not only as factors influencing the decision-making and labor mobility of already settled highly skilled migrants. It is also important to consider that variation in the political and economic setting of a host country involves differences in incoming students by class and status origin. I expect this dynamic to shape the social and economic characteristics of Chinese students who arrive to the United Kingdom and Spain. When already established in the EU, skilled labor migrants, certainly conditioned by the economic, social and human capital they have gathered, do not map out their

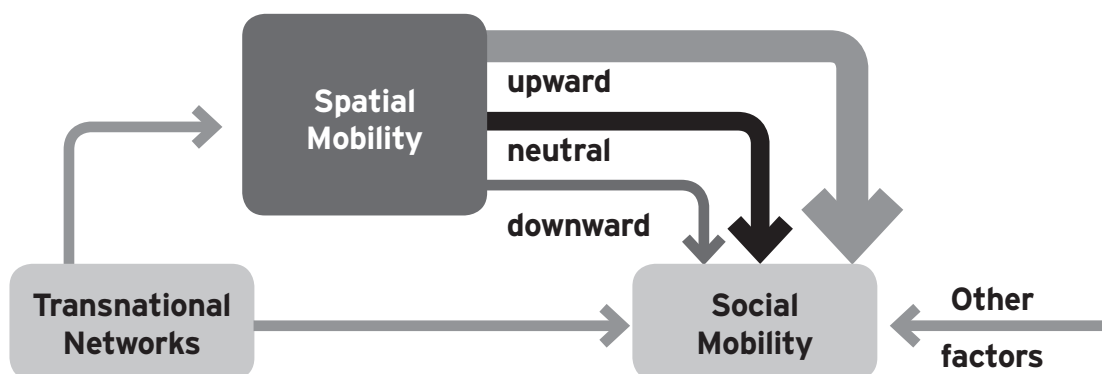
strategies in vacuum. The ways in which immigrants draw on their stocks of capital depend on social, economic and political context at the European level (e.g., growing labor uncertainty among the youth), on the national ground and in China. In this vein, mixed embeddedness perspective (Kloosterman, Van der Leun and Rath 1999; Kloosterman and Rath 2001) rejects the neoclassical stance that immigrants simply seize on market opportunities (Todaro 1980; Borjas 1989, 1990; Simon 1989). Similarly, Portes reminds us about diverse contexts of immigrants’ reception (1995) that shape the newcomers’ social mobility. The variation in “modes of incorporation” is the function of distinct constellations of state policies toward immigrant populations, divergent perceptions of society and mass media, and dissimilar strength of co-ethnic ties in the immigrant community. Likewise, “new theory of assimilation” (Alba and Nee 2003) underlines that migrants’ agency is shaped by state’s institutions. On the other hand, global integration theory suggests that migration decision-making depends not only on the wage and career prospects but also the perceived ease of transition to a culturally different destination (Cheng and Yang 1998; Szelényi 2006:11).

3.5 Causal Relations between Migrants’ Social and Spatial Mobility

I expect that the variation in non-EU migrants’ social mobility patterns also rests on foreigners’ geographical mobility and on their capacity to develop transnational networks. On the other hand, spatial work-related mobility and ability to foster wide ties closely intertwine with the immigrants’ class and status origins, their cultural, financial and human capitals.

This project will test a hypothesis that different transnational networks which students develop during their studies relate to distinct spatial and social mobility patterns upon their graduation. I display the complexity of the links between transnational networks, spatial and social mobility in the course-grained model below.

Model of causal relations between transnational networks, spatial and social mobility of the highly skilled Chinese in the European Union.



First, migration scholars argue that involvement in transnational networks spurs spatial mobility (Portes 1998; Massey and Zenteno 1999; Phillips and Massey 2000; Winters, de Janvry, and Sadoulet 2001; Curran et al. 2005; Massey and Fussel 2004). Second, human capital approach suggests that geographical mobility facilitates human capital accumulation, career building and upward social mobility (Salt 1983; Salt and Findlay 1989). The linkages between networks, spatial and social mobility remain less clear, however. Networks may foster spatial circulation and consequently facilitate social mobility in the function of the capital and information they provide. To be more precise, wide international networks fostered while pursuing academic careers might amplify the escalator effect and facilitate social spiralism process (Watson 1964) upon graduation. Thanks to taking up jobs outside ethnic enclaves while studying, holding internships abroad and thus opening to non-Chinese professional partners and peer students, the Chinese highly skilled migrants maximize the chances of successful economic incorporation abroad and increase the opportunities of upward social mobility in contrast to the students employed only in the Chinese economic niches. The latter group's transnational ties limited to co-ethnics would not help them ascend the social ladder upon graduation. This project will evaluate whether the Chinese students' capacity to foster transnational ties and move abroad after graduation to ascend socially correlates with their human, cultural and financial capital amassed prior to and during attending university.

Next, a competing hypothesis predicts that spatial mobility leads to downward social mobility. Deprived of transnational experience, equipped with a low-demanded degree and lacking language fluency, Chinese graduates who move internationally may only be able to occupy low-paid jobs, for instance in the secondary ethnic labor market. In fact, even foreign-born highly skilled migrants equipped with a first-class degree and proficient in languages, experience downward mobility when making a first step abroad to nonetheless afterwards move up in the career ladder (Chiswick et al. 2005; Favell and Recchi 2011).

Further, spatial mobility could be irrelevant for social mobility. In other words, transnational networks could influence social mobility without the intervening variable of spatial mobility. The university degree gained in the EU and international embeddedness of Chinese students (via e.g. holding internships abroad while studying) may allow the postgraduates to remain in the country where they studied, succeeding on the national labor market. Consequently, the well-educated Chinese may be able to escape the limits of spatial mobility that often prevents the low skilled Chinese from settling down. Here, my research will reveal whether for the Chinese highly skilled spatial mobility is a necessary step toward career progression.

On the other hand, one may well imagine a scenario where the causal relationship between spatial and social mobility is reversed: social mobility leads to spatial mobility and greater involvement in transnational ties. For instance, the Chinese highly skilled graduates whose transnational networks during studies were scarce and spatial

mobility negligible were targeted and hired upon graduation by multinational companies (see Salt 2009). Students might thus have ascended significantly on the social ladder and developed networks after the escalator effect took place. This scenario resonates with the modernization theory and liberal theory of industrialization (Treiman 1970:218) in what they tell us about the dominant role of human over social capital in modern societies (for a similar argument, see also Boudon 1974).

To sum up, this project hopes to contribute to the social mobility and migration literatures by identifying the mechanisms that link contextual variables with migrants' diverse stocks of capital, spatial mobility and social mobility. In detail, I aim to build the theory on social mobility by unraveling the impact of migrants' family position in class and status orders. I also intend to identify the conditions under which spatial mobility fosters upward or downward social mobility and link the mobility patterns to the involvement in different types of transnational networks.

4. MAPPING THE CHINESE IMMIGRATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

4.1 Leading Players in the Chinese Highly Skilled Immigration Field

Multiple agendas meet in the field of Chinese highly skilled immigration in the EU. The actors involved include China and Chinese students, higher education system in the EU, the European Union, the EU member states and multinational companies. The intersection of diverse interests reveals that the global labor market, EU university system, EU foreign and internal policies as well as member states legislation all play a role in shaping the patterns of the Chinese highly skilled migrants' inflow to the EU and their performance on the European labor markets. Moreover, it suggests a growing interconnectedness of global labor and student mobility (Salt 2009:25).

China's opening to the world after the enactment of economic and political reforms in 1978 facilitated emigration. Since then, China actively promotes emigration, endorsing migrancy as a model way of life for local communities (Pieke 2004). The country benefits from sending its younger and skilled cohorts abroad, counting on knowledge transfer, remittances and a construction of a loyal and trained diaspora (Pieke 2004). On the other hand, for the young Chinese studying in Europe offers a golden opportunity to build human, social and economic capital, at the same time escaping harsh entry exams and high tuition fees at the overloaded Chinese top universities.

In contrast, the commercialization of higher education systems in Europe spurs academies' increased interest in China, whose students' tuition fees help

fill the gaps in the European universities' budgets. The massive influx of non-EU students puts high pressure on the EU universities, however, forcing them to internationalize their university programs and compete at the European and global higher education market.

Next, scholars and policy-makers alike stress the short supply of highly skilled labor in the EU, calling for an ease in visa restrictions for the highly skilled (see, e.g. Parkes and Angenendt 2010; Kahanec and Zimmermann 2011). Until now, the EU attempts at regulating the inflow of non-EU skilled migrants have failed to successfully address the rising demand for an academically qualified labor. Only in 2007 did the European Commission launch a "Blue Card" initiative that aimed at opening the European labor markets for non-EU migrants, granting them a possibility to move across the EU borders. Nevertheless, the proposal underwent serious cuts during the negotiations between member states (von Weizsacker 2008; Collet 2009), curtailing, for instance, the Card owners' right to spatial work mobility in the EU (Arts. 18 and 19, (2), 9, 13; Parkes and Angenendt 2010). The EU member states' diverging interests and general unwillingness to pool sovereignty in the migration field to the European level continuously hamper the pan-European "Blue Card" or Immigration Pact (2008) measures.

Finally but importantly, multinational companies operating on the EU market increasingly target Chinese students and postgraduates (Salt 2009), pressuring national governments to ease visa requirements for the highly skilled. Firms benefit from hiring non-EU graduates that completed their education in Europe because they bring in international experience and have a high propensity for ongoing mobility. What is more, having acquired linguistic and cultural competences in an EU member state, they connect global firms in Europe with the employees' motherlands. In this respect, the Chinese graduates are crucial because of the importance of trade between Europe and China. In fact, as Salt's research reveals, companies deliberately target students from particular geographic regions and nationalities: 97 per cent of his respondents – company managers - mentioned Asia, particularly China (2009:22).

4.2 Patterns in the Chinese Immigration to Europe in the XX Century

Although the Chinese begun to emigrate centuries ago, Chinese labor migration to Europe stems back only to the beginnings of the XX century. First notable influx of the Chinese occurred in the down of the World War I with the arrival of about 100 000 workers recruited to work in the French military and then reconstruction industries. Also, in the same period Europe saw a rapid increase in Chinese shipmen, street peddlers and students (Minghuan 2005:656-657). The last category landed initially in France, regarded by China as politically leftist and safe environment for the Chinese highly skilled.

The World War II cut short the ties bonding Chinese in Europe and in the mainland China (McKeown 2005:72). Dismantling transnational networks led to the rise of Chinese family businesses, as it was easier to hire family members already on the spot than to recruit compatriots from China.

Minghuan identifies three major Chinese migration waves to Europe after the II World War (2005: 657-659). Since the early 1960s, migration from rural China peaked. Peasants easily penetrated the British, Dutch, German and French catering and restaurant industry, developing thriving informal ethnic businesses, connected to one another and recruiting predominantly on the basis of family and village networks. Later in the 1970s, France experienced a wave of Chinese refugees from Indochina. The influx of refugees coincided with a growing number of Chinese seizing on family reunification programs and of students.

4.3 Transformation of the Chinese Low Skilled Population in Europe

The composition of the Chinese immigrant population in the European Union rapidly transformed in recent decades not only because of the massive influx of the highly skilled. Also the Chinese low skilled population in the EU has changed markedly. Pieke shows us, for instance, that mobility is a way of life for the Chinese low skilled (2004). High competition, low employment opportunities and vast family and village transnational ties account for this pattern.

Blue-collar workers seize on economic niches in Europe and search for amnesties within the EU (Pieke 2004). They find employment in wholesale, clothing and import industries, seizing on ties with mainland China (Minghuan 2005:660-662). Their economic activities restructure and open traditional Chinese ethnic market. By and large, they are wealthier and better educated than the previous Chinese low skilled immigrants. Coming from urban areas, new migrants find it difficult to penetrate dense Chinese ethnic economy in old destination countries. Lacking connections to family and village networks built by previous migrants, they move out of saturated restaurant business in the member states where they face stiff competition with old Chinese migration (Pieke 2004) and settle in Central Eastern EU member states, such as Poland, where the demand for cheap Chinese clothes, shoes and household items peaks.

4.4 The Chinese Students Overseas

Currently, "of all international students, over 18%, almost 410 000, come from China. (...) China is the most significant country of origin among international

students in all of the G7 countries except Italy and France (where it is second after Morocco)" (OECD 2011:67). In comparison with the Chinese student population in the US, however, the number of Chinese graduates in Europe is still fairly small. The proportions have slightly reversed due to the restrictive turn in the US visa policies after September 11th (Borjas 2002; Szelényi 2006). It remains to be seen whether president Obama administration's bill *Immigration Innovation Act* of 2013 targeted at temporary and permanent highly skilled migrants will boost the influx of the "best and brightest" to the US.

The Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) estimates that between 1978 and December 2011, the overall number of all types of Chinese students enrolled at higher education institutions abroad surpassed 2 245 100 (read in *Australian Government/Australian Education International* 2012). The Chinese government data released on 10 February 2012 confirms that substantial proportions of the young Chinese decided to stay outside China upon graduation. That is, of all those who left China for study purposes, only 818 400 returned. The shares of those who study overseas and of those who return continuously increase. For instance, comparing 2011 to 2010, the number of young Chinese at foreign universities raised by 19 per cent (55 000) and the number of students coming back to China upon graduation went up by about 38 per cent (51 300). The increase in return rates are related to China's policies offering generous support for the overseas graduates. For instance, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) has launched a "Hundred Talents" program that provides returning Chinese who studied science and technology with economic support and employment possibilities in Chinese research hubs "and other regional authorities offer cash grants to returning entrepreneurs" (OECD 2012:180).

In 2011 (statistics on 2012 have not been released yet), there were 339 700 Chinese students studying abroad "among whom 12,800 had been sent (and paid for) by the State, 12,100 had been sent (and paid for) by other organisations, and 314,800 of whom had made their own arrangements and covered their own expenses" (*Australian Government/Australian Education International* 2012). The fact that about 92 per cent of all Chinese studying abroad covers the living- and tuitions costs out of their pockets suggests that they are less bound than their governmentally funded colleagues in the decision about return or stay outside China. Second, this data shows that a large number of students' families can afford costly long-term investment in children's' careers. In this vein, scholars and admission experts argue that while until recently vast majority of the families of Chinese students abroad stemmed from the academic elite, currently the number of students from working class families significantly grows (*Financial Times*, 3 April 2012). Summarizing, high enrollment costs and fierce competition block the access of students of less affluent origins to Chinese universities and provide them with incentives to study abroad.

5. CASE SELECTION: THE CHINESE HIGHLY SKILLED IN THE UK AND SPAIN

European destinations of the highly skilled Chinese diversified in the last decade. Besides heading for the top level expensive universities, young less affluent Chinese increasingly choose countries that offer lower tuition- and living costs. They also aim at getting degrees that provide an added value on the job market, such as bilingual English-Spanish MBAs. To reveal a broad picture of labor attainment mechanisms of the young Chinese, I draw a sample of graduates who finished universities in Great Britain and Spain. These states significantly vary in the living costs, tuition fees and policies targeted at highly skilled workers. Moreover, the countries experienced a rapid and significant increase in the Chinese student population in the last decades. I select students who got a higher education degree in London, Barcelona and Madrid as these cities rank high in the number of Chinese students and Chinese working populations. Such strategy provides variation in both national context (attitudes to migrants, policies, labor perspectives) and in the socio-economic profile of migrants, allowing for rich comparison opportunities. I will thus be able to stratify my sample according to the discipline or cost of the degree, linking the labor paths to involvement in distinct networks in different national context.

Country	The Number of Chinese Students		
	2010/11	2011/12	Increase
The UK	67325	78715	16.9%
Spain	4214	4719	10.7%

Sources: The United Kingdom: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) 2013; Spain: Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, March 2012.

In the next section, I describe the Chinese students in the UK and Spain. I discuss their numbers, territorial dispersion, gender balance and preferred disciplines. In addition, I focus on national policy settings and on the reasons for inflow to the UK and Spain.

5.1 The United Kingdom

Massive Chinese student immigration to Great Britain developed in the second half of the twentieth century. Initially, young Chinese came to the UK with government stipends while “with the deregulation of the migration control policy in China in 1986, the number of self-financed Chinese students started to grow” (Shen 2008:154). In sum, Great Britain cherishes a long-established tradition of Chinese student immigration and aggressively recruits students in the mainland China. As opposed to Spain, British universities score high in the world university

rankings. Their elevated tuition fees for non-EU students influence different Chinese student economic profiles in Spain and in the UK. That is, one could expect that students in Spain are, on average, less affluent and score lower on academic achievement ranks prior to leaving China as they do not face the stiff competition of British top university departments.

Although on the whole the Chinese of higher class origins will find it easier to study in the UK than their poorer peers, it would be mistaken to take for granted that only the richer Chinese populate British universities. First, less affluent families with high status aspirations might be determined to send their children to good schools in London while running up substantial debts. Second, once less wealthy Chinese devise a way to study in London, new network ties emerge that help perpetuate immigration of the lower class students. Thus, different linkages help sustain immigration flows of less well-off students and of the rich ones. While the Chinese “new middle class” (Walder 2011; Wu and Cheng 2012) can be largely detached from the old Chinese immigration in the UK, the affluent students whose relatives live and work in Great Britain for decades can seize upon connections inaccessible neither to the better-off and poorer new middle class representatives.

According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the number of Chinese students in the UK in the 2011/2012 academic year amounted to 78715 (HESA 2013) what represents a 17 per cent growth in comparison to 2010/2011. In contrast, in the same period the total number of students in the UK fell by 0.2 per cent (reaching 2 496 645). Despite restrictive turn in the British student visa legislation (see below) and against the background of a decline in the number of general and other Asian (e.g., Indian and Pakistani) student residents, the inflow of Chinese students to the UK grows.

About 74 per cent of Chinese students in the UK (66050) cluster in England. Much smaller communities concentrate in Wales (4395), Scotland (7485) and Northern Ireland (785) (HESA 2013). In the early 2012, London Mayor Boris Johnson stated that London hosts the largest Chinese student population than any other foreign city in the world (*The Guardian* 15 March 2012). Not surprisingly, London is the main destination on the higher education map of the young Chinese. The UK’s capital is a financial, political, cultural and social nucleus, providing the Chinese with rich educational possibilities and a potential of future employment in multiple British and Chinese companies (such as Industrial and Commercial Bank of China ICBC, HSBC and China Telecom).

It is difficult to access data on the subjects pursued by Chinese students who resided outside the UK before entering the country. Previous studies only generally indicate that the young Chinese tend to choose economics and business departments (Shen 2008:155). Statistics on the Chinese students’ acceptance rates in 2012 at the institutions under the UCAS umbrella (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the organization responsible for managing applications to higher

education courses in the UK) partially corroborate Shen's findings. They show that most young Chinese choose business administration, engineering and mathematical sciences, social sciences and creative arts and design (UCAS 2012). Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) provides detailed account of the UK-domiciled Chinese students, that is, of those who have already lived in Great Britain before embarking on a university path. Domiciled Chinese are not the main focus of my study as I expect the non-UK domiciled Chinese to face different challenges and opportunities than the young Chinese who received high school education in the UK.

Till now, I could not acquire data on the rates of Chinese students who, having studied in the UK, remained in the EU after graduation. On average, as Blinder notes, international students usually stay shorter in Great Britain than other categories of migrants. For instance, of those who arrived in 2004 "79% no longer remained in the UK as settled residents or in the immigration control system by the end of 2009. Another 6% of the 2004 cohort remained as students, 3% were still in the UK temporarily on work visas not leading to settlement, and 11% were on a path to settlement or settled here through work or family routes" (2011:2). That is, about 14 per cent of the 2004 international student cohort stayed in the UK upon gaining their degrees.

International student stay rates in 2013 might drop substantially in comparison to previous years due to recent drastic changes in the UK student visa system. Since 2010, the British government's explicit goal has been to significantly cut the migration net numbers. Though facing stiff competition for the "best and brightest" with the OECD countries, the UK coalition government decided to reach its objective through decreasing the stay rates of skilled workers. As Salt notes, "measures have been taken (...) to reduce inflows through three of the main routes of entry: economic; family; students" (Salt 2012:119). The government underlined that in some cases international students were admitted for inexistent courses and worked illegally in the UK. In 2010, the Home Office emphasized the need to cut the link between temporary migration and permanent migration, stating that it was overly simple to turn into permanent migrant after a temporary stay (Salt 2012:120). In relation to a public consultation on entrance criteria for students launched by the government, the Minister of Immigration instructively announced that "too many students coming to study below degree level have been coming here to live and work, rather than studying. We need to stop this abuse" (UK Border Agency, 7 December 2010).

Till now, students could stay up to two years after graduation looking for work. As Britain closed the Post-Study Work (PSW) visa route from February 2013 on, students must find a sponsor and a work with a salary of £20 000 (22 900 EUR) a year, or are threatened with deportation. The government also introduced a 5-year limit on student visas for most university students. Other restrictions include stricter accreditation and inspection of colleges and diligent controls of English fluency of international students on degree courses. In addition, the government voted for further limitations on work permits and on bringing in dependents. On the other hand, "in 2012, the government also announced a new route for international grad-

uate entrepreneurs: students who have engaged in innovative entrepreneurial activity during their studies may stay on afterwards to develop their business ideas” (OECD 2012:108). A rise in the standards of international students’ enrollment led to a situation where “by November 2011, almost 500 independent institutions had been banned from recruiting abroad (...), hundreds more failed to sign up for the new inspection system” (Salt 2012:125). The migration policy moved to the top of political agenda when London Metropolitan University’s visa license was revoked in August 2012 and the institution was banned from recruiting new and teaching already registered international students.

Public downgrading of the degrees obtained by international students in the UK affects the strategies of recruitment companies and of Chinese students. Background interviews show that the Chinese are increasingly reluctant to start one-year Master programs in Great Britain fearing that companies will undervalue their degrees (as a Chinese Master student in Barcelona told me, according to her colleagues in the UK, the firms’ HR departments simply delete such CV files).

5.2 Spain

Chinese student immigration to Spain is a fairly new phenomenon. While in the year 2000 local universities attracted only 240 young Chinese, in 2008 they registered 2500 and in 2012 - 4719 graduates from China (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social 2012 – later cited as MESS). The number of Chinese students rises rapidly with the growth in the general Chinese population. Namely, in 1995, 9158 Chinese resided legally in Spain. This population has multiplied about 170 times to reach 170369 residents in 2012. Curiously, unlike the intra-EU immigration, Chinese immigration increases with deepening of the already acute economic crisis in Spain (MESS 2012). Specifically, we note a 6 per cent growth (9733) in the total number of migrants from China comparing 2011 to 2012.

Chinese students are unevenly distributed throughout the Spanish universities. About half of them study in Madrid (1501) and Catalonia (1043). Smaller populations cluster in Castilla y Leon (698) and Andalucía (668). Statistics reveal gender imbalance within the group. Namely, females account for 72 per cent of all registered Chinese at Spanish higher education institutions (MESS 2012). One could link the preponderance of females over males to the popularity of Spanish philology among the Chinese. As Beltrán notes, Spanish, business administration, marketing, economics and international trade peak in the discipline choices of the young Chinese (2010:26). Female students also predominate in two main Spanish cities, but here the gender proportions are more equal. That is, in Madrid females add up to 65 per cent of all Chinese students (980 females, 521 males) while in Catalonia women population amounts to about 66 per cent (692 females, 351 males, see MESS 2012).

Similarly to scholarly ignorance about the social mobility patterns of Chinese students in the United Kingdom, we know little about the young Chinese labor incorporation patterns upon graduation at Spanish universities. The data at hand describes Chinese who work in Spain, but it is impossible to track down the graduates of Spanish higher institutions. Though far incomplete, a snapshot of main employment sectors of all Chinese in Spain gives us at least a broad picture of potential career paths that this group of migrants takes.

First, as Carrasco Carpio and García Serrano indicate, about 11 per cent of all working Chinese born outside Spain hold a university degree (due to sampling problems, one has to interpret the results with caution though) (2012:54). Alas, again no statistics provide detailed data on the institutions' locations. The distribution of Chinese employees by sector reveals that the largest share - 89 per cent - work in commerce and hotel industry. About 4 per cent find employment in logistics, 3 per cent in manufacturing industry and the same proportion work in households (Carrasco Carpio and García Serrano 2012:80). By and large, skilled workers predominate among the Chinese in Spain with about 25 per cent of all employed Chinese working as company managers, what is consistent with the fact that 38 per cent of Chinese are self-employed (2012:86). This pattern clearly distinguishes the Chinese from the majority of active migrant and native populations in Western societies that in 90 per cent enjoy the employee status (2006:102). Another 64 per cent of Chinese in Spain find employment in the service sector. My research aims to reveal whether the young Chinese graduates who remain in Spain after receiving a university degree deviate from the well-trodden Chinese career paths.

Comparing to other migrants, the Chinese in Spain display the highest spatial (inter-municipal) mobility levels (Carrasco Carpio and García Serrano 2012:100). This confirms findings about behavioral patterns of this migrant group in other countries (see, e.g., Guerassimoff 2003; Laczko 2003; Thunø 2003: 275; Pieke 2004; Shen 2008). That is, about 18 per cent of all Chinese in Spain changed their official domicile ("padrón") in 2011. In contrast, the external mobility level, capturing those who leave Spain, has decreased since 2008 and currently adds up to 6.4 per cent (Carrasco Carpio and García Serrano 2012:102). However, the external mobility rates underestimate the real numbers of those who leave Spain, as many migrants do not report to local authorities the change in their domicile when they move abroad.

Affordable university tuition fees and living costs on the Iberian Peninsula partially explain the growing interest of Chinese families to have their offspring educated in Spain. Further, studying in Spain offers prospects to those who master Chinese, Spanish and English to secure employment in multinational companies operating on the growing market between China and South America. Some also observe a growing interest of the young Chinese to stay in Spain, become self-employed and launch small companies dealing with international trade (*El Confidencial* 10 March 2012). Bilateral recognition of each country's degrees accompanied the tightening of trade cooperation between China and Spain. Nowadays, coherent

administrative framework supports the Chinese student immigration the Mediterranean country. Until 2011, Chinese and Spanish universities launched about 400 academic partnerships (*Ibercampus* 22 October 2012), facilitating the influx of the young Chinese. In addition, Spain heavily advertises its university programs in China. For instance, following the example of the UK, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB) and the University Alcalá de Henares set up recruitment offices in the China. Moreover, various local bilateral initiatives emerge. To name a few, the Technical University of Madrid launched a language immersion program for Chinese students who are offered a stay with Spanish families related to the university. In Catalonia, Autonomous University of Barcelona runs a recruitment program “Ortelius” targeted at Chinese and Latin American students. Further, the Technical University of Catalonia (UPC) has a double degree with Tongji University and an exchange program with Tsinghua University. Finally, associated within the framework “Alianza 4 Universidades”, the University of Barcelona (hosting 181 Chinese students in 2011), together with the Rovira i Virgili University in Tarragona, UAB, Autonomous University of Madrid and the Madrilenian Carlos III University put China on top of their recruitment agenda (see *El Periódico* 13 December 2011). There are also five Confucius Institutes in Spain, and other institutions, such as Casa Asia in Barcelona, promote Asian and Chinese culture on the Iberian Peninsula.

In this project I focus on students who graduated from the universities in Barcelona and Madrid. The reason behind selecting two cities in Spain and one – London – in the United Kingdom is a significantly lower number of Chinese students and, consequently, of graduates, in Spain. Inclusion of Barcelona and Madrid offers an additional opportunity to look at how local politics affects labor incorporation paths. Madrid, city which promotes multicultural policies of immigrant integration, largely differs from Barcelona, where assimilationist measures predominate (Davis 2009). One may thus expect that distinct institutional settings at sub-national level influence the Chinese graduates’ chances and willingness to stay after finishing studies.

The capital of Catalonia autonomous region – Barcelona - hosts about 20 per cent of all non-EU residents, what makes it the most densely populated by non-EU migrants urban area in Spain. (Observatorio Permanente de Inmigración 2012:7). Catalonia and particularly Barcelona attract large numbers of Chinese and other non-EU students thanks to a wide university network and because of the region’s popularity as a tourist destination. Among 8516 international students at Catalan universities, 65 per cent (5537) come from outside the European Union (Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte 2012). In Madrid region with 13036 international students, those with a non-EU domicile account for 59 per cent of non-EU students. In Catalonia, it is the University of Barcelona that hosts the largest number of non-EU students (1876), scoring better than the UAB (1031), UPC (930) and Pompeu Fabra (272). In the country’s capital, the University Complutense with 2999 non-EU students ranks highest, followed by the Technical University of Madrid (UPM) (1263), the University Rey Juan Carlos (880), Autonomous University of Madrid (673) and Carlos III (463). At the moment I lack detailed data on the shares of Chi-

nese within the general non-EU student population. I expect to receive this information directly from the universities.

In contrast to the United Kingdom, international student immigration to Spain develops in a welcoming policy environment. In detail, Spanish long-term residence Immigration Law (2009) transposes EU regulations and, as a result, “like reunited families, long-term residents are better able to secure their future in Spain than in most European countries. (...) Spain opened equal chances for former students trained for its labour market to settle there. Once non-EU residents have 5 years’ residence and a basic income like any Spanish resident, the procedure is short and simple.” (Huddleston et al. 2011:186).

Another difference that sets apart the Chinese in Spain and in the UK is the linkage of current students and graduates to the “old” Chinese immigrant populations. While the newly arrived Chinese in the UK vary in their networks to the comfortably settled co-ethnics, the new Chinese immigrants in Spain, according to the Chinese Student Association in Barcelona, are largely disconnected from the older Chinese immigration. Different character and timing of Chinese inflows to these countries account for such patterns. That is, the Chinese immigration to the UK begun much earlier and is more numerous than the inflows to Spain from China. Second, the old Chinese immigrants in the UK occupy on average higher class positions than the immigrants in Spain as either they stem from higher classes in China or the time spent in the UK allowed them to move up the social ladder.

In sum, one could expect that some Chinese graduates would settle in Spain because of the country’s favorable immigration policies, low living costs and the window of opportunity to engage in international commerce between China, South America and Spain. However, this window of opportunity may direct the skillful Chinese to work in global trade on the spot: in Latin America or China. Last but not least, the economic downturn that hit Spain particularly hard may discourage the young Chinese entrepreneurs.

6. METHODOLOGY

Adopting a stratification research approach (e.g., Szelényi, Wnuk-Lipinski and Treiman 1995; Bertaux and Thompson 2006; Favell 2008), I collect data on labor and residential trajectories from the sample of highly skilled Chinese migrants. In detail, my interviews gather information on individuals’ settlement and work histories before they had embarked upon university career, throughout and after studies. Next, I inquire about the family’s position in the class, status and party structure and its perceived impact on the respondent’s social mobility. Also, I collect evidence on students’ networks along their life. To gain an insight about the hopes and aspirations of the young Chinese, I ask about the respondents’ reference

groups, observing if they compare themselves to the native, mainland Chinese or Chinese immigrant population. This methodological approach enables an “analysis of contingent relationships throughout the career” (Treiman and Ganzeboom 2000:134) thus allowing for an evaluation of competing hypotheses about social mobility mechanisms.

I follow a strategy of paired comparison (Tarrow 2010), selecting graduates from universities in different national contexts. Such approach yields the benefit of comparison of the young Chinese who, on one hand, differ in class and status backgrounds assuming that on average it is more difficult for the less affluent Chinese to pay for living in Great Britain than in Spain³. On the other hand, such case selection provides a chance to study how the lives of the Chinese graduates unfold in diverse socio-political contexts. In detail, within-case comparisons allow me to hold the contextual variables constant while cross-case comparisons provide an opportunity to control for the economic resources. My strategy here involves contrasting labor paths of affluent ex-students from British universities with similarly rich alumni of Spanish universities (e.g., those who can afford getting costly MBA degrees at ESADE or IESE) and taking the same step with the alumni of lower-middle or working class origins. I stratify the sample along university / discipline, labor attainment and gender lines including, if possible, the unemployed, self-employed and dependent workers in diverse sectors. The inclusion of graduates from wide range of disciplines allows me to compare ex-alumni who share similar educational background but differ in the country of study (e.g., a Spanish degree from the UK would probably matter less on the job market than a comparable degree from a Spanish university).

I plan to conduct about 30 principal interviews in each country, selecting my respondents according to theoretical and snowball sampling (Warren 2001:87). My strategy to reach Chinese graduates involves obtaining the institutional (and private if possible) e-mail addresses of those who graduated within the last year from universities in London, Barcelona and Madrid. In case the data confidentiality restrictions prevent the universities from passing me the ex-alumni e-mail addresses, the departments resend my message without me knowing the graduates' contact details.

The letter to recent graduates includes an invitation to participate in the interview and a link to a brief survey that inquires about the facts and perceptions on the respondents' work and residence trajectories. Such strategy opens up a potential to gather large amount of basic information on labor attainment and thus to detect general patterns in the young Chinese's labor paths. Next step – in-depth interviews with those who agree to meet in person – allows me to uncover the mechanisms of different career paths. In addition, seizing on snowballing technique, I

3. Taking the cost of the degree as a proxy of class origins has its drawbacks, however. On one hand, there are the less affluent but the brightest ones awarded with scholarships to study at the prestigious and expensive departments. On the other hand, the richest graduates might have other than career-related reasons when choosing a cheaper university abroad. Also, the rich graduates might not necessarily be the “best and brightest” who land themselves top jobs.

plan to interview the Chinese graduates whom I contact without the universities' intermediary assistance. Besides, I carry out a number of background interviews with key informants, contacting multinational companies to obtain information about potential recruitment programs. Also, I communicate with university representatives to get accurate data on the Chinese student enrollment and about perceptions on international recruitment programs run by universities and (multi) national companies. Finally, I interview the representatives of institutions involved in cooperation with or promotion of China (e.g., Confucius Institutes, Casa Asia in Barcelona etc.).

I aim to avoid the limitations of methodological nationalism (Favell and Recchi 2011) by employing a transnational approach to the study of labor mobility. Namely, the interview process started in Great Britain and Spain might lead me to interview, face-to-face or via Internet, the graduates who moved to other EU member states. Following students who graduated in Spain and the United Kingdom and subsequently moved abroad enables me to reach the individuals that usually sneak out national statistics.

It is possible that the graduates who returned to China will be less willing to take part in the survey and (Skype) interview. In effect, interviewing only those who stayed may lead to underestimation of important factors that bring some of the young Chinese back home. As Chiswick et al. rightfully underline, "the effect of duration, or years since migration, on labor market outcomes observed in cross-sectional data may not be an unbiased estimate of the longitudinal effect that individuals experience" (2005:333). Indeed, the return migrants may substantially differ from those who stayed. In particular, "the cross-section provides upwardly-biased estimates if the least successful of immigrants have a greater propensity to remigrate or if more recent immigrant cohorts have lower unmeasured dimensions of ability relevant for the labor market" (2005:333). The reasons for return may vary from academic or labor failure to a sense of responsibility towards elderly parents in China; wish to bring up offspring in homeland, or concern about a spouse's scarce work opportunities in Europe. The decision to stay in Europe as opposed to departure is not thus purely work-related, but rather embedded in the palpable tension between two major values of the Chinese culture: responsibility for the family and educational/labor success.

In this project, I focus on the first generation of Chinese migrants, that is, on those who arrived to Europe after completing their secondary education in China. The definition of first generation needs further clarification. Academic literature tends to lump all first generation immigrants together, independently of their age upon arrival. Such generalizations, however, run the risk of constructing a category that is too diverse to provide a base for solid conclusions. As Rumbaut insightfully points out, "differences in nativity (of self and parents) and in age and life stage at arrival, which are criteria used to distinguish between generational cohorts, are known to affect significantly the modes of acculturation of adults and children in immigrant families, especially with regard to language and accent, educational at-

tainment and patterns of social mobility” (2004:1164). Those who arrived as kids (at times classified as 1.75 generation) have been longer exposed to Western norms and curricula than their older co-ethnic peers and thus their educational and labor paths are likely to differ from the ones of those who arrived to host countries in their early teens (13-17 years; 1.25 generation) and as adults (older than 18, 1 generation).

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