

New Media and Chinese Migrant Netizens: examining a potent 'known certainty'

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Internet-enabled new media & the Chinese in NZ

- Engagement with NZ mainstream media

- The web life of:
 - a) Migrant youth
 - b) The Chinese elderly
 - c) NZ Cyber China netizens.

Aim (one certainty factor affecting migration)

To examine the “multi-local identities” of NZ Chinese through their engagement and discourse on the Internet

- Multi-local identities: from neither ‘here’ nor ‘there’ to both ‘here’ and ‘there’.
- The Internet: real-time communication, interactive, participatory—A virtual homeland for transnationals.

Implications for tensions of citizenship, patriotism, sense of belonging, and the evolvment of multi-culturalism.

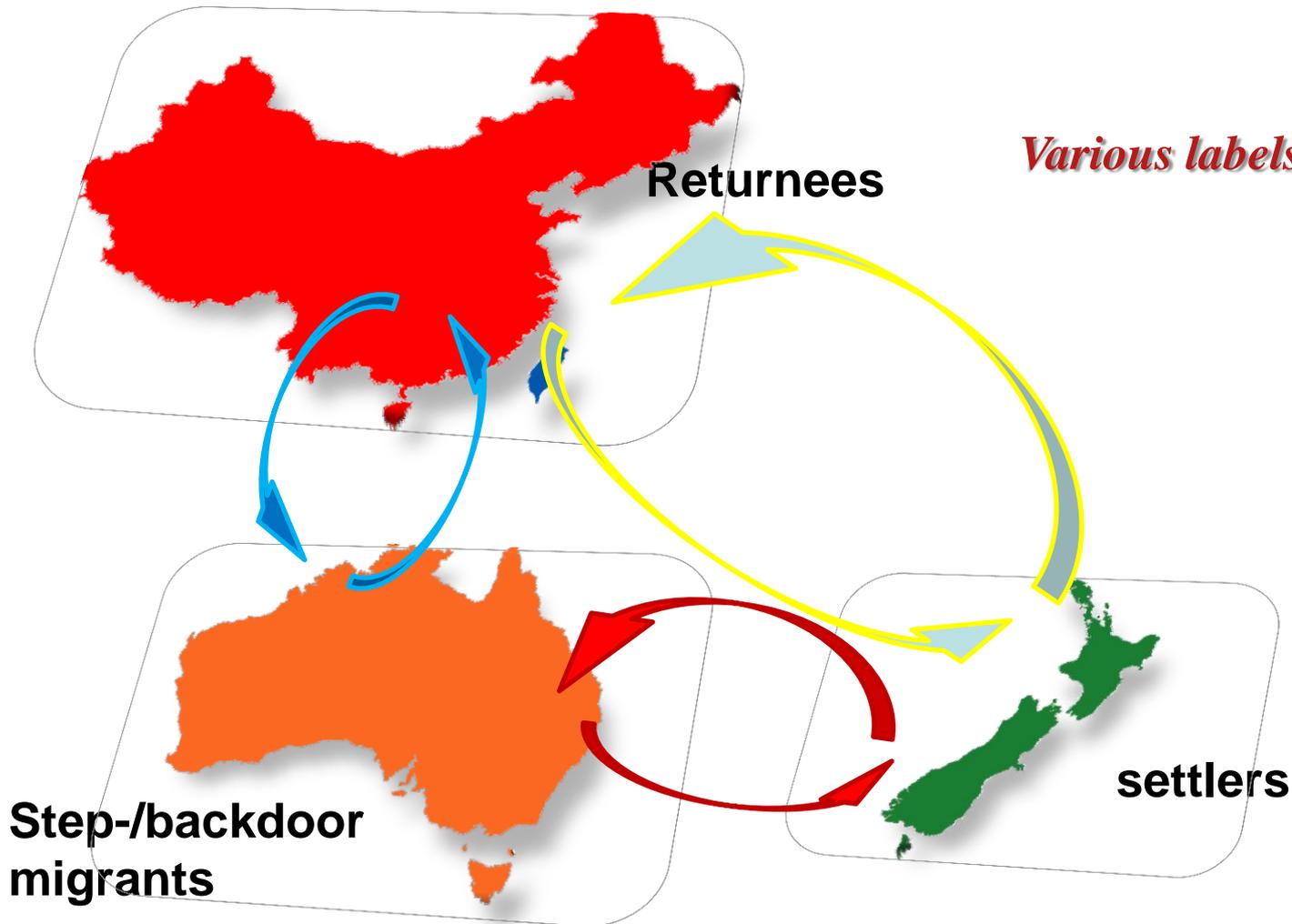
Transnationalism – an established pattern

- Wage differentials triggering migration flows
- Personal fulfilment factor (career, lifestyle...)
- Needs of different generations of the migrant family.

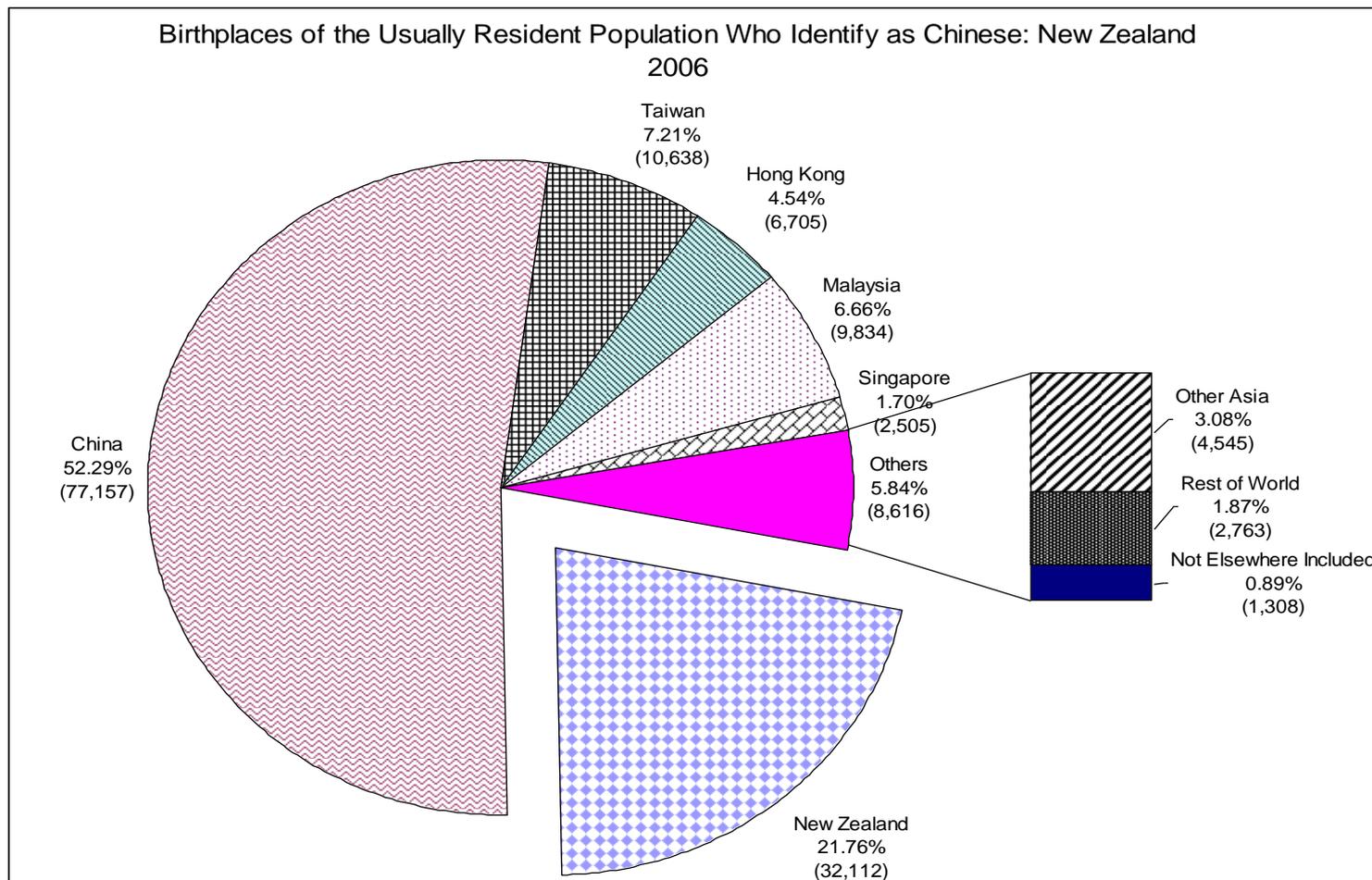
All factors actively interacting in the globalisation context.

Empowered by ICT and the networked migrant world. NZ densely wired.

Incessant transnational trajectory



New Zealand Chinese birthplaces 2006 census



New Chinese: transforming media scene

Contesting representation of its own image in the New Zealand mainstream

New Chinese arrival

↓ **Strengthening**

repertoire of affiliation (enriching form and content of mediascape)

↓ **Bolstering**

Collective identity, sense of solidarity

New research paradigm

- From the bounded framework (fixed locality/clear national borders) to deterritorialised populations.
- From examining 'integration/settlement' to examining the subjective lived experiences of migrants.
- The Internet has become a salient part of the new migrant's life.

NZ and China : connected

In the past

- “Tyranny of distance”
- Suffering from the smallness and remoteness of the NZ diaspora

Now

- Internet connecting the two, and other Chinese communities around the world

Both bridge & network--empowering & transforming.

Participation in NZ mainstream e-forums

- Sites of investigation
 - NZ Herald Online (pre-publication monitoring & evaluation process in place, commenters need to pre-register)
 - Stuff.com
- Topics selected
 - Cultural and social issues
 - Business and trade

Categorising e-forum participants

- Asian (150 comments, 7.4%)
 - explicit self-identification
 - implied
 - inferred
- Asian-literates (101 comments, 4.9%)
 - explicit self-identification
 - implied
 - inferred

Tone/stance of the comments

- Colour-coding
 - **Green**
 - **Yellow**
 - **Blue**
 - **Uncoloured**

Green

- indicates posts displaying a strong stance to protect New Zealand from an assumed Asian or particularly Chinese threat.

Example: RW's comment on O'Sullivan 'More clarity needed on Chinese land bids'. May 4, 2011.

I am from China and love the pureness of New Zealand...New Zealanders are naïve if they allow the sale of land to Chinese companies,...but they should continue to welcome Chinese investment and business in other areas.

Yellow

- A kind of 'opposite number' for green, yellow-coded posts are generally those which take a China-centred view of the world.

Example: Wayne Lo's comments on Rudman's article 'Political battles of mainland China have no place in central Auckland.' Feb. 4, 2011.

The Dalai Lama is a proven terrorist...Tibet is part of China...Mao is indisputably the greatest humanitarian in human history.'

Examples

- Another characteristic of 'China-centric' commenters is a disdainful stance taken vis-à-vis other Chinese

Example: Sean's comment on Gilbert Wong's 'Two heads of the dragon' April 16, 2011.

An short-settled NZ Chinese with good educated at mainland, it is very hard to recognise people like you are Chinese since the absent of understanding and inheriting Chinese history and culture....people like you are called banana.

Blue

- Indicates a position which is less dogmatic than either Green or blue, one which seeks to educate and inform other posters. A heightened sense of the importance of being reasonable was often taken as an indicator that a post might be considered 'blue'.

Examples

- James Fu on Brian Johnston 'Two heads of the Dragon', April 16, 2011
- *Your views and observations are certainly not narrow...I guess your China experience could be more at peace and fulfilling if your views can be broader...I sincerely wish you have an enjoyable time in China, Brian.*

Findings and Discussion - engagement

- Chinese/Asians are obviously engaged with mainstream media, reading the news, and actively posting comments.
- They tend to 'zoom in' news items with clear 'Asian' headlines and photos.
- The exact extent/degree of engagement remains to be investigated, but seems to be more extensive than first assumed.

Findings and Discussion – comparison with ethnic media

- NZ Herald online
 - 68 Green comments
 - 65 Yellow comments
 - 60 Blue comments
 - 58 uncategorised
- Skykiwi.com
 - Much more one-sided and forthright.

Findings and Discussion – Identity

- The e-forum participants are obviously more competent in English, and the most avid commenters are likely to be long-term settlers.
- A number of highly-confident new migrants assume the self-appointed role of China-defender, displaying a militancy of the outraged patriot.
- Many also assume the role of educator, sometimes using a condescending tone.

Case study: 5-day series on immigrant impact on Auckland

- NZH series 1 – 5 October, 2012, on the impact of ethnic diversity on Auckland.
- Emails to the reporter, sent either directly or through the NZH site.

25 years after New Zealand abolished nationality preference for immigration, a week-long Herald investigation looks at the impact immigrants have had on the country's largest city



Asian culture and festivals are now becoming mainstream. Photo / Paul Estcourt

NZH straw poll

- NZH straw poll (taken at four locations in Albany, Auckland Central, New Lynn and Botany Sept 15-22) with 214 respondents in total.
- Questions:
 - Are you comfortable with the ethnic diversity in Auckland today?
 - Would you be comfortable if Asians, Pacifica and Maori outnumbered Europeans?
 - Do you think ethnic diversity is a good thing?
 - How has the effect of ethnic diversity been on you personally?
 - Do you have a close friend/s who are from a different ethnic group than yourself?

Series I: embracing ethnic diversity

- drew the largest amount of comments, from Chinese, other Asians, and non-Asians alike.
- A number of non-Asians expressed contrary views, stating that they disliked 'too many immigrants'.

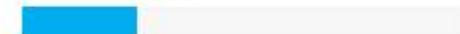
Are you comfortable with Auckland's changing ethnic mix?

9200–9250 votes

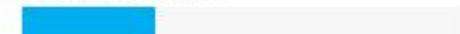
Yes 40%



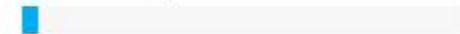
Not really 26%



Definitely not 30%



I don't know yet 4%



The face of Auckland city is slowly changing as students from all ethnicities merge. Photo / Greg Bowker

- A number of Chinese, mostly **new immigrants**, expressed **strong objections**, accusing the reporter of **drawing unnecessary attention** to the rising statistics of Chinese/Asian presence in NZ.

*“When you print this **Kiwi will hate Chinese more**. You ever think before you write. You should go back to Malaysia or wherever you coming from. Chinese life in New Zealand is shit because of you.”*

- Some pointed out that the reporter has ‘western thinking’, and he ‘only interview [sic] local born Chinese....**not real Chinese**’

*“You and all the western thinking researchers are **doing a very bad thing for the Chinese people in NZ** for putting this story in this paper. ... you are disgrace to Chinese face.”*

Series II: on religion

- The 2nd days report drew mostly positive comments from the readers, irrespective of background and ethnicity.
- Many Asians, especially Muslims, expressed appreciation.
- Only one comment from a Chinese

*I am not sure how much you know about religion, but I do not think you understand it very well. **The Dalai Lama is not a Buddhist Leader, he is an evil man** who was expelled from China and is now living in India. From outside of China he is continuing to **stir trouble for the Chinese**, and the followers are recruited to have an anti-Chinese feelings. Maybe the New Zealand Herald still doesn't know this, but as a reporter, **you should educate yourself before you write about the Dalai Lama.***



Series III: on Asian eateries

...are you able to explain how you come to say that the Asian food here is as good as in Asia... I don't think you can say the food here is as good as Asia. I am coming from China... You are not a good reporter if you make statement without thorough investigation. It is a good idea if you remove the article on line otherwise it will give reader the thinking that food in China is as bad as food in Auckland.



Series IV: on Sports

‘I think your articles are very racist against Chinese....why you do not use pictures of Chinese sports people but use Korean and Japanese. *Would like you to print an apology to the Chinese people...*’

Migrants lacking star role models

By Lincoln Tan

5:30 AM Thursday Oct 4, 2012

 Tweet { 0

 Like { 0

 +1



Any pattern of Chinese engagement?

- The recent immigrants do pay attention to what is reported in mainstream media, especially when 'Chinese' is the topic.
- Shows little awareness of editorial policy, the role of the copy-editor in determining headlines...not so different from most readers.
- Hyper-sensitivity towards 'the public image of the Chinese'. A lack of confidence? Insecurity?

Obligation of an 'ethnic reporter'?

- A number of emails show a particular expectation towards the reporter, an ethnic Chinese from Singapore, that he should be an 'insider', and not 'betray the community'.
- Readers' comments on the designated ethnic reporter seem specially demanding.

The editorial brief of the series

Much more neutral and less sensational in its wording.

Day 1 Auckland super-diverse city.

- Overview: the age of acceptance

Day 2 Tapestry of Faiths

- Embracing new religions

Would neutral headlines be better?

Day 3 Sports and Culture Clubs

New Zealand sports 'can't do without migrant pool'

Day 4 Food Diversity

Day 5 Looking Forward

Key issues facing ethnic communities; youths

Sense of responsibility of mainstream news media?

Desire to engage with multi-ethnic communities?

Thank you!

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