

**NEW CHINESE MIGRATION: THE RISE OF  
THE MIGRATION INDUSTRY IN  
SINGAPORE**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED**

**FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE**

**2012**

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

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Seah Min Li, Mabel

Date: 22 August 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to convey my gratitude to several individuals who have provided help and guidance to me during the course of this research project. I should state from the outset that any errors contained in this work are my own.

I am immensely grateful for the supervision of A/P Lian Kwen Fee. His meticulous reading of my work and his clarity of thought have enabled me to be clearer with my own ideas. For this, I am truly indebted to him.

Special mention goes to the speakers and participants of 'Asia-Pacific Worlds in Motion (IV), 2012'. My involvement in this conference provided useful feedback mid-way through the course of this thesis. The comments I received helped to refine my initial research ideas.

A significant portion of this thesis contains responses from my informants. Without doubt, I owe particular thanks to all my respondents and the people who provided leads. First, the Humanitarian Organisation of Migration Economics (HOME) gave me opportunities to interact with Chinese migrant workers. Second are my friends Daniel, Joyce, Yuqiao and Wei who introduced me to Chinese professionals working in Singapore. Third, to the Chinese professionals, I truly appreciate the time off your busy schedules. Fourth, headhunting companies and recruitment consultants were the hardest groups to contact. I must acknowledge the help of my friends Jiesheng and Johan who introduced me to relevant individuals and organisations. Fifth, to the recruitment professionals, thank you for sharing about your work for it has inspired my interest in the migration industry. Sixth, responses from government institutions constituted an important perspective to this research. I have been privileged to be granted interviews with various government departments.

To friends who always make these journeys more enjoyable: I am appreciative for the comments of Gabe, Erica and Sabast. I also wish to convey my gratitude to the graduate students in the Sociology department, and especially to Alvin and Ryan. Thank you all for always providing a stimulating research environment and for the friendships which make these postgraduate years so memorable. To my friends from Zion Bishan Bible-Presbyterian church, I appreciate your support. .

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## SUMMARY

While migration has been widely conceptualised as a socio-cultural phenomenon in Sociology and the social sciences, lesser attention has been given to the perspectives of business or industry growth. Yet, given the prevalent labour flows today, coupled with the prevailing demand for migrant labour across the skill spectrum, migration is increasingly a business-oriented activity. Using the case of new Chinese immigrants in Singapore, this thesis examines the changing social organisation of immigration and its implications for various institutions. The basic argument is that the uniquely 'new' characteristic of immigration today lies in the ways it has been institutionalised – through businesses and government policies. However, I am not suggesting that there is solely a change from the use of personal networks to formal organisations in the migration process; rather, there are elements of personal ties and informal networks which have persisted or emerged in new forms. Overall, this institutionalisation of migration results in the growing influence of the migration industry. This phenomenon has a three-fold significance. First, while Chinese migration is anything but new, I make a case for a new diversity amongst Chinese immigrants. New immigrants today are more varied in terms of backgrounds, skills and orientations, thus causing heightened diversity in Chinese immigration. This departs from older migrant groups. I also argue that migration today has taken on a more business-oriented and corporate character; it is heavily reliant on institutions rather than the conventional means of personal/familial ties. Second, this new diversity exists as older patterns of the social organisation of Chinese migration are being disrupted and new modes of immigration proliferate. Specifically, amongst Chinese immigrants, there is an increase in the dependence on institutionalised networks and concomitantly, a decrease in the reliance on personal networks. Third,



this reliance on institutionalised networks fuels the migration industry in Singapore. Through the problematization of ‘new immigration’, ‘migration networks’ and the ‘migration industry, this thesis examines the social and economic dynamics of new immigration. Overall, these developments are significant as they questions previous understandings of Chinese migration, networks and migrant social organisation.

*Key words: new Chinese migration, migration networks, migration industry, social organisation, diversity*



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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Public and academic discourses today are replete with the terms ‘new Chinese immigration’ and ‘new Chinese immigrants’ (Oon 2012; Chiang 2012; Khoo 2012). Yet, Chinese immigration is anything but new. What is new, however, are the ways in which immigration has been institutionalised – mainly through businesses and government policies as seen in the rise of the migration industry and migration-related institutions. In this thesis, I examine these new dimensions of Chinese immigration to Singapore. Firstly, I reason that this highly organised and formal arrangement today lies in the changing configurations of migration networks. While migration networks in the past were often undergirded by kinship and personal ties, networks today are more diverse and have as their social bases, relations more diverse than kinship ties. Some examples of the bases of migration networks include formal business transactions and alumni associations, which rely on a diversity of networks to sustain themselves. Consequently and secondly, these changing configurations of networks have paved the way for institutions to react to them by either facilitating or capitalising on immigration flows. These network dynamics make immigration ‘new’ insofar as the organisation of immigration today sees a departure from older patterns of organisation and concomitantly, the formation of new ones. Here, I use the case of new Chinese immigrants in Singapore to demonstrate the new social organisation of immigration and show how it drives the rise of the migration industry. Overall, these developments are significant because they constitute in and of themselves, migration-induced ‘social change’ (Van Hear 2010; Portes 2010) and also attest to changing immigration environments. More

specifically, these changes provide insights on changing migration processes which this thesis will unpack.

### 1.1 Research Problem

This thesis examines three issues: new immigration, networks and the migration industry. To understand how new immigration brings about a migration industry, yet without ignoring migrant experiences, I draw on the concept of networks. Networks serve as a tool to bridge the specific and broad level operations of immigration (Figure 1). This research thus pursues three lines inquiries: a) what is new about Chinese immigration today?, b) how different is the social organisation of Chinese immigration today? and lastly, c) what constitutes the migration industry and why is it gaining importance today?



*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework*

First, I problematize the ‘new’ traits of Chinese migration. I argue that Chinese immigration is anything but new, both internationally and locally. On an international level, there exists works on ‘new Chinese immigrants’ such as Japan (Le Bail 2005), South Africa (Huynh and Park 2011), Canada (Guo and Devoretz 2007) and Europe (Guerassimoff 2003; Giese Karsten 2003) to name a few regions.

Locally, ‘new Chinese immigration’ is somewhat oxymoronic as the inflow of Chinese immigrants has existed from the beginning of Singapore’s history, an immigrant society. Yet, despite being an old trend, current Chinese immigration exhibits discontinuities from the past. While immigration from The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is an old pattern, it has of late been occurring at unprecedented rates and is thus indicative of a new migration context.

Logically, what follows is the presence of new mechanisms undergirding migration processes. Since networks are used to explain the mechanism behind the ‘self-perpetuating’ migration processes (Massey 1986: 60), it stands as a useful concept to explain the mechanisms of change, which this thesis deals with through its focus on new migratory patterns. Specifically, I explore the new dimensions of migration networks and argue that migration networks are operating differently today, mainly because of the ways in which they have evolved. This argument is driven by a conceptual puzzle: given the diversity of Chinese immigrants today, the social bases of migration networks are evidently expanding, thus causing migration networks to become more institutionalised. Moreover, to some degree, migration networks today are also increasingly commercial in nature. These realities stand in contrast to previous understandings of Chinese networks which are centred on notions of deep and personal relations. Those networks were described to be particularly instrumental to business opportunities (Tong and Yong 1998; Rauch and Trinidad 2002). Tong and Yong (1998) refer to this as ‘personalism’, which they suggest have three aspects: personal control, *Guanxi* (personal relations) and *Xinyong* (trust). In essence, the lack of trust or the desire for personal control leads to the reliance on *Guanxi*, which overtime develops *Xinyong*. They argue that *Guanxi*

depends on personal relations anchored in locality/dialect, kinship ties, workplace ties, social clubs and friendships.

Given that traditional models of Chinese networks are anchored in close personal ties, how and why are networks today more institutionalised and commercialised? I argue that the discontinuity between old and emerging models of Chinese migration networks is caused by a decreasing usage of personal networks. I stress that the role of networks has not vanished but has instead changed in form: new immigrants have become more dependent on formal and institutionalised networks, while still being dependent on personal networks in either old or new forms. I reason that current networks are increasingly rooted in organisations which range from legal services to recruitment, settlement services and even government-linked services. One driver of this could be that the strength of personal networks to the community has become weaker and more loosely organised than it was in the past. According to Johnston (1971: 20-23), more 'loosely organised' links heighten the tendency for people to migrate. The lack of personal networks is therefore, not a deterrent to migrate. Since this is so, what tools do immigrants rely on when considering migration?

Taken together, I argue that these new network dynamics are increasingly facilitators of new migration patterns. New networks, I argue, are organised around various institutions and organisations rather than personal relations. The organisations leverage on this new population of immigrants (networks) as potential clients. As a result, there is a proliferation of migration-related institutions and a steady growth of the 'migration industry'. This 'industry' I argue consists of an assemblage of migration-related services, some of which have existed for some time



while others are only emerging. I relate the idea of network changes to the growing migration industry by asking these questions: who are the actors in this industry and how are immigrants reliant on them? In addition, how has migration become institutionalised, either in the form of businesses or government policies? Although I stress the emergence of institutionalised migration networks, I am in no way dismissing the importance of personal migration networks; I argue that these networks work in tandem with each other.

## **1.2 Outline of the Chapters**

In chapter two, I discuss the conceptual basis of this thesis. By combining the ideas of institutions and network, I wish to understand the broader institutional outcomes arising from the changes in migration processes. This chapter also includes the methodology. Chapters three and four contain secondary data. In chapter three, I present a historical overview of Chinese migration with the objective of highlighting the enduring traits/patterns of migration over the years. This sets the stage for chapter four, which is a documentation of new Chinese immigrants. The objective here is to understand the profiles of these immigrants and the new context in which they migrate in. I show that new Chinese immigration -post 1978- is common in many parts of the world and also include some empirical data from respondents from Singapore. Chapters five and six contain primary data. Moving beyond immigrant profiling and descriptions, chapter five proposes that the uniquely 'new' aspect of Chinese immigration today is its changing social organisation: instead of being predominantly rooted in personal relations, Chinese migration is increasingly institutionalised. This is prominently exhibited through the changing network

dynamics or what I term the ‘new network dynamics’. This new mechanism causes a departure from kinship-oriented nature of Chinese immigration. In its place is a system of institutionalised migration. However, I maintain that personal networks are still being used, but in a form different from the past. Personal networks and institutional networks are not mutually exclusive. Broadly speaking, these institutionalised migration networks are organised as migration-related institutions. Therefore, in chapter six, I build on the idea of the migration industry. I review literature and present suggestions on how to conceptualise the migration industry. Finally, in chapter seven, I conclude by showing how the problematization of ‘new’ immigration leads to an analysis which brings together networks and institutions. The results of combining these two perspectives are threefold: firstly, the recognition of a changing social organisation of migration, secondly, the unsettling of the assumption that migration networks are often based on kinship ties and finally, the recognition of a more institutional notion of immigration.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviews the general theories of migration and suggests that emphasis is usually on either the structural aspects or agentive features of migration. The weakness of this tendency is the presentation of somewhat polarised ideas of migration. In this chapter, I suggest that while network and institutional perspectives have been individually established in migration studies, scant attention is given to the integration of these perspectives. This integration is particularly useful to my research agenda of understanding how changes in migrant network dynamics impact the development and growing importance of the migration industry. I expound on this argument by suggesting the utility of combining these perspectives. First, it provides a frame through which to examine new Chinese migration vis-à-vis old Chinese migration. This highlights the discontinuity between old and new Chinese migration. Second, the interactions between networks and institutions shed light on a new organisation of Chinese migration - one that is more dependent on the migration industry and less on personal networks. Third, exploring the emergence of the migration industry emphasizes the linkages between the economic and social aspects of migration. Each of these arguments is taken up in Chapters three, four and five respectively. In addition, the methodology will also be discussed.

#### **2.1 Contextualising Migration: Transnationalism**

In recent years, transnationalism has become a popular lens through which researchers examine migration. This perspective captures the back-and-forth dynamics of migratory processes, thus serving as a more fluid approach to understanding migratory processes. From the late 1990s on, transnationalism, also

known as “processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994:8) became a buzzword in the literature. Transnational migration networks serve to explain the globalised economy and its reliance on the recruitment, placement and circulation of labour (Vertovec 2002).

This thesis does not seek to debate the various strands of transnationalism theories, but rather, but rather, accepts that migration processes occur within transnational environments. As such, I am aware that networks and institutions, which will be discussed later, have a transnational dimension. Since migrants’ relationships with their families, states and employers are increasingly wide-ranging and less anchored in solitary units, institutions become critical for they serve to consolidate various types of networks. In what follows, I review network perspectives and complement them with institutional perspectives to explain new Chinese migration.

## **2.2 Network Perspectives: Opportunities and Social Origins of Migration**

Networks cross-cut many aspects of social life; its reach ranges from individual interactions to groups organizational dynamics and thus makes the concept a very wide-ranging one. This however, does not compromise on its incisiveness. So how are networks related to migration? Networks are information channels through which opportunities arise. Most significant is the work of Granovetter (1985) which highlights the benefits of various types of networks. His concept of “the strength of weak ties” argues that actors tend to get non-redundant or new information from social ties that they are weakly connected with. For example,

one can get useful job information in an alumni meeting from the person that one is only marginally acquainted. This network is formed via alumni ties rather than through close friendships. Such weak ties become important in modern society as the network density, or the extent to which people know each other, is lower than in traditional society.

Social networks are also the social origins of migration (Tilly and Brown 1967; Massey 1990; Massey, Alarcón, J. Durand, and H. González 1987). Networks are useful for examining migration processes such as recruitment and settlement. They focus on actors who negotiate various network structures. In migration, they are personal ties which galvanises many migrants through a sense of community. As the first line of support to tap on, social networks serve as convenient resources for an immigrant in a new country. In addition, networks are also strategic resources for 'risk diversification' because when migrants have an extensive web of networks, the risk of emigration declines, thus resulting in more immediate potential gains being realised. Social networks are usually discussed in light of personal networks and family migration (Massey 1986; Powell and Smith-Doerr 1994).

In the case of Mexican immigration to the US for example, networks, especially kinship ties drive immigration. Familial ties consist of a high degree of trust, and serve as the immigrants' "most secure" connections (Massey 1986: 104). As a result, many immigrants rely on these ties to gain access and then employment in the US. The inherent reciprocity in familial ties ensures these migration networks to be self-sustaining. Echoing Massey's argument that family ties are the social bases of migration networks is Herman's metaphor of 'migration as a family business' (Herman 2006). Through this metaphor, Herman suggests that the family is involved

in the mobilisation, mobility and integration stages of migration, and is therefore the social basis of such movements. Much like this example, there are other studies on Mexican chain migration stating the immigrant reliance on familial networks. This type of social support does not only apply to the Mexicans but to communities in other countries as well (Grieco 1992). However, recent works acknowledge the need to differentiate the strength of migration networks because not all familial networks operate the same way as the Mexican ones, nor do all family networks possess the same degree of influence (Herman 2006; Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003). ‘Networks’ is clearly a nuanced concept, one with elaborate functions and operational mechanisms depending on the circumstances.

#### *The Limits of Social Networks*

Social networks have featured prominently in migration processes and are understood to be the fundamental social bases upon which migration is sustained. Yet, in this globalised environment, the assumption of personal networks and consequently, family-based migration, is only one explanation of migration. Therefore, in this section, I discuss the inadequacies of the social networks approach in migration. First, while the power of networks lies in the tightly-knitted relations, I argue that there is possibility of a “loosening” of migration networks. First, migration networks increasingly refer to social relations beyond that of the family and second, these ties are not inherently collaborative. What I propose is thus a deviation from ideas of migration networks are primarily rooted in family units or being part of tightly-knitted communities. Most importantly, the bases of social networks are diversifying. Migrants are no longer only depending solely on familial ties when

there are several kinds of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) available, allowing them to be connected to various opportunities and resources (Vertovec 2004; Panagakosa 2003).

My argument implies that there are changes in the ways in which networks are formed and sustained. The evolution of networks is another theme which will be explored in this thesis, especially in chapter five. In a review of migration networks and systems, Gurak and Caces (1992) discuss four themes surrounding networks and migration – function, adaptation, selectivity and evolution. The first three deal with issues of integration and linkages between communities and societies and recruitment respectively, which are common issues in the field. This thesis focuses on the fourth theme, which is the “evolution” of networks. Gurak and Fe Caces note that despite the variability in form in networks, researchers have largely assumed that kinship is the social base of networks. The diversification of social bases challenges a related concept termed ‘homophily’ which refers to the logic that similarity breeds connection (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook 2001); personal networks are thus homogenous or highly similar. Following the suggestion of McPherson et al (2001), this thesis explores the changing dynamics of networks and consequently challenges the assumption that networks stem from a common source and produce similar information. Though inherently personal, networks can be fundamentally rooted in bases outside of kinship ties.

Another critique focuses on the impact of networks. While networks are often discussed in a positive light, Gold (2005) suggests that there are negative aspects which are less known in the literature. Alongside positive outcomes such as assistance in migration, remittances and adaptation, networks are also the basic

structures for the transmission and perpetuation of inequality. Waldinger (1997) adopts this perspective and argues that the exclusivity induced by networks may trigger a conflicting form of social closure: people within the network end up competing rather than assisting each other. Migration networks, many of which are organised along ethnic lines, are thus not necessarily nodes of solidarity. In a similar vein, researchers note that there is negative social capital (Portes 1998) when dishonest agents collude with fellow village men to take advantage of other migrants. Furthermore, networks are not always collaborative in nature, even amongst ethnic groups which are thought to possess a high level of solidarity. In their assessment of hometown associations, Waldinger, Popkins and Magana (2008) discover that there are many tensions when immigrants negotiate their identities between home and host societies. While people within a particular network cluster possess some degree of similarity, the network cluster is not always collaborative. The globalising influences from the internet and ICTs cause internal contestations within communities of people. This further dampens the assumption that networks are reciprocal and self-sustaining.

While much of the discourse centres on networks being self-perpetuating due to the inherent trust and reciprocity in familial relations, networks are equally discontinuous. In the case of Brazilian migration to Japan, Higuchi (2010) finds that migrants choose to sustain some forms of social networks but not others. Therefore, in Higuchi's study, migration networks have the potential for trust and reciprocity, but these traits do not always materialise. In addition, Higuchi notes that Brazilian migration is highly dependent on recruiters and market mediators (Higuchi 2010: 88). On the contrary, old ideas of migration networks hold the assumption that migrants will always maintain ties with their communities back home. Therefore, this



case surfaces the question of whether there are other social structures present which serves to sustain migration flows since personal ties are not always resilient.

### **2.3 Institutional Perspectives: Businesses and the State**

As such, I shift my focus to institutions. This section highlights the importance of institutional perspectives alongside network perspectives. While there are many accounts of migrant experiences (Harney Dr and Baldassar 2007; Silveya and Lawsonb 1999), the institutional perspective on migration remains a less popular one. The works which deal with institutional aspects of migration examine the political aspects of migration such as the role of institutions (Hollifield 2008; Bertocchi, G. and C. Strozzi 2008), political mobilisation (Bousetta 2000) and immigrant rights (Bosniak 2006; Rubio-Marín 2000; Whelan 1981). However, less emphasis is placed on how these institutional perspectives interact with existing approaches or how these institutional perspectives relate to issues outside the political realm. My thesis aims to address this gap.

There are however some exceptions. In a review of institutional theories of migration, Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino and Taylor (1993: 450) suggest that various institutions, both private and voluntary, emerged with the onset of international migration to “satisfy the demand created by an imbalance between the large number of people who seek entry into capital-rich countries and the limited number of immigrant visas these countries typically offer (Massey et al 1993: 450).” Private enterprises are proliferating in hopes of capitalising on demands brought about by migration today. These services include “surreptitious smuggling across borders; clandestine transport to internal destinations; labor contracting between

employers and migrants; counterfeit documents and visas; arranged marriages between migrants and legal residents or citizens of the destination country; and lodging, credit, and other assistance in countries of destination (Massey et al 1993: 451).” Some lucrative aspects of migration include marriage migration (Wang and Chang 2002; Lu 2005), immigration consultancy services (Tseng 1997) and recruitment processes (Jones and Pardthaisong 1999). In addition, there is also growing interest in non-profit organisations (Gibson, Law and McKay 2001) and international organisations (Hune 1991) in migrant issues. These include recruitment migrant activism, migrant aid and shelter. The presence of institutions, both profit-oriented and voluntary, affirms the argument that migration is increasingly dependent on the work of formal institutions. Due to the large-scale and diffused nature of migration today, it is likely that the reliance on institutions is steadily increasing, so as to address the diverse demands from a heterogeneous migrant population. ‘Migration institution’ is a concept which Massey mentions in his works on the social origins and networks of migration (Massey 1998; 1999), where he acknowledges the significance of migration institutions but does not elaborate on this concept. The lack of specificity regarding migration institutions is another gap this thesis addresses. In chapter six, I elaborate on the concept of the migration industry.

Another key institution is the state. The role of the state in an era of prevalent migration is a contested issue. While some argue that globalisation is eroding borders to the extent that states no longer have significant roles, others suggest that states remain equally important due to their role of enabling or restricting migration. I thus argue that the role of the state is a heightened one in a globalised environment because migration, while global in nature, is ultimately directed at nation states. This argument is further developed in chapter six when I discuss the uniqueness of the

migration industry serving China-Singapore migration. In a bid to highlight the role of the state in international migration, Weiner (1985) proposes three vital roles of the state. First, the will of states shape migration patterns; it takes one state to permit emigration and another to allow immigration for a certain migration flow to develop. Second, on a larger level, states shape international migration patterns through their policies on immigration and emigration. Third, while each state has its own migration issues, such issues are increasingly becoming internationalised, thus changing the dynamics of governance and conflict in sending and receiving states. Through its regulations and daily operations, the state shapes larger migration flows. For example, the political functions of the state work in tandem with its economic strategies. Bangladeshi migration to East and Southeast Asia is influenced by economic conditions (Lian and Rahman 2006). The growing economies of this region are dependent on short-term labour, usually for the construction industry. This need for labour is not a temporary one but rather, a permanent requirement for the functioning of these economies. Therefore, migration continues to be highly-regulated by the state.

In this section, I have highlighted several institutions which facilitate migration: profit-oriented institutions, voluntary/humanitarian institutions and national states. However, the listing of these institutions is by no means an institutional explanation of migration. Therefore, I now turn to migration networks to explain the functions and workings of institutions.

## **2.4 Combining Institutions and Networks Perspectives**

I have three objectives in bringing together the perspectives of institutions and networks. The first is to examine the intersections between social networks and institutional workings of migration processes. In migration studies, networks are usually discussed in terms of social ties and relations. On the other hand, institutions are typically associated with economic and political action. Second, this synthesis brings a more nuanced view of migration by paying attention to both individuals and structures. There are many studies which focus on either migrant place-making strategies/experiences (Dych 2005; Anderson 2010; Conradson and Latham 2005; Cresswell 2010, Favell, Feldblum and Smith 2006) or the role of the state and businesses (Massey 1999; Tseng 1999). The latter however, remains a less mature body of literature. In integrating these perspectives, I aim to achieve a more holistic picture of migratory processes. Third, such a perspective allows for the examination of social/personal dynamics of migration within the larger international context.

Most notably, an example of an integrated perspective in migration studies is the work on global body shopping (Xiang 2007). Xiang explores the relationship between networks and political economy. He does by examining the world systems perspective of labour within structural functionalist analyses. These seemingly contradictory paradigms yield a particularly interesting finding: Indian kinship ties in the form of dowry, play a significant role in shaping industry trends. Evolving social ties are thus implicating larger trends such as the value of IT workers, the influx of IT workers overseas and the perception of IT workers from Indian. This is the benefit of using ethnographic perspectives vis-à-vis broader institutions.

However, this integration of perspectives may at times seem implausible: networks, which are rooted in personal ties, seem to diametrically oppose the context of large and formal institutions. Yet, I argue that networks of the past are undergoing changes due to the forces of globalisation. Networks are more accessible and network formations are more diffused. Taking the globalisation of Chinese associations as an example, Chinese networks which are often conceptualised as highly personal are often the pillars of Chinese ethnic associations. However, this focus on ancestral rootedness is not resilient to the forces of globalisation. While there is an inherent tension between intimate ethnic relations and institutionalised organisation linkages, scholars have suggested that Chinese associations are complementary with globalisation. These old ethnic linkages are increasingly morphing into new global networks through various international events involvements such as intentional conventions organised by transnational entrepreneurs (Liu 1998: 587). Moreover, undergirding these conventions are international coordinating entities and permanent secretariats (Liu 1998: 587). Consequently, these events cause Chinese networks to broaden and proliferate, thus legitimising these seemingly outdated institutions which are centred on hometown linkages. Therefore, while local networks are crucial, its survival is contingent on globalising strategies. The combination of local networks and global institutions provides a fresh perspective on the renewal of outmoded organisations through the proliferation of new networks and subsequent institutions. In what follows, I highlight three ways in which I combine these perspectives, and discuss the issues which illustrate the utility of these approaches.

## 2.5 Framing Old Chinese Migration Vis-à-vis New Chinese Migration

I use the concepts of networks and institutions to examine old and new Chinese migration. I reason that these features are common through the history of Chinese migration and thus act as points of comparison. Chinese networks deserve particular attention because the literature predominantly agrees that there are strong personal and cultural dimensions to these ties. In other words, Chinese culture promotes the formation of close and tight networks and these alliances are used for instance, in business and migration, in order to promote self-interest. This culturalist perspective is one which I challenge later on in this thesis, by suggesting that the Chinese in this globalising era have more weak ties than they do strong ties.

### *Chinese Networks as Social and Economic Organising Principles of Migration*

There is a sizeable literature which argues that the Chinese have a propensity towards the formation of personal and ethnic networks. The outcome of this is the presence of Chinese institutions. Chinese networks are thus organising principles for Chinese societies (Cheng & Rosett 1991; Hwang 1987).

Applying this to migration, the strength of the network perspective thus lies in its emphasis on the non-economic processes. The Chinese idea of personal relations extends beyond a simple relationship between two parties; it contains an element of reciprocity. *Guanxi* is defined as the “a set of interpersonal connections that facilitate exchange of favors between people on a dyadic basis (Bian and Ang 1997).” Ang and Bian (1997: 984) state two traits of *Guanxi*; the first being intimacy and the second being trustworthiness. Respectively, *Guanxi* occurs between people who are already close to each other, and “through which the parties exchange valued

materials or sentiments. *Guanxi* is critical for gaining access to employment contacts (Bian and Ang 1997) or business opportunities (Barton 1983). These ties put users in a position of advantage. Yao describes *Guanxi* in business as a strategy to tap on a legitimate system of cultural values when the person is in a position of weakness (Yao 1987: 91). This idea of networks being a mode of advancement does not only apply to the Chinese (Poros 2001). Since *Guanxi* is not institutionalised, trust is highly important for sustaining it (Bian and Ang 1997: 984).

### *Chinese Institutions*

However, Chinese networks are not always personal in nature. Wong and Salaff (1998: 360-361) describe networks as a form of capital, which at times take on 'institutional' forms such as associations. Relatedly, they consider the heterogeneous capacities for network formations through the concept of 'network capacity'. This paves the way for a more elaborated network analysis in contrast to the restricted and traditional network analysis which privileges kinship and strong relations. The institutionalisation of Chinese networks is evident in the movement of Chinese labour (Wang 2008), with the three most important recruitment channels being internal transfer in transnational corporations, social networks and private recruitment agency. With its institutional focus, this study challenges the culturalist view of networks –that were popular in the 1990s- which suggest that networks amongst the Chinese are driven purely by personal relations (Gomez and Hsiao 2003; 2004).

The Chinese temples are crucial points of contacts for Chinese immigrants. Its functions are three-fold: first, it facilitates ancestral worship for returning

migrants as well as new migrants. This demonstrates the close relationship between ethnicity, community and religion. In other words, the Chinese rely heavily on ethnic ties as community support. Second, it provides essential social services (Frost 2005: 43) such as a space for socialising and entertainment. Later on, fraternal associations emerged with the purpose of facilitating the observation of customary rituals involved in festivals, ancestral worship and burials. Finally, it also stands as welfare organisations, sponsors of education and tribunals for the settlement of disputes (Frost 2005: 43). The temples are therefore common spaces which join the Chinese community, and they are also storehouse of resources.

Clans are also traditional representations of ethnic organisations. Yet, these organisations are not homogenous. The Chinese see clan membership in terms of identity and belonging. For the wealthy members, being in a leadership position in a clan is prestigious (Yen 1981). Similar to temples, clans also have the functions of supporting ancestral worship and social activities (Yen 1981: 67). Its overriding role however, is to maintain ties of members who belong to Chinese dialect groups in various parts of the world. The peak of this achievement was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when dialect differences were palpable in Singapore and Malaya, so much so that the Chinese gravitated only towards their own dialect groups. As such, while the clans aimed to unite the overseas Chinese, it ironically resulted in highly distinct boundaries within the Chinese community.

## **2.6 Conceptualising New Network Dynamics and a New Social Organisation**

In chapter five, I expound on my assertion that there is a ‘new network dynamics’ amongst Chinese immigrants. I suggest that network formations and network dissolutions happening today presents a new social organisation; specially,

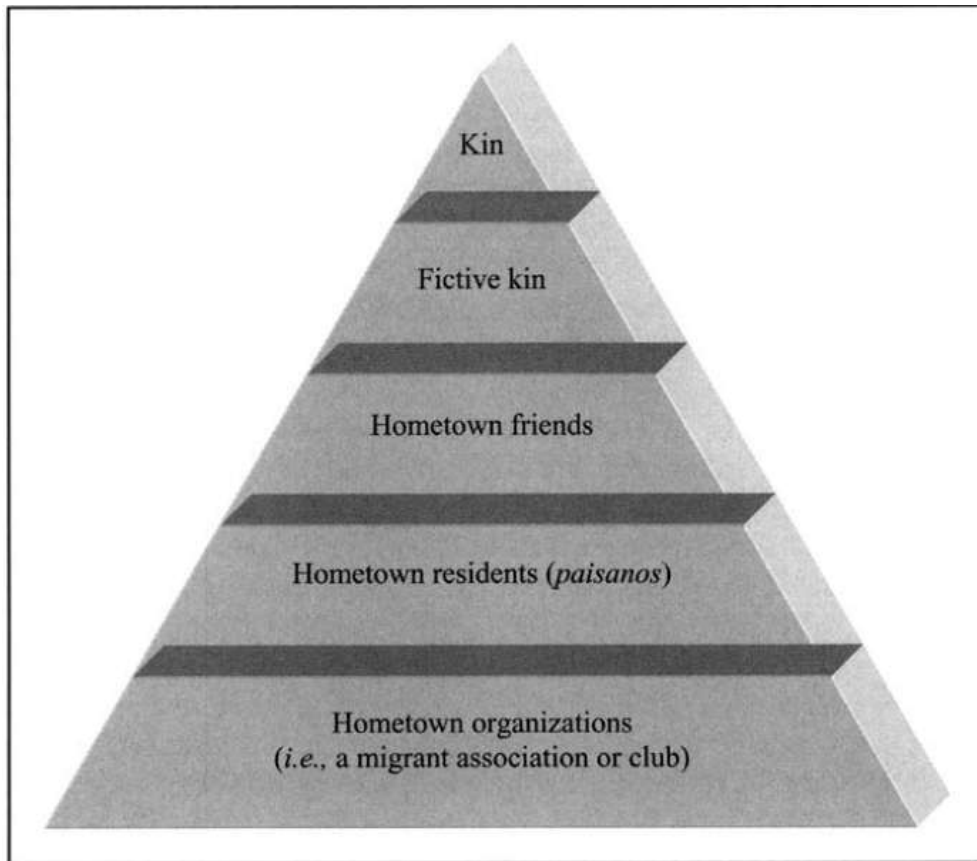


immigrants are relying less on personal relations and more on ties to formal institutions. However, this argument is not meant to polarise the concepts of networks and institutions; instead, what I aim to do is to highlight the complementarity of these concepts, and to suggest that combining these perspectives provides a fresh dimension to migration accounts.

*“Massey Model” of Migration Networks and its Inadequacies*

Undergirding this argument is a critique of the Massey model of migration networks. In what follows, I examine the origins, usage and limitations of the concept of migration networks. Douglass Massey’s popularised the notion of migration networks in the 1980s. Through a series of works, he discusses the social origins of migration networks and explains the social processes undergirding migration. Three perspectives frame Massey’s works. First, migration is defined as “social process in which basic human relationships are adapted to play new “roles” in the migratory enterprise (1986: 111).” Second, personal networks –kinship, friendship, and community ties- underpin the social organisation of immigration. Using the case of Mexican immigrants to the US, Massey reasons that since familial ties consist of a high degree of trust, they serve as the immigrants’ “most secure...connections” (1986: 104). Finally, these networks perpetuate themselves internally through kinship ties, and are also strengthened externally by “institutional mechanisms ranging from the fiesta of the patron saint to United States-based soccer club (1986: 111).” Networks are embedded in established institutions and are iterative and self-sustaining; they find their roots in personal relations and exist collectively as ethnic communities. Commonly known as the “Massey model”

(Krisman 2005) of migration networks, this concept entails six principles (Massey 1987: 4-6): first, migration occurs amidst structural changes in either or both sending and receiving places. Second, migration processes occur along with the development of migratory infrastructure where migration “eventually develops a social infrastructure that enables movement on a mass basis” (Massey et al 1987: 4). In short, personal relationships form support structures for migrants. Third, migration is inherently a familial decision. As migration becomes more common, it is likely that it becomes part of familial strategies for survival or advancement, “with the timing of migration determined by life cycle changes that affect the relative number of dependents and workers in the household”. Due to its reliance on familial networks, fourth, migration is a self-perpetuating process. The assumption here is that network contacts are stable and cumulative because of close personal ties. Fifth, networks are cumulative and resilient with the assumption that return migration is very regular amongst immigrants. Sixth, not all migrants are return-migrants. Massey notes that “settlement of some migrants within the receiving society is inevitable”. Overall, migration occurs due to structural and socio-economic changes in societies, and is sustained by very intricate network dynamics amongst friends and kin. These personal networks are rooted in hometowns, friendship circles and families (Figure 2).



Source: Massey et al. (1987: 139–143).

*Figure 2: The migration network concept which discusses the different levels of relationships  
(Krissman 2005: 15)*

Massey’s framework (1987) serves as the basis for several studies. The case of family-oriented migration is not a new phenomenon, nor is it specific to contemporary society. In fact, an argument could be made that the reliance on personal networks is an intuitive strategy for survival and sustenance. One such example is that of a 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish agricultural community which engaged in mass emigration to the US. In this community, kinship networks were known to be tools to “bolster... security” (Ostergren 1982: 299). Networks were established mainly through marriages. Chain migration was prevalent and resulted in “socially cohesive, kinship communities on the American agricultural frontier.” These network dynamics inevitably gave rise to family-oriented migration. Bangladeshi immigration

to Singapore for example, demonstrates the importance of village/community networks in the self-perpetuation of migration. Undergirding these relations are the notions of reciprocity, obligation and trust (Rahman 2010). Aside from the Mexican and Bangladeshi cases, the literature is replete with instances of migration involving personal ties, and especially kinship networks (Banerjee 1983; Heering, Liesbeth, Van der Erf and Van Wissen 2004).

The migration network concept although fundamental, is inadequate on several fronts. Krissman (2005: 4) argues that the kinship-oriented nature of the concept restricts its explanations to the realm of the family and community. Furthermore, with its emphasis on the micro-level processes, networks do not explain “large-scale international migration flows”. So the first critique is that Massey’s migration networks restricts international phenomenon to local-level explanations. Second, migration networks are not confined to kinship, friendship and community. In this new migration context where transnational and virtual ties are numerous, migrants do not only rely on personal or familial networks. After Massey’s work, Boyd (1989) acknowledged that research on migration networks often focuses on friendship, community and family ties, and yet these are not the only possible triggers of migration. It was also in the 1990s when researchers called for a revision of the concept of “network” to include sociological insights. Adding to these, I suggest, third, that the migration networks concept be examined on a broader institutional level. This is to shed light on the ‘large-scale’ perspectives that Krissman (2005) argues are missing. International migration today is no longer a social process within the family unit, but one between nations and industries. Institutional perspectives open up new perspectives to understand migration. It is precisely this globalised, institutionalised and wide-ranging context that leads me to

rethink the concept of migration networks from a non-familial perspective. In addition, I draw attention to the evolving social bases of migration networks: the social bases of migration networks are increasingly institutionalised – they are organised as formal relations rather than informal and personal ones. Nevertheless, both personal and institutional networks are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, to some degree then, my argument counters previous understanding of migration networks that are anchored in kinship ties.

## **2.7 Conceptualising Institutional Networks and the Migration industry**

Since networks are becoming more institutionalised, I propose the idea of ‘institutional networks’ which I argue, underpin the migration industry. I broadly define this as the networks and associations an individual has towards institutions, and suggest that these institutional networks are increasingly important in an era where migration is arranged along organisational lines. This means that migration is a highly differentiated phenomenon with functionally defined aspects such as recruitment or logistics. Logically, various institutions specialising in specific roles emerge to address these needs.

Institutional networks are thus functionally-driven and differ significantly from personal networks which are underpinned by trust and reciprocity. To further define institutional networks, I compare this with trust networks (Figure 3). Tilly defines trust networks as “ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others” (Tilly 2007: 7). In his opinion, “religious communities, political conspiracies, webs of ethnic traders,

and kinship group” are examples of groups supported by trust networks. Trust networks are often applied to understanding migration which relies on informal or personal relations rather than formal institutions. To summarise, Tilly distils trust networks in a few points: first, they are based on solidarity between people. Second, they are long-term and driven by obligations. Third, by virtue of being based on kinship, they are usually contracted in specialised areas. Fourth, the sense of territoriality is strong given that there are clear divisions between insiders of the community and outsiders. Fifth, the perpetuation of these networks is achieved when migrants enter the host society and segregate themselves and concurrently choose to integrate mainly with fellow immigrants. This safeguards the bases of communal ties, which sustains the workings of trust networks. Finally, the parochial workings of these networks limit opportunities to specific geographical areas and social groups. In Granovetter’s terms (1973), these strong ties are weak because they only give access to a restricted pool of resources. In my thesis, the concept of trust networks is used to refer to personal networks in old migration processes.

<b>Trust Networks (Tilly 2007: 5-6)</b>
1. Maintains solidarity between people at the origins and destinations
2. Members acquire long-term rights and obligations binding themselves to each other
3. Tend to concentrate in relatively specialized economic, geographic, and social area
4. Networks creates and depends on boundaries that separate members from outsiders
5. Survival of networks depends on the social segregation or integration of the immigrants
6. Confines members to a relatively narrow range of opportunities (work, housing, sociability, and welfare)

*Figure 3 Tilly’s definition of ‘trust networks’*

On the contrary, my proposed 'institutional networks' operate on opposing principles (Figure 4). I argue that institutional networks are on the rise while personal or trust networks are on the decline. I suggest six characteristics of institutional networks. First, a migrant's involvement with an institution could be on a one-off basis. Once the function has been met, there may not be reasons for the migrant to approach that same organisation again. Second, the involved parties are bound by business contracts or industry regulations. Migrants often turn to job agencies or governmental departments to seek help with their application. However, they could also not be bounded by any formal agreement and this is seen when workers are exploited due to lack of documentation from job agencies. Third, membership boundaries are not distinct. Migrant organisations, due to their institutionalised procedures, have the abilities to serve a wide diversity of migrants unlike ethnic associations which only serve a particular ethnic hometown-based group. Fourth, the survival of institutional networks or migrant institutions is dependent on the lack of ties between migrants. In contrast to older immigrants who relied heavily on their families, newer ones rely on any institutional help they can locate. The existence of migrant institutions today is thus perpetuated by the lack of social ties between migrants and within migrant groups. Finally, due to the widespread nature of institutional networks, migrants who rely on them expose themselves to a range of opportunities. I will illustrate institutional networks in chapter five.

<b>'Institutional Networks'</b>
1. One-off and impersonal
2. Involved parties are bound by business contracts, or not bound by any contract
3. Networks are widespread and diverse
4. Boundaries are not clear; organisations accommodate diversity pools of people
5. Survival of networks depends on the lack of networks between immigrants
6. Members are free to construct that networks and are open to a wide range of opportunities

*Figure 4: My definition of 'institutional networks'*

### *Migration industry and Related Concepts*

By discussing institutional networks, I also invoke a discussion on the institutions dealing with migratory procedures. Collectively, I term the interaction of these networks and institutions the 'migration industry', and explore this idea in greater depth in chapter six, which argues that the rise of the migration industry follows the increasing reliance on institutional networks. To recognise the migration industry is to be aware of the growing economic aspects of immigration. Scholars contend that the concept involves a few aspects. First, it involves actors, both legal and illegal, who are involved in the capitalising on migratory processes. Related concepts include "migration merchant" (Kyle) which refers to the agents profiting from the commercialisation of migratory processes. These merchants profit from migrant-exporting schemes (Kyle and Dale 2001:32-33). Similarly, Castles and Miller (2003: 28) suggest that "recruitment organizations, lawyers, agents, smugglers, and other intermediaries" are potential actors in the migration industry. Hernandez-Leon (2008: 155) argues that there is an ethnic dimension to this concept.



He conceptualises “migration entrepreneurs” as people from the same ethnic group who tap on mobility and remittances opportunities within their own ethnic circle. Specifically, these entrepreneurs provide travel, legal, employment and smuggling assistance. More recently, Hernández-León (2008: 155) adopts a broader view of the migration industry, stating that it could include various actors, both legal and illegal. More importantly, he asserts that this industry “greases’ the engines of international human mobility” through the provision of services which facilitate human movement.

## **2.8 Methodology**

The methodology is devised to capture both the nuances of migrant social networks and understand larger institutional structures. There are two parts to the interviewing process: I interviewed Chinese immigrants and representatives of institutions. In all, I conducted twenty five interviews; seventeen with Chinese immigrants and the remaining eight with institutional representatives. Of the seventeen immigrants, six were non-professional workers and eleven were professionals working in Singapore.

The new Chinese immigrants in my study are extremely diverse. They constitute the new wave of immigrants who migrated from China during a time when China has integrated itself into the global economy. This globalising context enables migration across a wide spectrum; groups of migrants during this time are varied in their origins, educational levels and socio-economic statuses. These migrants come from various regions across China and work in many industries including tourism, Food & Beverages (F&B), education, engineering, manufacturing and finance. Their

ages ranged from early-20s up to mid-40s. All respondents came to Singapore during the late 1990s and 2000s. Here are the profiles of the interviewees (Figure 5):

Interviewee	Hometown	Age	Industry	Occupation	Status	Gender
1. Cao Yuan	Shandong	Early 20s	Tourism & Hospitality	Chambermaid	Non-Professional	M
2. Sun Yang	Fujian	Early 20s	F&B	Restaurant Worker	Non-Professional	M
3. Zhou Wa	Shandong	Mid 40s	F&B	Storehouse Worker	Semi-Professional	M
4. Wei Tian	Henan	Late 30s	F&B	Coffee shop Assistant	Non-Professional	M
5. Chen Wei	Fujian	Early 20s	Manufacturing	Factory Worker	Non-Professional	F
6. Lin Yuan	Zhejiang	Late 20s	Manufacturing	Factory Worker	Non-Professional	F
7. Li Mei	Jiang Su	Late 30s	Education	Educator	Professional	F
8. Zheng Hao	Harbin	Mid 20s	Education	Educator	Professional	M
9. Wei Yang	Xi'An	Late 20s	Education	Educator	Professional	M
10. Zhou Wen	Jiang Xi	Mid 20s	Education	Educator	Professional	M
11. Yang Li	Harbin	Mid 20s	Education	Educator	Professional	M
12. Shou Min	Shandong	Mid 20s	Engineering	Engineer	Professional	M
13. Li Heng	Chao Zhou	Mid 20s	Engineering	Engineer	Professional	M
14. Zhang Wei	Beijing	Late 20s	Business Development	Business Executive	Professional	M
15. Sun Li	Beijing	Late 20s	Finance	Investment Manager	Professional	F
16. Wen Li	Shanghai	Mid 20s	Finance	Auditor	Professional	F
17. Wei Zhen	Shanghai	Mid 20s	Finance	Compliance	Professional	F

Figure 5: Profile of interviewees (New Chinese immigrants)

This diversity of new Chinese immigrants will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Locating a diverse group of relevant individuals required several strategies (Figure 5). First, I relied on personal contacts. This yielded mainly contacts of Chinese professionals working in Singapore. Second, seeing the need to diversify my pool of respondents, I approached a migrant humanitarian organisation called the Humanitarian Organization for Migrant Economics (HOME)<sup>1</sup>. Through this organisation, I was connected to several less-skilled workers who were at that juncture, experiencing predicaments at work - some needed legal advice from the HOME while others were there to use the computers or for language classes. Apart from meeting interviewees at HOME itself, I also obtained other contacts from HOME and met up with interviewees individually. Some workers having resolved their employment issues, rarely return to HOME and so I had to meet them near their workplaces. However, there are also less-skilled workers who are not embroiled in legal cases and are in legitimate and unproblematic labour contracts. To get in touch with this group of people was particularly difficult because they are less visible; they are not concentrated in migrant centres nor are easily spotted in public. Due to their hectic work schedules which sometimes involve night-shifts, many of these migrants

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<sup>1</sup> HOME's vision and mission: HOME is committed to the principle that migration of people benefits the global society with a focus on the effects of migration within the context of Singapore. The mission objectives of HOME are:

- To develop research and education on the socioeconomic of migration on Singapore and the countries of origin;
- To provide social integration services for emigrants and immigrants;
- To provide humanitarian assistance for the effects of 'crisis' migration.

We believe that the rights to Dignity of Work, Dignity of Person and the Dignity of Life are fundamental human rights. Migrant populations in many countries are often discriminated when it comes to the protection of these rights. HOME seeks to uphold human dignity for all peoples wherever they come from. Source: <http://home.org.sg/home/index.html>

spend the bulk of their time in their dorms/flats and worksites. This leaves little time for social activities. Therefore, third, I followed a group of labour unionists into factory worksites so as to observe the work culture. When time permitted, I spoke briefly to a few of the workers. Each of these interviews lasted about an hour or slightly over an hour.



*Figure 5: Interviewee Subgroups and Strategies Used to Contact Them*

In addition, I interviewed a range of people working in organisations dealing with immigration issues (Figure 6). This is in line with my argument which states that institutions are becoming more central to immigration processes. These institutions fall into three categories: voluntary organisations, private enterprises and government agencies. The institutions involved in this study are as follows:

Name of Representatives	Positions	Organisation/Institution	Type of Organisation
1. Ian	Exco Member	Loving & Giving Society	Charity society stated by new Chinese immigrants
2. Ms Goh	Management	Contact Singapore	Government Agency
3. Mr Tan and Ms Lin	Management	National Talent and Population Division	Government Agency
4. Randall	Mobility Consultant	Mobility Company	Private Sector, Mobility Industry
5. Kieran	Exco Member	University Alumni Group	University Alumni Group
6. Steven	HR Manager	MNC, HR Department,	Private Sector, Manufacturing Industry
7. Fazial	Headhunter	International Recruitment Company	Private Sector, Recruitment Industry
8. Natalie	Headhunter	International Recruitment Company	Private Sector, Recruitment Industry

Figure 6: Profile of institutions interviewed

First, I sent formal email requests to two government departments, requesting for interviews, as part of my thesis fieldwork. The email addresses were found on public and official government directories and were readily available online. Emails were sent to the directors who could refer me to specific department heads. Thereafter, I went down to these government offices to meet with various officials to discuss issues such as the channels through which new immigrants enter Singapore and the need for new immigrants and integration initiatives. Second, through key informants, I got fairly acquainted with the work of voluntary organisations such as university alumni groups or the *Loving & Giving Society*. They would inform me of public events or talks and I would attend them. Subsequently, I requested for interviews with the representatives of these organisations. Third, private companies were the hardest to contact due to the lack of public information on the owners and employees. For this category of respondents, I relied on personal contacts. It took much longer to arrange interviews compared to the previous two categories. I met

one HR director in his office and the other two recruitment and mobility professionals after working hours.



*Figure 7: Summary of the categories of interviewees and the strategies used*

This data collection process lasted around five months. All interviews were collated and transcribed. Verbatim transcriptions were filed.

### *Coding and Data Analysis*

Subsequently, I coded the interview data around these three categories: new Chinese immigration, networks and migration industry and businesses. For each of these categories, I developed related themes and arranged them in an excel file with sub-themes in the rows and the interview quotes in the columns (Figure 8). Thereafter, I generated sub-themes for each category (Figure 9). Each of these columns in Figure 9 forms a chapter of the thesis. In the subsequent chapters, I will expand on these sub-themes and discuss how they relate to the research questions.





1. New Immigration:	2. New Networks:	3. New Industries
a) <b><u>Personal details:</u></b>	a. <b><u>Social Networks in Singapore:</u></b>	1. <b><u>Growing opportunities:</u></b>
<b>Place of origin</b>	Migrant Hang out	Growth in Asia
<b>Age</b>	Mainly PRCs	Business Opportunities (Origin)
<b>Job</b>	PRC Network: channels, activities	Business opportunities (Destinations)
b) <b><u>Motivations:</u></b>	Other networks: professions, religions	
<b>Plans to return to China</b>	Leisure/Clan Associations	2. <b><u>Middlemen/agencies: Lacking details, role of middlemen</u></b>
<b>Plans to work elsewhere</b>	Virtual Ties	
c) <b><u>Job scope:</u></b>		3. <b><u>Institutional Recruitment:</u></b>
<b>Issues at work</b>	b. <b><u>Lack of social networks:</u></b>	Institutions running programmes
	Lack of SG friends	MOE, Multinationals
	Limited social networks at work	Recruitment in batches
		4. <b><u>Related industries:</u></b>
	c. <b><u>Transnational Networks:</u></b>	Mobility consultant
	Personal transnational ties	Headhunting
	Lack of transnational networks – need to rely on middlemen	5. <b><u>Industry needs in Singapore</u></b>
	Transnational virtual - Finding a job through website	MOE Recruiting teachers from abroad – specialised recruitment
	Transnational corporate - Companies outsourcing to headhunting companies	Filling industry needs: institutional matching
		Target Group: Skilled Foreigners and Skilled Singaporeans
	d. <b><u>Lack of involvement in community:</u></b>	the need for foreign workers: filling company need
	Clan Associations: losing relevance?	Strategic Recruitment: South China

	Reliance on Institutional or Online help	Marketing and promotion: operations
	e. <u>Middlemen matters:</u>	
	Job search	
	Controversies	
	f. <u>New networks and channels:</u>	
	Recruitment industry in SG and the channels	
	Involvement in Clubs and Clan Associations	
	Revamping Clan Associations	
	University Alumni: stemming from personal networks	

*Figure 8: Sub-themes for the three main categories*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **CHINESE MIGRATION: COLONIAL TO GLOBAL**

This chapter presents a historical overview of Chinese migration from the colonial era to the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Focusing on the case of Singapore, I argue that a broad overview of these historical stages reveals that the pattern of Chinese migration has evolved from a concentrated one to being widespread and diffused. In so doing, I highlight the differences between the colonial economy and the global economy. While the colonial economy focused on resource extraction from specific colonies, the global economy is a highly competitive climate which involves many actors and organisations. This transition from the colonial economy to a market-led global economy leads to increasingly diversified roles of Chinese immigrants. First, the colonial period established the social and economic roles of the Chinese in SEA. The Chinese contributed significantly to the burgeoning coolie trade and entrepôt businesses of that time. Second, the period of nation-building starting from the late 1950s involved expansion and construction plans, which in turn perpetuated the need for foreign labour. This growing demand induced the authorities to liberalise immigration policies so as to ease the entry of foreign labour into Singapore. Finally, from 1978, China opened its economy to the world. This coincided with the rise of the tiger economies in East Asia and the growing global economy. This period was one which saw hyper-competition, the rise of the knowledge economy and services sectors which dramatically departed from the colonial economy's method of resource extraction from specific countries.

### **3.1 China-Singapore Migration: Push-Pull Factors**

The history of Chinese migration has been extensively documented, with scholars agreeing on several critical points. The mass migration after 1840 is one such moment (McKeown in Reid 2008: xxiv). McKeown estimates that there were 1.35 million Chinese leaving Hong Kong from 1876 to 1898 of which over half came to Singapore. Many of these migrants were indentured or contract labourers from South China, looking for employment in Southeast Asia. From the 1870s onwards, there was more pronounced migration towards Singapore and Malaya (Skeldon 1996). While the Cantonese were the largest group, there were also the Hokkiens from Xiamen and Teochews from Shantou whose populations were growing steadily. As such, this phase of Chinese migration was characterised by emigration from the Southern parts of China, most of which are coastal states. These migrants were known as the “Hua Qiao” or Chinese sojourners/overseas Chinese (Liu 2005) as many had intentions to migrate temporarily and to eventually return to China. However, for various reasons, many settled in the host countries.

Many Chinese migrated to Singapore, in part due to the unfavourable conditions in China with “floods, droughts, famines and rebellions and even over-population” (Ee 1961: 33). One of the most severe famines occurred in 1911 when bad harvest coupled with terrible floods, threatened the livelihoods for already impoverished people. Sources suggest “about two and a half million” people were estimated to be without means of sustenance during this period (Ee 1961: 34)”. Moreover, external pressures exacerbated the situation. Political conflicts were rife, often due to oppressive governments. The Taiping Rebellion (1857-64) and Boxer

Rebellion (1900) were instances of political instability which added to the incentives to China.

Working in tandem with these push factors, was a series of economic and political pull factors to the SEA region. First, economic opportunities were aplenty. Singapore and Malaya were lucrative places for trade and work purposes, as producers of rubber and tin. They were part of large British investments and were therefore bustling with economic activities. Singapore in particular, was strategically located amongst trade links and was itself a free trade entrepôt; it therefore readily attracted businesses and immigrants. Second, Singapore was a favourable destination for the Chinese due to the presence of political and legal establishments which supported China-Singapore migration. There were several political decisions affecting the Singapore-China ties. First, migration ties were established between China and the British Colonies. By 1860, “the Imperial Government had signed a convention with Britain and France whereby Chinese subjects were permitted to emigrate and take service in the British colonies or elsewhere beyond the seas” (Ee 1961: 36). This gave the Chinese ready access to Singapore. Second, sentiments towards migration shifted from one of hostility to one of acceptance around 1899. This stood in sharp contrast to previous orders to behead Chinese who returned from abroad. This revised stance triggered a wave of migration out of China. Third, official laws were established for the employment of Chinese in British colonies. In so doing, the employment of Chinese labour in the British colonies and protectorates became a legitimate and common practice. In 1904, the Chinese and British Governments agreed to jointly supervise indentured migration. This agreement is known as the Emigration Convention between the United Kingdom and China (Ee 1961: 36). In sum, these political initiatives paved the way for sustained China-

Singapore migration flows, and hence the Chinese population in Singapore grew substantially from the early 19th Century to the mid-20th Century. The peaks of Chinese migration in Singapore occurred between 1910 – 1915 (Figure 10) when political strife was rife in China and 1925 – 1930 when political and economic conditions were favourable for migration (Figure 10).

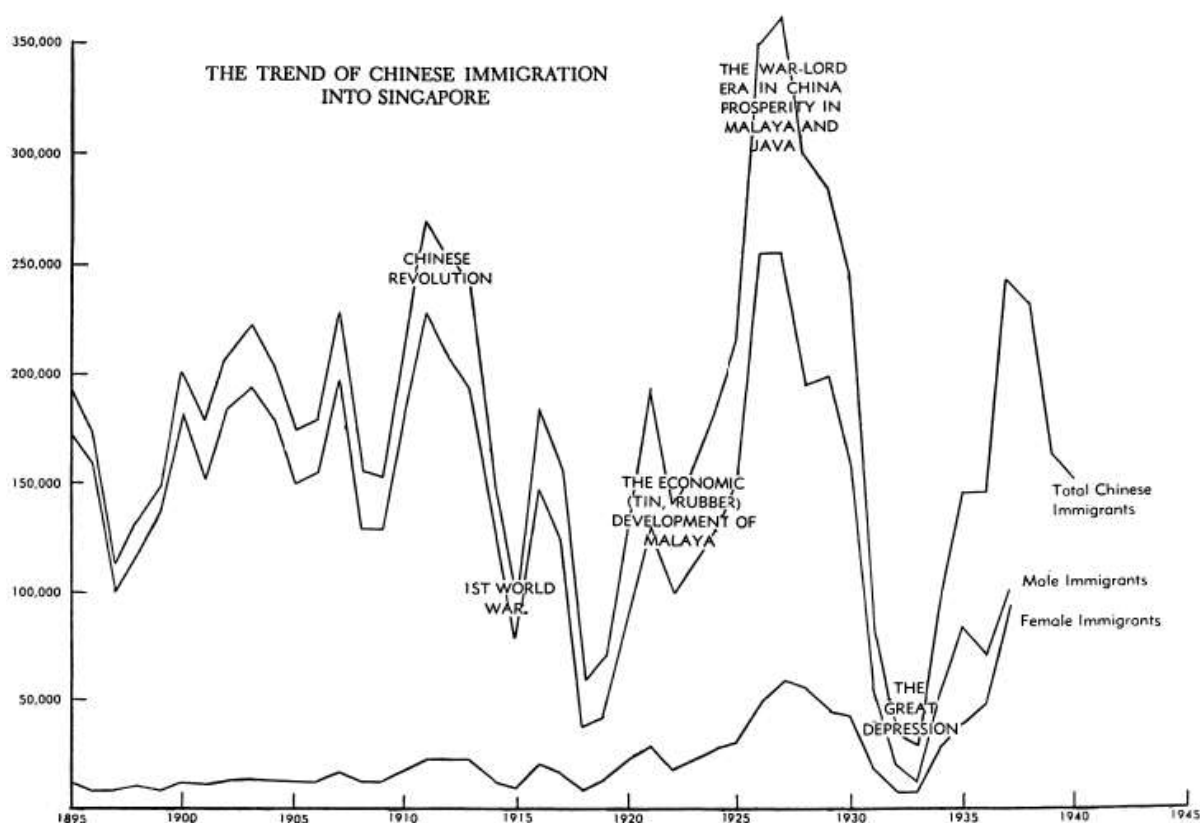


Figure 9: Table showing the migration trends in the 19th and 20th Centuries (Ee 1961: 51)

Broadly, 19<sup>th</sup> Century Chinese migration to Singapore was driven by economic opportunities in SEA, coupled with adverse conditions in China. Many Chinese immigrants originally intended to migrate temporarily, but many eventually stayed on in the region and contributed significantly to the colonial economy.

### **3.2 Colonial Economy**

Chinese immigrants went on to play a significant role in the colonial economy. During the colonial period, there were several industries that prospered with the help of Chinese labour – these were the tin, mining and entrepôt businesses. Traders have long been attracted to Southeast Asia for its natural resources such as tin and rubber. During the colonial period, the Chinese in SEA primarily originated from South China, namely the provinces of Kwangtung and Fukien (Unger 1944: 202), and migrated for the purpose of job opportunities. A few industries in the colonial era were dominated by the Chinese.

#### *Tin and Mining*

As the world's largest tin-producing country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the tin industry was of particular importance to the Malayan economy. The industry was dominantly by a few prominent businessmen such as Eu Tong Seng (Lian and Koh 2004; Chung 2005). The industry was also dominated by a few family businesses. For example, Wong (2007) highlights five families in Penang – Tan, Yeoh, Lim, Cheah and Ong- who controlled large tin and mining businesses alongside opium farms and import and export businesses.

These core industries had a heavy reliance on Chinese labour. The tin industry for instance, was dominated by Chinese capital and labour for a long period until capital-intensive mining was introduced. A historical overview of the employment trends in the tin mining industry between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries clearly shows that the Chinese expanded their dominance in this industry (Jackson 1963) through close associations and strong ties. This continued until significant

technological advances set in and opened up opportunities to the non-Chinese. According to Jackson (1963: 105), the first phase of the tin industry was the “Malayan period” before 1820. This period saw the start of this industry with tin production taking place in Kinta, Pahang and parts of Negri Sembilan. According to Jackson, most of the work was done by slaves.

As the industry matured, it entered into another phase from 1820-1850. Jackson terms this the “early Chinese period” because it was the first instance of Chinese dominance in the industry. Due to British trade treaties, tin was produced in Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Johor at this time. The Chinese capitalised on this by taking an interest in mining. Historical records suggest that by 1850s, most workers in the mining industry were Chinese. In fact, there was already a labour differentiation within the industry:

*"In Malacca all the miners are paid by the month, but they are divided into three different classes, viz. sinkays, coolies and overseers. By Sinkays are meant those who have newly arrived from China, who are always engaged for one year by the person who pays their passage money to the Captain of the junk and advances them some money for sending home, and also agrees to give them money for tobacco and shaving (Crookewit in Jackson 1963: 106)*

Typically, the Sinkays became coolies after the first year of service. Evidently, the market for Chinese labour was well-developed such that there were stages for progression for these workers.



The third stage is termed “the age of great capitans” which lasted from 1850 – 1880s (Jackson 1963). During this time, the Chinese expanded their businesses into other parts of Malaya, namely Selangor and Larut. A factor which facilitated this rapid economic expansion was the close-knitted ties amongst the Chinese. Miners to a specific location were often from the same dialect group and/or were part of a particular secret society:

*“The miners of Taiping were Hakkas and belonged to the Hai San secret society; the miners of Kamunting were Cantonese and belonged to the Ghee Hin secret society (Jackson 1963: 107).”*

Therefore, recruitment was conducted through close ethnic ties and thus ensured that the industry continued to thrive under the leadership of a few regional Chinese groups. Mining fields offered differential wages. While some paid the coolies by the month, others paid annually or based on circumstances. There was little consistency amongst these mines as they were owned by a few powerful capitalists, who were often headmen of various societies. Up to this point, the tin and mining businesses were organised along the lines of informal ethnic relations, thus allowing them to be exploitative and yet self-sustaining all at once. This form of social and economic organisation persisted until the authorities regulated the industry, and when they did, it marked another stage of this industry’s development.

“The rise of Kinta” from 1880 – 1905 was a period in which the mining business became more diffused; economic clout was no longer concentrated in various ethnic clusters or societies, and thus allowed a fairer and bigger market for

coolies to work in. Specifically, from 1884 – 1889, the Chinese mining population of Kinta increased, and outnumbered that in Larut.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, independent employers emerged and created competitive ventures and more favourable conditions, and this attracted many coolies from Larut. Overtime, the Larut coolies moved to Kinta and new employees were managed using a credit system (Jackson 1963: 108-109). This standardised the process of payment, thus restricting cases of exploitation of workers. As the mining industry developed, the Chinese continued to dominate:

*“In 1903 there were 186,000 persons actually working in the mines of the Federated Malay States.” (Jackson 1963: 112)*

However, with modern advances, this dominance soon came to an end as other industry players emerged.

The fifth phase was the “growth of mechanisation” which occurred from 1905-1920s. During this period, indentured work became illegal and this lessened the dominance of the Chinese in the industry. The long history of reliance on Chinese coolies ended as conditions for the exploitation of these Chinese workers became less favourable to business owners. However, industry players found other means to recruit affordable Chinese labour:

*“(It)... was not unusual to find that the labour force on an estate or mine consisted of a number of labourers who had been recruited from China by a labour contractor engaged by the management of the*

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<sup>2</sup> Larut district of the northern state of Perak in Malaysia

*place of employment. The contractor paid all the expenses of the journey from the native village in China to the place of employment. (Often) the majority of the labourers were from the same Chinese village as the contractor or from neighbouring villages.” (Blythe in Jackson 1963: 114)*

While indentured labour was halted, the practice of recruiting from the same Chinese village continued. This ensured that the dominant role of the Chinese persisted. Chinese mining businesses continued to rely on ethnic ties to hire workers. The informal networks of the Chinese continued to be important, but there were signs of recruitment networks becoming more institutionalised as the industry started to be regulated.

Finally, from 1912 onwards, the tin and mining industries became more open to external influence (Jackson 1963). Apart from the Chinese, Malays and Indians joined the industry. The European introduction of the dredging technique made the mining process more accessible (King 1939a) and with this, the “monopoly of (tin) production” shifted from the Chinese to the European companies (King 1939b: 130). Many technological changes followed and resulted in the rapid production of tin. At the same time, the International Tin Control Scheme was introduced, which limited production output. Following these developments, the industry became more diverse and regulated. In sum, this overview of the industry in Southeast Asia clearly shows that the Chinese dominated the industry for a long time until advanced technologies and governmental regulations came about. This dominance was in the form of a sustainable labour flow from China, as well as an enduring presence of Chinese businessmen. The recruitment of coolies was often based on personal relations to a

village or clan. Similarly, the expansion of businesses was conducted by way of forming alliances with fellow Chinese businessmen.

As such, I suggest that the social organisation of these major industries during the colonial period was ethnically and regionally driven, and largely sustained via informal networks, both legal and illegal, in the form of ties with family or ties with Chinese societies. Similarly, Chinese labour was prevalent outside of the tin and mining industries. Take the case of Malaya; apart from tin, it has a wide range of plantations and agricultural resources such as rubber, rice, pineapples, coconuts, oil palm and mangrove forests (King 1939a). Chinese owners relied on coolies to sustain this business. For example, King (1939a: 144) states that the Chinese capitalists were fully responsible for allocating work to the coolies. This type of economic organisation was likewise evident in the tin and mining enterprises. Therefore, I suggest that the colonial economy, which sought to capitalise on the raw material found in the SEA region, was driven by Chinese communities which were defined by districts of origins and dialects. The coolie trade was thus one of the earliest forms of Chinese labour migration to SEA.

### *The Coolie Trade*

The colonial period marked the rise of the coolie trade between 1840s and 1920s. The British adopted a laissez-faire policy towards immigration which favoured with their commercial and colonial interests (Pang and Lim 1982: 548) and triggered a wave of immigration to SEA. The political environment allowed companies to readily employ Chinese workers and labourers. Colonial expansion resulted in many opportunities for work and this attracted Chinese workers who were

economically and physically unsettled back home. Between 1846 and 1940, nineteen million Chinese migrated to SEA (Mckeown 2004: 157); many of these migrants were able to migrate with help from colonial governments or due to some form of obligation and debt systems. Mckeown notes that less than ten per cent of these migrants were indentured, and most of them came from the “southern provinces of Guangdong and Fujian (McKeown 2004: 158)”. According to estimates, the largest immigrant group between 1895 and 1927 were the Chinese and there were six million of them who came to Singapore between 1895 and 1927 alone (Pang and Lim 1982: 549). Many of these immigrants followed the pattern of chain migration, thus reinforcing the importance of ethnic and familial ties in colonial migration (Chng 2005: 604-605).

Another stimulus for the growth in coolie trade was the labour demand emerging due to the end of slavery (Ong 1995: 51). With the end of slavery, plantation economies in particular were left with severe labour shortages. In order to sustain this critical sector, owners were forced to turn to the surplus of Chinese labour. The surplus of Chinese workers meant that owners had a large supply of labour, leading to labourers being susceptible to harsh working conditions and exploitation. As such, Ong suggests that the end of slavery caused coolies to be ‘surrogate slaves’ for colonial expansion. Evidently, the economic demands of the colonial era thus created an environment which attracted Chinese labour migration to Singapore. Apart from this contextual reason, what was it about the dynamics of Chinese migration that triggered a stable flow of workers to Singapore? I thus examine the recruitment processes of Chinese migrants and coolies.

### *Recruitment*

Chinese businesses had a tendency to recruit through ethnic communities such as dialect groups, guilds and extended families. This is seen from the fact that the Chinese consistently dominated certain industries. The first line of recruitment is usually via familial relations; it was common for large businesses to pick a fellow family member to head operations in another business site. To further consolidate their dominance in the industry, prominent families often established economic alliances with other important families in the industry. Concurrently, Chinese businessmen actively established connections with counterparts from the same dialect groups. These alliances took the form of either commercial companies and partnerships or sworn brotherhoods (Wong 2007). By forming partnerships, these families were able to diversify their businesses and “through interlocking share ownership and interlocking directorates, they created a vertically and horizontally integrated structure of companies that could facilitate co-ordinated business transactions and operations (Wong 2007: 112).”

In contrast to official family connections, sworn brotherhoods are partnerships which are established through informal and sometimes, clandestine relations. These are communities of people who are not related by blood, but are bound by a common purpose and a great degree of loyalty towards each other (McIsaac 2000; Mann 2000). Secret societies are often cited examples of sworn brotherhoods. Some Chinese businessmen tapped on these relationships in their business dealings. For example, in the case of the tin and mining industries in Penang, families established ties so as to advance their economic interests:

*“Through this intricate network of association with the leaders of Ho Seng in the east coast of Sumatra, it seems very likely that the big five’s Kian Teik Tong could have allied itself with the Ho Seng to play a part in organising the coolies’ riots as a form of economic leverage in intra-elite commercial competition (Wong 2007: 115).”*

At other times, recruitment via personal relations occurred through these communities. Sworn brotherhoods, although perceived by the colonial authorities as unlawful and clandestine organisations, had an organising function – they served as a self-perpetuating mechanism for the survival of Chinese businesses by ensuring that there was always a dependable labour source.

In addition, coolies were also being recruited via the contract channel (Ong 1995). Coolies could agree to a contract indicating the length of service or the form of labour. Even so, this kind of recruitment usually involved Chinese middlemen tasked to recruit batches of Chinese workers from a particular village or dialect group. The clustering of certain dialect groups in a particular industry occurred because recruitment was done through strong personal ties. Recruitment channels were thus very focused on personal networks and ties. In an era where information technologies were absent, this strategy of tapping on ethnic clusters was effective as it ensured a sustainable flow of labour.

As the industry matured, the varied forms of recruitment proliferated. Soon, there were credit systems in place. These systems were supported by “brokers for large European trading houses, or coolie ships recruitment” (Ong 1995: 52). In some sense, this was similar to the idea of contract labour, only through an institutionalised and formalised system. As a result, it was also more regulated. Lastly, coolies could

also pay a sizeable amount to brokers and make their way to Singapore on their own. Sponsors for this sum of money usually include clan associations. Due to the lack of regulation and information technologies in those days, deception was common. The brokers involved in facilitating these moves were under immense pressures to meet quotas and often resorted to duping some workers into becoming coolies. Under all conditions, workers were expected to commit several years to working in Singapore (Wang 1978). This recruitment channel persists today, but has become more institutionalised and formal. I will expound on this in chapter five.

Therefore, the burgeoning tin and mining businesses required a steady inflow of workers. Since many of these enterprises belonged to Chinese businessmen or families, they often tapped on ethnic networks to ensure there was enough manpower at worksites. Given that they relied on ethnic networks in the forms of families, clans, dialect groups and even secret societies and given this wide range of networks, it is not surprising that the Chinese continued to dominant certain sectors. While many of these recruitment methods were based on informal ties, they were nevertheless dependable and sustainable. This tightly-knitted and ethnically-oriented pattern characterised the social and economic organisation of Chinese migration during the colonial era. In other words, the colonial economy depended largely on strong ethnic ties and communities.

### *Entrepôt Industry*

Another key feature of the colonial economy was entrepôt trade. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Singapore was a thriving port city. With limited land, Singapore inevitably relied heavily on foreign trade and it came in the form of port businesses. Relatedly,



three types of trade flourished (Turnbull 1989) with the first being international trade which involved the import of commodities for local consumption, and the export of domestic products. Another was the transshipment trade which referred to the transfer of goods from one ship to another while passing through Singapore. Most crucially was entrepôt trade which dealt with the distribution of imported products, especially the ones produced in the Malay Archipelago. Profit was generated through the various services such as re-packaging and grading of these products, which also meant that exports from Singapore were always of greater value than the imports. In so doing, Singapore was able to sustain itself financially despite not having land or agriculture.

Several reasons accounted for the success of the port activities. Singapore's strategic position at the southern end of the Malay Peninsular attracted trades from China, Southeast Asia, India and Europe. In fact, it took a while for Singapore to establish its position as a key port city as the presence of other ports in Hong Kong and Canton were more closely linked to China (Wong 1978: 53). However, trade networks soon expanded with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Trade networks proliferated and trade activities increased, adding to the vibrancy of this port.

Another crucial factor for its success was its status as a free port. This was instituted by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819 and allowed for ships to be exempted from payment of import and export duties and related charges. This added to Singapore's competitiveness, especially for Chinese merchants who had been paying significant amounts in Dutch-controlled ports. According to King (1939a: 145), Singapore soon attracted significant junk trade from China and neighbouring countries. Due to continuing demands, Singapore expanded its port facilities through the "conversion

of a mangrove swamp into a port by the Tanjong Pagar Dock Company, Ltd., and the expropriation of the company by the Government of the Straits Settlements in 1905.” The increased involvement of the state suggests the significance of this industry to the larger national economy.

It was not long before Singapore became the commercial capital of the free port trading system (Wong 1978). Within fifty years, Singapore managed to establish itself as an important nodal point for trade between SEA and other regions. Asians were beginning to expand their trade beyond the familiar neighbouring regions, thus elevating Singapore’s status both locally and internationally. This facilitation of international trade involved Chinese workers yet again; many Chinese positioned themselves as middlemen or compradors who worked for foreign corporations who bought and sold products such as tea or cotton, on behalf of the company. The comprador system thus complemented the entrepôt trade and contributed to the rise of Singapore’s port revenue.

International migration stalled during WW2 and shortly after, the Chinese Communist (CCP) Party came into power in China. During this time, the country was governed with principles such as the communist ideology of ‘domestic construction and self-production’ (Wei 2010: 32), which forbade migration. This meant migrating was impossible for the Chinese people. As a country, China was beginning to retreat from the world.

### **3.3 Nation-Building Years: Traditional, Non-Traditional, Skilled and Unskilled Immigrant Labour**

Singapore's nation-building years saw continual streams of Chinese immigrants. Chinese immigrant labour continued to be vital but unlike the intermediary role during the colonial era, they now occupied positions at the top or bottom rungs of society – skilled or unskilled labour. Around the time of independence starting in 1965, foreign labour was imperative to the functioning of Singapore. Singapore focused its resources on building the nation by augmenting the labour force through an influx of foreign labour. Foreign labour was vital given that Singapore faced a labour shortage. The state deemed foreign labour not only necessary, but beneficial for its ability to stimulate entrepreneurial activities (Pang and Lim 1982: 551). Immigrant labour was especially necessary in the 1960s-1970s as Singapore articulated ambitious economic agendas but yet, faced a labour shortage. To mitigate this, authorities implemented pro-immigration policies around 1968 (Pang and Lim 1982: 549).

As the economy grew, the demand for labour continued to mount. The labour shortage was most keenly felt in the manufacturing, shipbuilding and construction industries. However, the global recession in 1974/5 dampened the immigrant labour growth but it was not long before Singapore recovered and resumed its economic development initiatives. In 1978, the burgeoning construction industry created demands for foreign labour and it was then that Singapore diversified its immigrant intake. On top of the “traditional” sources such as Peninsular Malaysia, many immigrants were recruited from “non-traditional” sources which included Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh (Pang and Lim 1982: 549). Evidently,

this period saw a proliferation of immigrants and immigrant sources. In 1980s, the demand for labour spiked yet again; in fact, demand was so great that the authorities moved towards a liberal stance and “decided to liberalise for two years the importation of all, skilled and unskilled foreign workers from both traditional and non-traditional sources (Pang and Lim 1982: 550)”. In addition, the authorities simplified the application processes so as to ease recruitment of foreign labour. All these were done to reduce entry barriers to working in Singapore. Evidently, the years of nation-building generated a large demand for immigrant labour and since then, skilled immigrants have been a constant fixture in Singapore’s immigration policy. These groups of immigrants are transnational professionals and entrepreneurs, many of whom are “wealthy Chinese from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, and other Southeast Asian countries (Pang and Lim 1982: 549).” This reliance on immigrant labour continues till today (Yap 1999).

### **3.4 Post - 1978 Migration from China: Market-Led Global Economy**

The changing political economy of China was the next significant event. This occurred in latter parts of 1978, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) reoriented their plans towards a “socialist modernisation” (Skeldon 1996: 434). When Deng Xiaoping came into power, he pursued a market-led economy. Key to this was the economic liberation of China; under this new paradigm, policies such as the acceptance of foreign capital and the relaxation of emigration laws were introduced. This liberalised migration law. For example, the “Law on the Control of the Exit and Entry of Citizens” was instituted and took effect from 1986 onwards. This law serves to confirm the legal status of Chinese citizens and to permit entry

into the country and exit from the country, which were rights previously denied under the previous regime. To support China's changing political economy, travel was relaxed in the early 1980s and people began to leave permanently and temporarily for a wide range of reasons. Some estimates suggest that 350,000 Chinese citizens went overseas between 1979 and 1985 (Liu 2005: 29-316). In short, international migration became a right of Chinese citizens.

Over the decades, the law pertaining to migration was further revised in favour of mobility for the people. In September 1985, the People's Congress issued identification cards which facilitated the movements of citizens. Later, in November 1985, 'the regulation concerning Chinese citizens going abroad and returning' was promulgated, thus declaring overseas travel as a basic right. Specific emigration and immigration laws were adopted which granted Chinese citizens the right to travel outside of China and leave for private reasons (Skeldon 1996). This differed from the past whereby travel was endorsed only for official reasons. This effectively increased the volume and complexity of migration because Chinese citizens could now travel for various personal purposes. Moreover, in February 2002, Chinese citizens no longer had to submit a foreign invitation nor did they need to obtain approval from the local Public Security Bureau before going abroad. At the same time, destination countries were also relaxing regulation towards Asian immigrants (Liu 2005: 297). Along with these legal changes, economic development soared and created mobile populations within China. These mobile populations include a wide range of groups including professionals, students, study mothers, sporting and artistic talent to name a few categories. At the same time, China continues to provide low-skilled labour. The overall rate of immigration thus increased and the composition of immigrants has become more diversified.

### *The Rise of the Chinese Professional Class*

As a result of the confluence of an increasingly liberal China and the emerging tiger economies, China experienced a new type of business-oriented migration involving the relocation of families and educated/skilled people. The relatively affluent areas of Fujian, Zhejiang and Guangdong were unsurprisingly the major migrant sending areas, given their history of being the economic centres of China. Even so, Southern China continues to export lesser-skilled labour today. International students also constitute one significant group of Chinese immigrants. Since 1978, “more than 1.2 million students have left China to study abroad”. Around 30 years later in 2007, “China sent around 144,000 students abroad, 167 times of the 1978 (Ministry of Education, 5 April 2008 in Wei 2010: 35).” Unsurprisingly, this makes China the largest sender of international students in the world.

This post-1980 context of China created a generation of more liberal, educated and technologically-savvy people. Studies have found that the “composition of the migrant flows has been heavily biased towards the postgraduate-level student, the professionals and the wealthier groups” (Skeldon 1996: 449). These highly educated individuals from China, who emerged at the top of the world’s most populous educational system, are sought after by companies and schools around the world. At the same time, conditions in China’s major cities remain less favourable to them. Ironically, to produce such high-calibre people, China’s education system has to be extremely competitive but in the process of doing so, it has produced an oversupply of graduates, leading to high graduate unemployment and the deskilling

of many graduates (Bai 2006). These structural factors are disincentives for the highly skilled to stay in China and hence, many choose to migrate to countries which not only need them more, but are able to provide more economic, social and cultural capital. Therefore, the logical trend is to see more Chinese professionals moving across the globe for employment purposes.

### *East Asian Tiger Economies*

In addition, the liberalisation of China coincided with the rise of the East-Asian tiger economies, and induced more Chinese emigration especially to these economies. I highlight this regional context to argue that a thriving Asian economy was the climate in which Chinese migrants were moving to. Most significantly, this era paved the way for the rise of mobile professionals from China.

Around the 1980s, the newly industrialised economies (NIEs) of South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore prospered and emerged as strong economic competitors to the conventional powerhouses such as the US and parts of Europe. This rise of the East-Asian economies has been termed the 'Asian miracle' (Stiglitz and Uy 1996) because of their rise to economic prominence in such a short span of time. Japan led this regional growth and its success occurred much earlier than the other four countries. What then are the features of these exceptional East Asian economies? Kuznet (1988: S17-S19) suggests that the economies of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea share similar traits. They have high rates of investments, competitive labour markets, high export rates, small public sectors, little welfare expenditure and some form of government intervention in the economy. Incidentally, these traits have persisted from the 1980s till today. In his conceptualisation of an

‘East Asian model of economic development’, Kuznet excludes Singapore and Hong Kong on the account that they did not have an agricultural sector and hence, faced economic issues of a different kind. However, Kuznet, as with most other analysts, agree that Hong Kong and Singapore are part of the larger East Asian economic boom. These two economies share those traits as well but differ slightly regarding the degree of government intervention in the economy. In his comparative analysis, Krause (1988: S60) argues that the Singapore government opted for a more involved stance than that of Hong Kong. Barring the different degrees of state intervention, these economies did experience similar developmental trajectories. From the 1980s, these economies have had exceptional GDP growth rates and continue to be vibrant economies even in today’s climate when the global economy is slowing down.

### *The Developmental State of Singapore*

The most significant difference between the governments of the colonial period and that of the post-independence period in Singapore is this: while the British adopted a laissez-faire approach, the Singapore government was highly involved in the development of the state. I use the concept ‘developmental state’ (Chalmers 1982) to explain the role of the Singapore government, especially from the 1980s onwards. The transition from the colonial to the post-independence period changed migration patterns: while migrants were allowed to come into Singapore during the colonial period, the post-independence era saw the government actively pursuing foreign talent.

This concept of the developmental state was first used in the context of East Asian economic development in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It refers to the act of state-driven



economic planning and intervention. Chalmers Johnson (1982) first coined the term with reference to the Japanese economy. To briefly summarise his propositions, he argues that developmentalism is characterised by several traits: first, states which are developmentalist in its orientation consistently prioritise economic development. Second, states are involved in private property and the economy. Third, state initiatives are guided by an elite economic bureaucracy. Fourth, this management is simultaneously involved in consultations and collaborations with the private sector. All these efforts contribute to policy formulation. Finally, there is a distinction between state bureaucrats who execute these ideas and politicians who oversee them.

Following these arguments, Singapore has undoubtedly been a developmental state from the time of its independence (Perry, Kong and Yeoh 1997). I suggest two main reasons. First, the state wielded immense political control over a range of national issues such as immigration and its impacts on labour market restructuring, education and urban planning to name a few (Olds and Yeung 2004: 512-513). State organisations are arranged hierarchically such as any form of national change is influenced by the state, with minimal, if any, citizen involvement. Second, as a logical consequence, through a series of programmes, the state controlled and sustained economic growth. Pereira (2008) notes some of these initiatives. In the 1980s, there was a new economic policy called the Industrial Upgrading Programme. This programme had the intention of encouraging the move towards high technology jobs, which would inevitably drive Singapore up the value-chain. Also in the 1980s, government-linked corporations (GLCs) were formed. Under this new system the state became involved as the largest stakeholder, in the key sectors such as telecommunications, airline and shipbuilding sectors. Later on, in the 1990s, developmentalism extended beyond Singapore's shores. Singapore embarked on

regionalisation strategy, which saw the state pursuing economic opportunities in China and neighbouring countries. The agenda was to stimulate external growth in order to supplement domestic progress (Peirera 2008: 1193). Taken together, these examples show that the 20<sup>th</sup> century climate was evidently one of pro-growth. Examples of state entrepreneurship include the construction of the regional industrial parks in Batam and Suzhou (Pereira 2004).

However, developmentalism continued unabated even after the industrialisation period of the 1980s – 1990s. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the state has explicitly boosted the biotechnology sector, a highly lucrative sector which has yet to be fully developed. In addition, in anticipation of a declining manufacturing sector, the state has also channelled workers from the manufacturing to the service sectors (Pereira 2008). Together, these initiatives clearly show the sustained interest in state-led economic growth. After all, Singapore's economic success in the 1980s was large state-induced, and till today, the state continues to drive economic agendas.

Therefore, Singapore has very coherent plans for developmentalism. Within this framework, is a pro-immigration stance, which welcomes foreign labour into the country with the hopes of having them further stimulate the economy, and to mitigate the population issue of a declining workforce triggered by low fertility and ageing.

### **3.5 Summary**

The chapter shows that the patterns of Chinese migration have evolved through the decades. First, patterns of Chinese migration were previously concentrated but are currently diffused. The opening up of China and the growing

education levels have enabled many Chinese to seek opportunities elsewhere. The modern day immigrant does not only refer to the highly educated but also the less educated who are keen on exploring overseas employment. Unlike the uneducated immigrants of the past, migrants today work under much more regulated conditions. Most importantly, migration is usually voluntary. Second, Chinese migration networks and Chinese ethnic ties are key themes through these historical phases. While migration was often based on kinship or ethnic relations in the past, the shift from the colonial context clearly shows the declining reliance on these strong ethnic ties. Finally, the transition from the colonial economy to a market-led economy, and currently to a globalised economy today is critical to understanding the patterns of contemporary Chinese migration. In all these various stages, Chinese workers migrated for different purposes and through various means. In comparing these stages, I have shown that Chinese recruitment, employment and migration patterns were concentrated in various ethnic clusters in the colonial era, but this has started to change from 1978 onwards, when China became more receptive to global influences. In chapter four, I discuss 'new' Chinese immigration.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **GLOBALISATION AND 'NEW' CHINESE IMMIGRATION**

In this chapter, I describe 'new Chinese immigrants' in the 21st Century, the age of globalisation. I argue that the traits they possess are generalizable across various case studies from many countries, and thus, the idea of 'new' needs to be unpacked. Therefore, I problematize 'new' in two ways using the context of Singapore: first, if new Chinese immigrations are appearing in many parts of the world, what is distinct about them appearing in Singapore? In some sense, there is after all nothing 'new' about this phenomenon on a global level. Second, given the long history of Chinese immigration to Singapore, Chinese migration is anything but new. However, I suggest that immigration trends today are 'new' because a) there is a new context of migration and b) a new diversity amongst Chinese immigrants.

#### **4.1 Growth of Asian Migration**

There is a new context in migration research. In recent years, migration research has given attention to Asian migration. Although migration to and from Asia is not a new phenomenon, the unprecedented scale and diversity (Hugo 2005) today has ignited discussions on new economic, political and socio-cultural consequences in the region. Moreover, the region constitutes several countries which have the leading immigrant populations. Following Figure 11, they are Macau, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Brunei with 66.1%, 39.4%, 33.6% and 31.7% immigrant populations respectively.

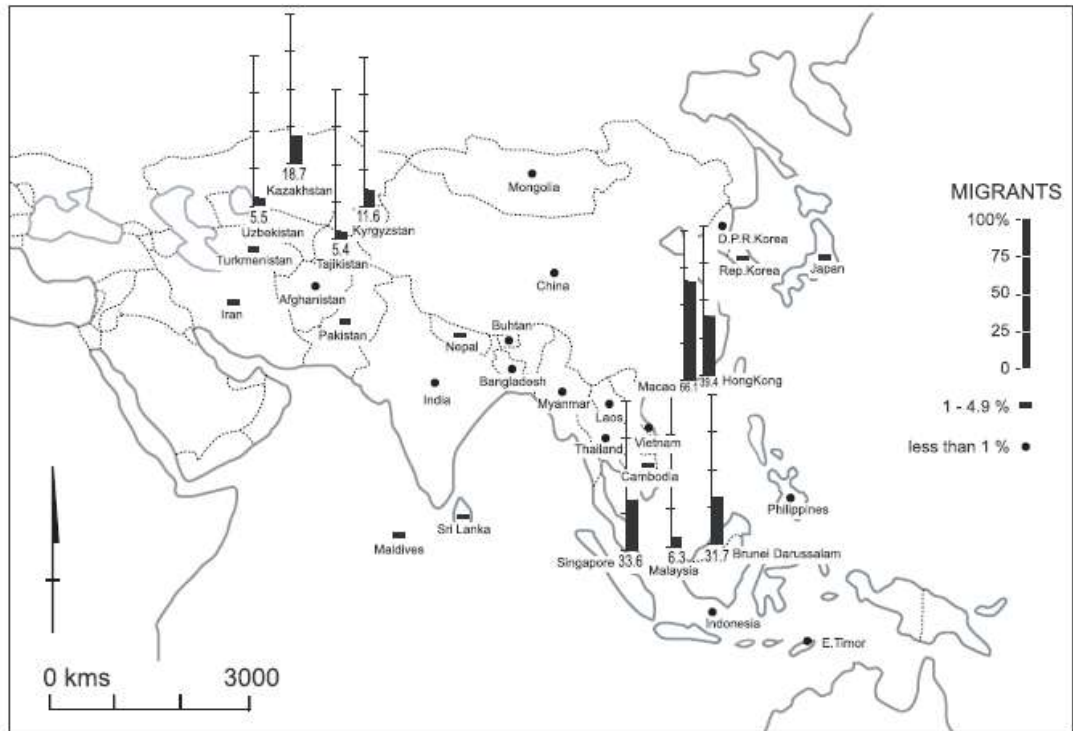


Figure 10: Asia: Migrant population of 2000 (United Nations 2002 cited in Hugo 2005: 95)

Today, as Western economies experience a decline, Asia is increasingly becoming a popular and practical destination for Chinese immigrants. As of 2010, Asia houses around 28 million overseas Chinese or eighty per cent of the total Chinese diasporas in the world (Wei 2010: 35). Incidentally, China is the largest migrant-sending country. According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM 2003), there are 350 million Chinese living abroad who constitute 18% of the total migrants globally. This scale of emigration is possible due to policies within China which are gradually more accommodating towards migration. In contrast to policies in the past which restricted immigration, those today take on a more neutral stance (Xiang 2003); Xiang suggests that migration has been shifted to the commercial realm, and in so doing, the authorities have successfully neutralised the once highly politicised issue. In other words, policies today avoid linking migration

with ideological and political issues, and this creates an environment more favourable for immigration. In addition, there is the institutionalisation and the commercialisation of migration. Through fairs and conventions, potential immigrants are cognizant of opportunities that can be found overseas, and have institutional guidance to act upon them. At the same time, they have forged new relationships with the overseas Chinese communities and receiving countries, thereby signalling their intent to support the movement of talent and labour between China and various countries. Under these conditions, China emerges as the top-sending migrant country.

#### **4.2 Chinese Migration in the Global Economy**

The context of globalisation readily enables the movement of labour across borders. This, coupled with China's liberalisation, produces political and economic ties which promote the export of Chinese labour. Under these conditions, Chinese labour migration/labour export takes an accelerated and unprecedented form.

##### *Organised Labour Export and Increased Trade*

From the late 1970s, the Chinese economy became more internationally-oriented and dynamic. Liu (1995: 299) argues that this triggered a 'dynamic population movement' in China; people within China are more able to move about both internally and externally, and since it happened on a large scale, significant population changes have been observed. The new Chinese climate fuels emigration in several ways, chief amongst them is the expansion of export labour. Organised

labour export is defined as: contracted projects and labour services (Liu 1995: 302).”

As labour is able to move relatively freely, the export labour market in China grows, and organised labour export becomes a key channel for Chinese migration.

TABLE 3  
Organized Labour Export

	<i>Number of Countries or Regions Contracted</i>	<i>Contracted Projects (US\$ millions)</i>	<i>Labour Services (US\$ millions)</i>	<i>Total (US\$ millions)</i>
1984	52	494	129	623
1985	71	663	172	835
1986	83	819	154	973
1987	95	1,114	146	1,260
1988	103	1,253	177	1,430
1989	124	1,484	202	1,686
1990	122	1,644	223	1,867
1991	147	1,970	393	2,363
1992	159	2,403	646	3,049
1993	158	3,668	870	4,538

SOURCE: *Statistical Yearbook of China 1994*, p. 532 (State Statistical Bureau of People’s Republic of China, China Statistical Publishing House, 1994).

Figure 11: Organised Labour Export Statistics, 1984-1993 ( Liu 1995: 302)

Figure 12 shows that China, at the onset of contemporary globalisation in the 1980s and 1990s, had increased the number of contracted countries/regions by more than three times in the span of eleven years. Evidently, the climate of globalisation has triggered trade and emigration in the form of organised labour export. This process is a highly institutionalised process involving governments and businesses: national government corporations, local government companies, and trading companies (Liu 1995: 302).” Ultimately, labour export serves to earn foreign exchange and simultaneously, to mitigate local unemployment. At a time when many mature

economies are shifting their focus to advanced producer services, the manufacturing capabilities of the Chinese workforce is in high demand.

More recently, students consist of a growing group of immigrants. These student-migrations are typically sponsored by either state or firms. In fact, this kind of migration is highly structured and possesses an organised system, with specific streams of people moving to specific places. For example, Singapore and Hong Kong, are receptive to university-educated Chinese workers, and Singapore is particularly willing to accept firm-sponsored Chinese students who received their education in Singapore (Liu 1995: 302). With institutional support from both sending and receiving countries, this trend continues to grow. According to reports, in 2008 alone, China sent 179, 800 students abroad, making them the largest source country of international students (Ministry of Education 2009 cited in Xiang and Wei 2009: 515). To add on, another government report indicates that the top destinations for Chinese students in 2005 were the Americas (32.1%), Europe (27.9%) and Asia (25.3%) (Chinese Ministry of Education Annual Work Report cited in Xiang and Wei 2009: 515). Enrolment in Asia looks set to grow (EDB 2003; Mok 2008; Cheung, Yuen, Yuen and Yin 2011). Singapore in particular, looks set to increase its population of international students in order to address its objective of becoming a global educational hub (Duhamel 2004; Olds 2007). Putting the two trends together, this can only mean that the numbers of Chinese students will continue to rise, and more of them will be directed towards Singapore.

Apart from students, Singapore has been taking in a sizeable pool of immigrant labour ranging from the highly skilled professionals and elite investors to the lesser skilled worker. Singapore has thus been a beneficiary of Chinese liberal



policies; recent figures (Figure 13) on economic cooperation reveal a growing economic relationship between Singapore and China. The steady growth in the value of ‘Labour Services’ reflects the influx of immigrants into Singapore from 2005 – 2010 (Figure 14). This period has the highest net migration rate in the last sixty years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Contracted projects</b>	<b>Labour services</b>
2005	767.58	398.28
2006	832.53	417.85
2007	874.39	450.66
2008	1,320.48	527.34

*Figure 12: Value of economic collaborations, China Statistical Yearbook 2006 (cited in Chan 2011:*

*13)*

*Net migration rate in Singapore, (per 1,000 population)  
1950-2015*

Period	Net Migration Rate
1950-1955	11.3
1955-1960	9.3
1960-1965	0.0
1965-1970	0.0
1970-1975	0.5
1975-1980	1.2
1980-1985	12.1
1985-1990	8.5
1990-1995	14.3
1995-2000	13.7
2000-2005	11.4
2005-2010	30.9
2010-2015	6.6

*Figure 13: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United*

*Nations Secretariat, World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision,*

*<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>*

From workers to students to professionals, this expansion of export labour is made possible due to the coincidence of two contexts: the liberalisation of China which has eased cross-border movements, and the globalisation of the economy which presents job opportunities abroad.

### **4.3 New Chinese Immigrants in Japan, South Africa, Canada and Europe**

What then are the characteristics of these new immigrants? The globalising and liberalising conditions of China means that from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, new immigrants have been appearing in many parts of the world. The literature typically points towards the 1980s as the phase which saw the influx of Chinese to new areas. Compared to their predecessors, these new immigrants are superior in terms of educational and socio-economic levels. Perhaps as a result of their elevated statuses today, they are also more willing to integrate and settle in host societies. Amongst Chinese newcomers in Japan, a majority could be counted middle class (Le Bail 2005) and many are more integrated than their predecessors in terms of economic and residential patterns. The ‘new immigrants’ here refers to those immigrating to Japan from the 1970s onwards. Relatedly, the ‘old’ immigrant refers to those present in Japan from 1945 to 1970s. Amongst new immigrants are students and professionals, who account for the increased educational and socio-economic levels of migrants. However, new immigrants are not necessarily always more educated. The inverse trend is found in South Africa. Before 2000, and especially around the 1980s, there were many professionals from Beijing and Shanghai in South Africa. Today however, a less affluent group constitute the Chinese group: they are mainly small traders and peasants from the Fujian province (Huynh and Park 2011: 289). Many of these migrants struggle to make a living.

#### *Transnationalism*

However, what is distinctively new is the *transnational orientations* of new immigrant: while immigrants of the past migrated in uni-linear ways, the ones today

move several times during the course of their careers/lives. This transnational perspective unravels another new aspect of Chinese migration: due to the diverse nature of migration today, there is a multitude of differences amongst Chinese immigrants. Huynh and Park term this the “nuances of Chinese identities (2011: 301)”. Due to immense differences caused by various transnational immigrant pathways, it is not unusual to observe tensions between groups of Chinese. This debunks the myth of the ‘Chinese mass’ and suggests that the Chinese immigrant population is increasingly heterogeneous. This heterogeneity is likewise evident in Canada. For many years now, Canada has been a primary destination for Chinese immigrants. These immigrants initially worked in major sectors such as manufacturing or services but have overtime, gained employment in niche areas: in the 1980s, many were in primary industries but by the mid-1990s, the Chinese began to migrate due to opportunities in Applied Sciences (Guo and DeVoretz 2007: 8). Migrant groups today are evidently more varied in terms of their skill sets.

### *Diversification*

One major implication of these new traits is the ‘diversification’ of immigrants in the globalised migration context (Giese 2003). Due to the diverse backgrounds, orientations and patterns, immigrants are loosely connected to each other. Contemporary Chinese migration to Germany brings across this point clear: due to the emergence of new migration systems and institutions, the process of migrating is “anything but homogenous”. First, new immigrants are also more geographically dispersed than before. In Europe, Chinese immigrants are exploring new frontiers. Up till 1945, Chinese immigrants in Europe were mainly contract

labourers, peddlers and traders (Pieke 2002: 7). Western Europe was the region with the most Chinese immigrants by the end of WW2 but over the decades, the Chinese communities spread across Europe. They settled in Northern Europe, and also in new destinations such as Southern and Eastern Europe from the 1980s and 1990s respectively (Pieke 2002: 6). Pieke (2002: 16) identifies three new regions which are new destinations for Chinese immigrants in Europe today. The first is Central and Eastern Europe. These areas have traditionally been areas with a low density of ethnic Chinese, unlike the current post-socialist economy which involves a high demand of goods and services, which are industries that immigrants from China have expertise in. Second, in Southern Europe, Italy (from the 1980s) is fast becoming a popular place for Chinese immigrants; they are mainly found in garment and leather workshops but are increasingly prominent in capital-intensive businesses. This pattern of Chinese diffusion is emerging in Spain, Portugal and Greece as well (Pieke 2002: 18). Finally, the Chinese continue to appear in Western Europe but apart from the traditional destinations of Netherlands, England and France, they are also moving to newer territories such as Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and the Nordic countries.

### *Professionalization of Emigration and Loose Networks*

This widespread diffusion of the Chinese population across the world is made possible, in part, due to the “professionalization of emigration”. Pieke (2002: 12) defines the phrase as making “emigration universally available in overseas Chinese home areas and opening up previously inaccessible destinations.” Using the case of the Chinese in Europe, Pieke (2002) shows how the relaxation of Chinese regulations

from the 1980s enabled waves of emigration from across China. In particular, three distinct groups of Chinese established bases in Europe (Pieke 2002: 8-9). They were the Zhejiangese, Cantonese and Hakka, and the South-East Asian Chinese. Within these groups, there are few commonalities as they came from different regions, had their own dialects and cultures and arrived ‘independently’ from each other. These ‘independent’ migration streams were possible in part due to the presence of recruitment services.

This new wave of Chinese migration demonstrates a more varied pattern of migration, and concomitantly, the declining trend of chain migration. The Zhejiangese for instance, have traditionally exemplified the chain migration pattern - the dependence of kinship and/or friendship networks in the pursuit of emigration - which has explained the presence of the Zhejiang community in Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France (Pieke 2002: 11). Recently however, the Chinese are leveraging on entrepreneurial opportunities as a means of emigration and venturing into Scandinavia, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Spain and Portugal for business purposes. A similar pattern of dispersed networks is evident amongst the Chinese in Germany (Giese 2003). Immigrants are “loosely connected” (2003: 179) and as a community, they are fragmented and polarised along occupational, educational, economic, cultural and ethnic lines. In sum, this idea counterpoises the view that old Chinese migration was largely driven by ethnic communities and that it was reliant on closely-knitted Chinese communities and strong networks (Zhao 2008). Today, Chinese immigrants in Europe and elsewhere are geographically diffused, economically better-off than their predecessors and are also highly heterogeneous.

#### **4.4 New Chinese Immigrants in Singapore: New Diversity**

The case of Singapore exhibits the above characteristic. Chinese immigrants are transnational in their orientations. This departs from patterns which Wang (1993) articulates; while he describes uni-linear movements amongst the Chinese between home and host country, migration today sprouts from various points, results in several destinations and includes regular shuttling between places. This is also known by scholars as the transnational turn in the migration literature (Faist 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Transnationalism manifests itself in two ways. First, there is an influx of immigrants as people become more mobile. Migration patterns reveal that the recent influx of immigrants began around 1990. Estimates (UNDP 2010) suggest that 1995-2000 and 2005-2010 are periods with the highest migration rates – 13.7 and 30.9 respectively (Figure 14). There has evidently been an unprecedented pace of immigration in recent years.

In addition, the transnational climate has inevitably encouraged larger volumes of migration. Another expression of transnationalism is seen in large increase in the numbers of Permanent Residents (PRs) who reside both in Singapore and in other countries. The Singapore Census (Singapore Department of Statistics 2010: 40) shows that between the years 1990 and 2009, the number of citizens, Permanent Residents (PR) and Non-Residents (NR) increased by 18%, 79% and 75.2% respectively (Figure 15). NRs include people who are neither citizens nor PRs. So while there has been a large increase of the PRs and NRs, who are transmigrants and who move amongst cities to find jobs, this does not translate into an equally large increase in the number of citizens. Therefore, it is true that

Singapore attracts many migrants but a sizeable proportion does not stay on, and choose instead, to be transnational in their citizenship orientations.

Year	Total Population <sup>2,4</sup>	Singapore Residents <sup>4</sup>			Non-Residents
		Total	Singapore Citizens	Singapore Permanent Residents	
Number (Thousand) as at June					
1990 (Census)	3,047.1	2,735.9	2,623.7	112.1	311.3
2000 (Census)	4,027.9	3,273.4	2,985.9	287.5	754.5
2004	4,166.7	3,413.3	3,057.1	356.2	753.4
2005	4,265.8	3,467.8	3,081.0	386.8	797.9
2006	4,401.4	3,525.9	3,107.9	418.0	875.5
2007	4,588.6	3,583.1	3,133.8	449.2	1,005.5
2008	4,839.4	3,642.7	3,164.4	478.2	1,196.7
2009	4,987.6	3,733.9	3,200.7	533.2	1,253.7
Average Annual Growth <sup>1</sup> (Per Cent)					
1990 (Census)	2.3 <sup>3</sup>	1.7 <sup>3</sup>	1.7 <sup>3</sup>	2.3 <sup>3</sup>	9.0
2000 (Census)	2.8	1.8	1.3	9.9	9.3
2004	1.3	1.4	0.8	6.5	0.7
2005	2.4	1.6	0.8	8.6	5.9
2006	3.2	1.7	0.9	8.1	9.7
2007	4.3	1.6	0.8	7.5	14.9
2008	5.5	1.7	1.0	6.5	19.0
2009	3.1	2.5	1.1	11.5	4.8

1 For 1990 and 2000, refers to annual growth over the last ten years. For 2004 - 2009, refers to growth over previous year.  
2 Total population comprises Singapore residents and non-residents. Resident population comprises Singapore citizens and permanent residents.  
3 Based on 1980 and 1990 using de facto concept.  
4 Data for 2004-2007 have been revised with effect from February 2008.

Figure 14: Yearbook of Statistics, Singapore; Chapter 3: population and growth. Pg 40

### Geographical Diversity



Chinese immigration to Singapore today is more diverse in character. Given that globalisation of transportation and communications have made cross-border travel options prevalent, the departure points of immigrants are now extremely varied. While earlier immigrants came primarily from the southern regions of China such as Fujian and Guangdong (Freedman 1960: 26), the sources today are geographically more dispersed, thus generating a highly varied pool of immigrants in Singapore. Many professionals from developed cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen, are working in Singapore. However, this trend occurs alongside the consistent and traditional inflow from the southern regions. In addition, there is a new and growing population originating from north-eastern parts of China, but little research has been done on this group. Given that the different regions of China are associated with their own distinct ethnicities, languages/dialects, cultures and socio-economic statuses, the Chinese immigrant population today is invariably more differentiated.

#### *Occupational Groups, Skills and Industries*

Diverse backgrounds translate into a range of occupations amongst immigrations. The historian Wang Gung Wu notes that Chinese migrants have dominated different occupational roles throughout two centuries (in Hirschman 1998: 23-24). Before the 19th Century, they were mostly “merchants and sojourners” who ventured abroad for economic reasons. From the middle of the 19th Century, there were many Chinese “coolies and labourers” who were often socio-economically impoverished (Freedman 1960: 26). From the 20th Century onwards, Chinese migrants were often regarded as the “overseas Chinese” - Chinese living abroad.

Respectively, these three migrant conceptualisations correspond to Wang's (in Jones 2010: 348) notions of Chinese migration patterns of the "trader pattern" (Hua Shang), the "coolie pattern" (Hua Gong) and the "sojourner pattern" (Hua Qiao). Today, Chinese immigrants are typically 'transnational' in their orientations - they are mobile and have settlement patterns which are less predictable. Singapore has been home to a range of Chinese immigrants – from labourers to professionals to special talents in arts and sports (Straits Times, 22 November 2008). This wide pool of immigrants changed the demographics of Chinese immigrants in Singapore.

Many Chinese immigrants are attracted to Singapore for employment purposes; this interest has become more differentiated and a more varied pool of immigrants is moving to Singapore. While not entirely new to Singapore, the group of new skilled workers has expanded exponentially in recent years, particularly from 2005 onwards (Hing, Lee and Sheng 2009). Chinese professionals and skilled workers from top-tier cities constitute a new and growing group today. Apart from growth in numbers, they are also growing in status. Being young and upwardly mobile, they are targets of the Singapore government's campaign to augment its population. One media report terms this group the "young dragons" (Leong 2008), which emphasizes their youth and ambition; unlike the previous generation these new immigrants are "younger", more "well-educated", "speak competent English". With these capabilities, they now work in fields –such as art and writing - which their predecessors were not involved in due to linguistic barriers.

Nevertheless, many continue to persist in conventional Chinese fields such as "entrepreneurship" and "IT". In addition, within this group of new immigrants, there is a sub-group who view Singapore as a stepping stone to somewhere else - these are

the people who follow a trajectory of “stepwise international migration” (Paul 2011), which means that they are likely to uproot for greener pastures someday (Leong 2008). There is yet another group who prefers to stay on in Singapore and take on citizenship or permanent residence. Either way, their abilities, whether to emigrate elsewhere or to stay on in Singapore, attest to the calibre of these “white collar professionals from China” (Lee 2011) – they are globally competitive and thus well-equipped to match up with locals in the workforce. However, there is still a dearth of research on this group of new immigrants.

At the other end of the spectrum, Singapore continues to attract lesser-skilled migrants as it did in the past. These new unskilled workers are typically found in construction, manufacturing, maritime and service industries in Singapore (Lin 2010). In fact, Singapore has received so many of such workers that this issue has been a point of contention in recent months as locals view them as threats to local jobs. Stereotypical reasoning suggest that the unskilled local population is either being supplanted by cheaper and younger Chinese labour or have their wages depressed due to a sheer volume of foreign labour. As one journalist puts it (Chen 2008), this is “Singapore’s unloved Chinese labour boom” for as essential as they are to the local economy, they are not necessarily well-received. It is thus not the case that favourable immigration conditions in Singapore translate into positive outcomes for workers; in fact, it is quite the opposite as many unskilled workers are disadvantaged and face a plethora of labour problems despite being in a pro-immigration climate in Singapore. These problems often involve agents and occur on both the origin and destinations sites of migration, perhaps as Lin (2010: 207-209) suggests, due to the emigration system of China and the immigration system of Singapore are not being in synchrony; the respective policies are not adequately

coordinated and thus expose loopholes which labour agents exploit. Lesser skilled Chinese workers often lack knowledge on various procedures and together with their lack of proficiency in English language, they are susceptible to being exploited by shady agents. Issues include the lack of transparency over salary, an arbitrary down-payment for finding employment in Singapore (Lin 2010: 201-204). On a personal level, many migrants –especially construction workers- experience psychological and emotional difficulties (Low, Liu and Soh 2008). These issues have strengthened the cause of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) which has typically highlighted human rights issues that accompany the influx of Chinese labour (Chan 2011; HOME 2011). Overall, Chinese workers today are spread out across various industries, unlike their predecessors who were largely confined to manual labour.

#### *Macro-economic Trends of Foreign Labour*

In addition to a numerical change, there also exists a qualitative change in the composition of Chinese labour. Specifically, there are new sending-cities and new labour export patterns. Chinese workers today are originating from more varied sources apart from the Southern cities which have been traditional sources of labour (Chan 2011). Historically, foreign labour to Singapore had originated from Southern China. The southern coastal cities were for a long time, more developed and connected, thus able to produce relevant workers and the channels for them to move abroad. At present however, many northern cities are becoming new sources of labour. This might be due to the fact that as China develops and opportunities proliferate within the country, many people from developed Chinese cities either stay put or choose to migrate within China. As competition becomes stiffer, potential migrants from the less advanced northern cities, thus turn to opportunities outside of

China. However, research on these emerging source cities remains limited. The illustration below (Figure 16) shows estimated figures. It shows the provinces which send the highest number of workers overseas through labour cooperation companies and international contractors (in 2007). The figures suggest that the following cities are becoming major sending-area: Shandong sends out 35, 445 migrants/year, Jiangsu sends 25, 973 migrants/year, Liaoning sends 25, 290 migrants/year and Henan sends 11, 986 migrants/year. The labour export of these northern cities surpass traditional source areas such as Fujian which sends 20, 288 migrants/year and Guangzhou which sends 9, 719 migrants/year. These southern cities have previously dominated Chinese labour in South East Asia. There is evidently, an expansion of labour sources; while the southern cities dominated in the past, it appears that many northern cities are dominating labour exports today.



Figure 15: Provinces sending the highest number of workers overseas through labour cooperation companies and international contractors in 2007(Cited in Chan 2011: 15)

The construction industry in particular, is one which benefits from the huge pool of China foreign labour. This trend of Chinese labour working in the construction industry in Singapore started during the 1980s construction boom, but has since become a more generalised trend with Chinese workers found across many industries today. At present, construction, manufacturing, maritime and services are largely dependent on foreign workers from China (Lin 2010: 194). Chan (2011: 13) notes: “According to China’s Ministry of Commerce, as of 2007, there were about 100,000 Chinese workers employed on work permit in Singapore, mainly in construction (42.8 per cent), manufacturing (32.4 per cent) and transportation (8.9 per cent).” In addition, most Chinese workers in Singapore are non-professionals who hold labour-intensive jobs (Chan 2011: 11).

The sizeable pool of Chinese labour in Singapore generates large amounts of revenue in terms of the total contract value. One estimate states (Chan 2011: 5):

*“In 2008, the total contract value of China’s labour export to Singapore was US\$527 million, making it the second most valuable international market for Chinese labour behind Japan.” (Figure 17)*

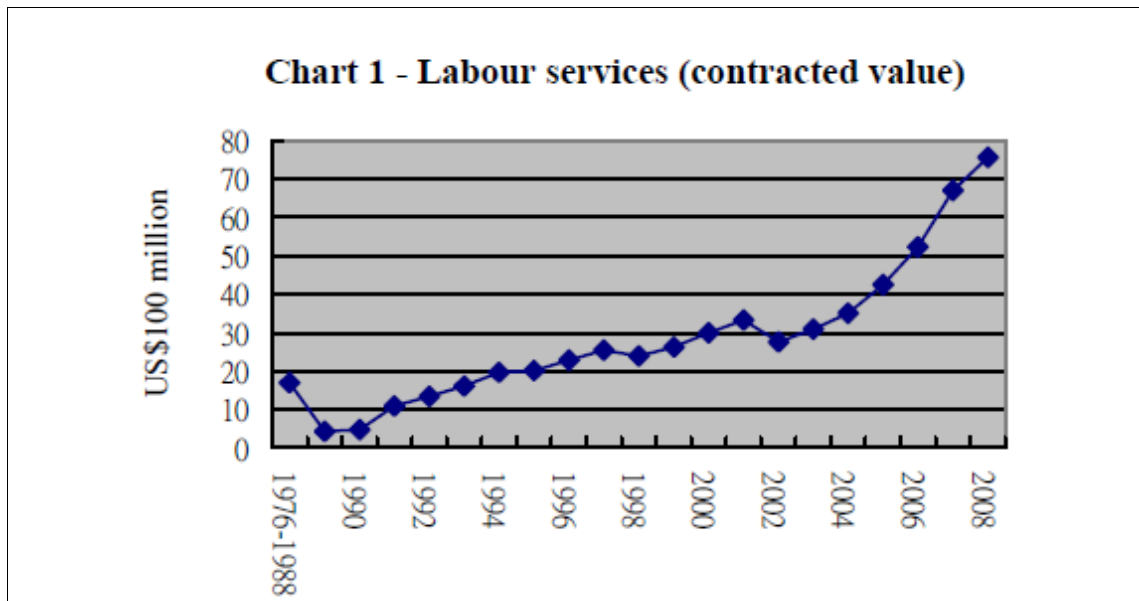


Figure 16: Export Labour Service in China (cited in Chan 2011: 9)

Labour export from China evidently has relevance on bilateral trade and economic development in Singapore. These macro-economic trends shape the socio-political policies which allow or disallow migrants to work here. In addition, these trends in turn confirm the increasing prevalence of Chinese workers abroad. Chinese immigration, particularly for work purposes, is growing. Migrants are also more widespread as destinations are increasingly diverse.

### *Gender and Age*

Gender and age of immigrants are also increasingly diverse, and this sets new immigrants apart from their predecessors. Recently, the entry of migrant brides and later study mothers ('Peidu Mama') highlight the prevalence of female immigrants (Huang and Yeoh 2005) as opposed to male coolies in the past. Since mainlanders are migrating for educational purposes in addition to labour opportunities, the age compositions have become more varied; Mainland-students attend schools in Singapore, meaning that they fall within the primary level to tertiary level students

age groups. It was only recently that the trend of study mothers ('Pei Du Mamas'<sup>3</sup>) started in Singapore. These mothers accompany their young children to Singapore for years and in so doing, put their career projects are put on hold during this duration (Huang and Yeoh 2005). In addition to study mothers, another fairly new group of Chinese immigrants are the Chinese brides who enter Singapore via marriage migration. The persistently low fertility rate in Singapore, together with an increase in the average age of first marriage, has fuelled international marriages. By this, I refer to the rise in the number of marriages between locals and foreigners. One significant group is that of Chinese brides; Zhong (2010: 8) notes that the inflow of foreign brides is a growing phenomenon as statistics from international marriages from 2003 and 2010 show that this pattern is steadily strengthening (Zhong 2010: 6). The phenomenon of international marriage is a highly gendered phenomenon as there are significantly more brides than grooms entering Singapore for the purpose of marriage.

Taking all these characteristics together, the interviewees in this study reflect this new diversity which I have described. They vary in terms of their places of origin, age, occupation and gender (refer to Chapter Two, Figure 5).

#### **4.5 Summary**

In this chapter, I demonstrate that China's involvement in the global economy from the 1980s onwards has triggered new migration patterns. Chinese immigrants

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<sup>3</sup> This refers to women who accompany their children overseas for studies -usually for primary level and secondary level education. This trend started in Singapore around 2000.



today certainly possess characteristics which their predecessors did not. They are more diverse and hence, produce more varied migration patterns. Unlike old Chinese migration, it is less common to observe Chinese migration today being initiated and sustained by familial ties, nor is it likely to see the Chinese congregating in specific geographical areas or industries. There is a new diversity amongst Chinese immigrants. However, by making mention of case studies from many regions, I also ascertain that new Chinese migration applies to many contexts outside of Singapore. Since this is so, I proceed to problematize the idea of 'new'.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NEW NETWORK DYNAMICS:

#### TOWARDS INSTITUTIONALISED NETWORKS

The question then remains: what is new about new Chinese immigration in Singapore? Going beyond the descriptive exercise of immigrant profiling, this chapter suggests that there are changes in the ways migration networks operate today – there are new network dynamics. To elaborate on this argument, first, I present a critique of the established model of migration networks: while Massey’s conceptualisation of migration networks has been fundamental in many works on immigration, the globalising conditions of today have reshaped network dynamics. Specifically, there is an increased reliance on institutional networks and a concomitant decrease in the reliance on personal networks in the migration processes. Migration networks are therefore moving away from *ethnic and familial bases of origin* to more institutionalised ones; specifically, the social organisation of Chinese migration is becoming more institutionalised and commercialised. Consequently and second, this is a new mechanism in the migration process as it causes a shift from the former social organisation of Chinese immigration. Together, these changes are what I term the ‘new network dynamics’. However, I maintain that ethnic and familial ties remain crucial, but are less apparent today as networks are increasingly ordered along institutional lines. In other words, ethnic and familial ties have not diminished, but are being arranged in a different form.

## **5.1 Evolving Contexts and the Shift towards ‘Weak Institutional Networks’**

This chapter discusses the evolving social organisations of Chinese immigration: it has evolved from one that was concentrated to one that is presently diffused. Personal networks in the form of kinship, friendship and community ties are increasingly less apparent pillars of support for immigrants. More common support networks come in the form of commercial agencies, migrant organisations and alumni institutions. This departure from traditional migration networks suggests that the social bases of migration networks are changing; while I argue that they are increasingly institutionalised, I maintain personal networks remain present but are increasingly connected to institutional settings. The decision to focus on networks stems from the recognition that networks are significant in migration processes because they transmit information. According to Castells (2006), networks form the basic unit of society; he refers specifically to social and media networks which carry useful information to be used to sustain social behaviour. More importantly, Castells states that network density is lower in modern day urban society as compared with traditional society. Consequently, this means fewer ‘strong ties’ and more ‘weak ties’.

Undergirding this argument is the understanding that migration patterns are different under the conditions of the colonial economy vis-à-vis the global economy. In the colonial context or the period of old Chinese migration, there were no ICTs and only basic transportation networks existed. The lack of infrastructure meant that community ties were important because people had no alternatives to communicating face-to-face or within communities. As such, ethnic organisations and family units

were of paramount importance to the sustenance of social life. Network density during this period was high. With little interaction outside of one's immediate social circle, people understandably established strong ties with local communities. In this context, Massey's model of migration networks proved to be common.

However, this old social organisation changed with the onset of globalisation from the 1980s. In contemporary society, people lead more independent and individualistic lives, hence resulting in a network density that is increasingly lower. It is thus expected that strong ties are fewer and weak ties are on the rise. Along with this, the advent of ICTs further causes a lower network density because people no longer have to gather in physical communities for social support; social support could be garnered through virtual and transnational ties. Therefore, while personal networks continue to exist, they become especially apparent in institutional contexts; personal networks are not new but their reliance on institutions is a recent development. This evolving social organisation is what I term the 'new network dynamics', and this forms the basis of chapter six.

## **5.2 Networks, Institutions and the New Migration Context**

Today, there is prevalent international mobility within Asia. Hugo (2005: 94) proffers two explanations: first, is the proliferation of social networks. Migrants usually move to places which their predecessors had – this gives them the advantage of having social capital assist them in migrating and adapting to local conditions. Accordingly, given that more Asians today live outside of their home countries, potential emigration destinations are also proliferating. The second reason is the work of the vast migration industry. This industry encapsulates the actors and

institutions involved in moving people across borders. Examples include “agents, recruiters, travel providers, immigration officials etc. who form chains linking Asian communities with overseas destinations and are crucial elements in the migration system. (Hugo 2005: 94)”. This institutionalisation of migration has made migration more convenient and accessible than before. Networks and institutions are thus important analytical concepts.

Yet, networks and institutions are not at all new in migration. Before the 1800s when transportation networks were far from established, and elaborate migration systems were lacking, the importance of personal networks in migration was already apparent. In particular, ethnic networks were essential to trade and everyday life; Jewish, Chinese and Indian migrant merchant networks shaped the European, Southeast Asia and Indian economies (McKeown 2004: 163-164). In addition, these networks were critical to socio-cultural developments of that time as well. In what follows, I demonstrate that migration networks today are highly institutionalised. This development de-emphasizes the element of ethnicity which was critical to Chinese migration networks of the past.

### **5.3 Beyond Personal Networks: Declining Reliance on Personal Networks**

This empirical section explores my argument that personal networks on their own are increasingly less apparent in migration processes, and when they are apparent, they often appear in institutional contexts. Following Massey, I operationalize ‘personal networks’ as ties between family, friends and community or groups bound by ethnic relations (Figure 18). My data shows that these three types of personal networks are on the decline.

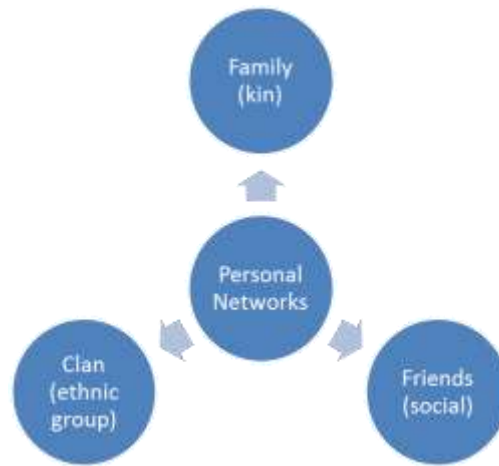


Figure 17: Conceptualisation of 'personal networks'

#### *Familial Ties: Challenges rather than Resources*

Maintaining familial ties have become more of a challenge, than a resource to be tapped on. Many of my respondents do not have family members in Singapore, and seldom return home. As a result, they are content with maintaining ties through the use of information communication technologies (ICTs). For Chen Wei, not only does she not have family networks to tap on while in Singapore, she also struggles to keep in touch with people back home. Specifically, her move to Singapore disrupted her family life as she missed out on major events. When asked how she keeps in touch with her family while in Singapore, she states that the internet is the dominant channel of communication.

*“I call, use QQ<sup>4</sup> at times but mostly, it is the telephone. But that aside, I think if you put yourself in our shoes... it's quite hard to go back*

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<sup>4</sup> Instant messaging computer programme in China

*only once in 2 years, and for a short period of time. We usually go back in September – and it's neither the start nor the end of the year so it's quite meaningless but I guess, we go since we only get to go back once in 2 years.”*

*(Chen Wei, Factory Worker, early 20s)*

Moreover, her long periods away from the family add to her detachment from family life. Even so, many younger immigrants are technologically-savvy and are able to maintain ties with friends and family via internet programmes such as QQ. Sun Yang voices similar responses, stating that his lifestyle revolves around long working hours and leisure time spent on the internet:

*“Yeah... It's usually just working in that one shop. I seldom go out. I just use my computer and surf the internet... I use QQ to keep in touch with people back home and those working in Singapore too... Anyway I rest in the mornings and go to work in the afternoons. When I'm free, I go online and surf the web.*

*(Sun Yang, Restaurant Worker, Early 20s)*

In contrast, the slightly older immigrants prefer to call home regularly and hardly use the internet.

*“In Singapore, the ‘128 Card’ is very convenient. \$28 for a card that lets me call back to China, and this can last very long... I call home every day. This ‘128 Card’ has a 50 days limit... so if you don't use it, it's a waste.”*

*(Wei Tian, Coffee Shop Assistant, Late 30s)*

Either way, respondents have found convenient ways to keep in touch with family members, and this use of ICTs creates transnational virtual ties for these immigrants and their families. These transnational ties suggest that the composition of family networks might be changing – it is likely that familial ties today are increasingly not closely-knitted networks anchored in a physical space.

For some, the family is a source of pressure rather than a source of support. This contradicts Massey's concept of migration networks in which kin and community ties provide social and economic resources to immigrants. With these evolving familial relations, it is understandable that the resources which familial/personal networks used to give are increasingly being provided for by other networks. For instance, one respondent sustained unexpected injuries at work and consequently, had to stop work for a period of time to undergo surgery.

*“This injury will affect my whole life I think. I want the company to pay for it. I don't have money to pay and I need this operation.”*

*(Cao Yuan, Chambermaid, Early 20s)*

Yet, going back to China is not a realistic option to him. He speaks of his reluctance to go home due to his failure to live up the expectations of his family and friends:

*“I can't pay for the air ticket to go home now. Also, it's hard because, I cannot go home empty-handed. You know, I haven't told my parents about this injury and my situation now... I also can't go home empty-handed. Ok... in my extended family, there are 7 boys and 8 girls. There are all independent and accomplished – one is a general, the*



*other an architect etc. It gives me pressure, especially when within my immediate family, I am the only son. Another reason for coming to Singapore is to be independent, to prove that I can survive on my own.”*

This work accident has undoubtedly caused him much stress:

*“Now that I am not working, I feel lonely and bored at home. Singapore is so small, there are not many places you can go to have fun. Also, there is pressure to find a job (but this is not easy because I am injured). Now that I am not working, daily expenses becomes a concern. My operation will also cause some pain. My family does not know about my situation and I don’t want to tell them because I don’t want them to worry.”*

For Cao Yuan, the prospect of going home ‘empty-handed’ after borrowing money from family and friends to come to Singapore is a daunting one. He feels the need to conceal the details of his misfortune, so as not to appear weak to his family members in Shandong.

In rare instances when the immigrant has a family member in Singapore, it is often that the familial ties are ‘weak’ ones. I interpret this as individuals living and working separately from family members and keeping in touch only occasionally. Sun Yang come from Fujian and works in the F&B industry. While he has an older brother working in the construction industry, he admits to being fairly uninvolved in his brother’s life. When asked how often he would meet his brother:

*“Occasionally only, as he is rather busy. He doesn’t live where I live, but lives in Eun<sup>5</sup>.”*

Furthermore, both of them did not come to Singapore together. They came separately and relied on middlemen to get jobs in different industries. Evidently then, the reliance on familial networks for migration is on the decline. In the first instance, it was due to familial pressure and the second example suggests that it might be more effective to approach middlemen rather than family members when one is looking for a job overseas, because the middlemen channels are more targeted. Also, since middlemen are so prevalent today, this becomes a highly accessible channel.

#### *Friendship Ties with Mainland-Chinese: Differentiated and Weak Ties*

Friendship networks amongst Chinese immigrants are also sparse. This is unexpected as one would expect that due to the large numbers of Mainlanders in Singapore, there would be the formation of several social groups, perhaps defined along the lines of origin or dialect. Yet, the inverse is occurring; the presence of many Chinese immigrants in Singapore does not necessarily translate into it being easier for immigrants to locate a particular community to be affiliated to.

I attribute this to the ‘new diversity’ amongst immigrant; specifically, the many sub-groups within the Mainland-Chinese group make it hard for immigrants to find like-minded people. Failing which, this respondent chooses a more isolated lifestyle which involves “mostly stay at home” and “working most of the time.”

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<sup>5</sup> Respondent lives in Little India

Interestingly, Cao Yuan attends church regularly, but does not have many PRC friends in Singapore.

*“China is so big... there are hundreds of cities and we are all different. There was a man sitting next to us just now and he was speaking in dialect, I can’t understand him unless he speaks Mandarin (“Pu Tong Hua”). So we are all very different.”*

Two conditions contribute to this detached lifestyle: the restrictions placed by employment agencies and the long working hours. As a respondent explains, many factory workers have two off-days a week but are cautious with how they use them as agencies have implicit instructions regarding off-days.

*“Before we came, they (agents) told us that we shouldn’t do too many things on off days... the agent told us not to do problematic things. They say that the regulations in Singapore are as such. So we don’t go out too much. Our middlemen were stricter too... he said if we got into any trouble, it would implicate him... Our office will tell us the same too.”*

*(Chen Wei, Factory Worker, Early-20s)*

Given that many of these workers live together, they readily heed this instruction and choose to spend more time at home with friends. Furthermore, many non-professionals are here on contracts and are cautious not to violate any terms in the contract lest they be expelled from the company.

For many lesser-skilled workers, socialising outside of work is rare as the nature of their jobs restrict them to only several off-days in a month. When they do

contact friends in Singapore, they usually meet up only sporadically. As a respondent describes,

*“Yes, I have friends in Singapore and I can call them every day but if there’s nothing much, I don’t call. When I work and there’s nothing on at night, I head to Chinatown to buy things. A lot of us head there... this place is Zhen Zhu Fan... Next to that there is a coffee shop and if you walk further down, there is a Sheng Siong supermarket and that is where we meet to buy things. Buy beer and all... every time we meet there are about 10 of us, so it’s like a gathering.”*

*(Wei Tian, Storehouse Worker, Late 30s)*

At best, I suggest that there are some ‘weak’ friendship ties amongst new Chinese immigrants. These friendship ties, unlike those of the past, are not necessarily bound by clan or dialect associations. Many of these immigrants become acquaintances through their jobs in Singapore.

In contrast, there is a sense of stronger friendship ties amongst professionals who usually get weekends off, and generally more autonomy over their time. Professionals are able to establish ties with fellow PRCs quite easily, usually forming work or leisure groups. On the subject of social life in Singapore, one respondent states that she has “hardly any” Mainland-Chinese friends in Singapore. As a middle-aged professional, her social circle revolves around her family:

*“We’re too busy so we usually only interact with colleagues. It’s the same for my husband... We don’t have many PRC friends... For now,*

*my friends consist of my colleagues or some relatives. For the colleagues, it is usually because we hang around school to mark papers so we chat a bit. There's really no time to hang around with friends... at best, we have gatherings once a year.*

*(Li Mei, Educator, Late 30s)*

Therefore, having weekends free from work does not necessarily translate into having more opportunities to socialise. In comparison to old Chinese immigrants, my respondents lack familial and community networks, and lead their lives independent from social communities. Needless to say, they hardly mention involvement in ethnic communities.

#### *Friendship Ties with Singaporeans*

However, is it the case that new immigrants are so well integrated that they do not rely much on the immigrant community? Here, I explore the theme of having local friends in Singapore. The responses were unanimous: most, regardless of their skill levels, do not have local friends and are in fact, disconnected from local communities. Li Mei, a factory worker in her early 20s, attributes this to the lack of time and relatedly, the limited opportunities to socialise:

*Interviewer: Do you have a lot of Singaporean friends?*

*Li Mei: Hmm not really. It's ok but not many at all... There's really no time. Even when I meet my friends, it is usually during the school holidays and it's usually just for a meal. Meet and chat for 2-3 hours*

*at the very most, just to find out how each one is doing. That's about it. There is little leisure time, everything is just so tight.*

Similarly, Zhou Wa discusses his lack of social connections in Singapore:

*Interviewer: do you have friends in Singapore who are Singaporeans?*

*Zhou Wa: No, no, no...*

*Interviewer: So only the people from China?*

*Zhou Wa: Yes... but We rarely meet...*

*(Zhou Wa, Storehouse Worker, Mid 40s)*

As the data suggests, new immigrants have 'weak' ties with each other and with local communities. The question which follows is this: are they perhaps plugged into traditional communities such as clan associations, which have typically played a large role in Chinese immigration?

#### *Dwindling Ties in Chinese Communities*

Historically, relationships within Chinese clans had been important features of an immigrant's life. Yen (1981: 62) defines a clan as a composition of "various kinship-bound families"; these ties were especially resilient as they consist of kin groups which are "the individual's second line of defence". Kinship ties were the main resource for immigrants in need due to elements of trust, obligation and reciprocity inherent in these relationships. Moreover, under British rule in the colonial era, the Chinese were living under a foreign government and amongst foreigners in Singapore and Malaya in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This further

encouraged the Chinese to galvanise themselves in clan groups (ibid, p.63). The purposes of clan associations were to “perpetuate descent lines, to promote clan solidarity, and to foster traditional values which in turn uphold the idea of kinship (ibid, p.76).” To these ends, clans organised social and cultural activities which brought the community together; activities included the observance of seasonal festivals, the settling of disputes, the legalisation of marriages, community outreach and the promotion of education through various means (ibid, p78). The intent of clans was to preserve Chinese traditions and practices in an era when the overseas Chinese community was growing exponentially. These intentions of upholding tradition kept the Chinese immigrant community a closely-knitted and self-selective one.

Today however, clan involvement amongst immigrants is uncommon. I argue that ethnic ties are increasingly less important to new immigrants who wish to establish social communities in Singapore. With the prevalence of ICTs, immigrants can easily link up with each other even if they did not know each other prior to their move to Singapore. In addition, there are many other interest groups and communities apart from clan associations; unlike the immigrants of the past, the ones today are more adaptable given that many are effectively bilingual and technologically-savvy. With these traits, new immigrants are well-equipped to explore many interest groups and are not limited to organisations which typically served the needs of the Chinese community. Chinese temples are examples of community places which were vital to old immigrants but are less relevant to new immigrants. Having stayed in Singapore for year, Cao Yuan (in his early 20s) stated that he had only visited temples “once or twice”. Similarly for Wei Tian (in his late 30s), who attributes the lack of community involvement to his lack of time:

*“I don’t attend any religious events.... I work 12 hours daily.... When I first came, there was no break. They told me there will be 2 off days in a month and if you don’t rest then, it can be counted as over-time work.”*

There are structural barriers contributing to clan or ethnic associations being out of favour today. Traditional Chinese associations which aim to preserve Chinese practices and values, are struggling to be relevant today. While clans are formed around notions of hometown and dialects, new immigrants today are diverse in composition and transnational in their origins, thus making it doubly hard to establish commonalities amongst them. For many, joining a clan is simply not possible because they come from new areas/communities in China which do not presently have clan presence in Singapore. Even if one’s hometown has a clan representation in Singapore, it does not necessarily guarantee involvement or even awareness of the clan community. Lin Yuan, who originates from Fujian, and whose clan has a strong presence in Singapore remains clueless about its functions. When I asked if she had visited the Fujian clan association, she responded with curiosity:

*“Where is the Fujian Hui Guan? Singapore is so small but I haven’t walked around much... What do they do there?”*

*(Lin Yuan, factory Worker, Early 20s)*

This respondent subsequently mentions that she spends much of her leisure time on the internet or with colleagues who live with her.

Therefore, I reason that this lack of participation stems from the growing belief that clan associations are irrelevant. In a focus group with three respondents,



some reasons surfaced. Hometown-based associations which are geographically defined are thus incompatible with the diversity of immigrants today.

*“Personally, I feel that there is a big difference because China is so big. All the Hui Guans are usually for immigrants from Guangdong and Fujian. I am not from there... But I do have some friends who are on a scholarships and they are from these provinces... they do actively join those communities. So it really depends... if there is a clan from Shangxi... probably, I will be interested in that but there are none because there are too few people from my place.”*

*(Wei Yang, Educator, Late 20s)*

The idea of membership based on hometown origins is a highly constraining one as it means that clans are inherently inward-looking. In contrast, in a globalising context, the varied nature of immigrant groups would require broad-based organisations able to accommodate diversity and change. As such, I contend that if clans continue to be rooted in a geographically bounded idea of membership, they would be counterproductive to new immigrants. This is because would then clans restrict and limit interactions to a specific group of Chinese rather than to welcome new immigrants.

*Interviewer: The people in the Hui Guan are people from China only right?*

*Zhou Wen: Yes. And it's confined to Hometowns.*

*Interviewer: Yeah... and people like you would want to mix with a more diverse bunch.*

*Zhou Wen: Yeah because China is so big!*

*Zheng Hao: If you don't speak the dialect, it's very hard to mix.*

*Wei Yang: None of us speak Cantonese*

All three interviewees are educators. Zhou Wen and Zheng Hao are in their mid-20s, while Wei Yang is his in late 20s. This narrow-approach is also seen in the choice of activities which the organisations run:

*Wei Yang: And for me, I think the image of Hui Guan is kinda old. It's for the older generation, not really our generation. It's for old people!*

*Zheng Hao: I do have some friends who are from Shantou. They go to the Hui Guan every week...*

*Interviewer: To do what?*

*Zheng Hao: All kinds of activities.*

*Zhou Wen: Really? I'm really shocked. I didn't expect anyone from our age to join Hui Guans.*

*Wei Yang: I went to Hui Guans several times to attend seminars and I saw a lot of people who were 60s or 70s.*

*Interviewer: It doesn't appeal to you?*

*Wei Yang: Obviously there is a gap.*

Due to the slow pace of growth and the inherent resistance to change, clan associations today struggle to appeal to the younger generation. At best, it continues to attract people from the older generation who had relied on these organisations in

the past. In addition, clans favour the usage of dialects. Dialects however, are exclusive specific Chinese groups. As such, through their insistence on dialects, clans accentuate internal differentiations with the Chinese groups, rather than to unite the various sub-groups.

Related to clans are religious communities. I argue that the religious life of Chinese immigrants has shifted from one that was formerly concentrated in the Chinese community, to one that is widely diffused today. In the past, religious activities were fused with community life as ancestral worship was widely practised (Yen 1981: 78). However, amongst new immigrants today, there appears to be a segregation of religious activities and ethnic activities. None of the new immigrants I spoke to, made mention of ancestral worship. Ironically, there is one particular religious community which transcends ethnic groups and languages, and has no official ties to ethnic associations appears to be gaining popularity amongst new immigrants. This institution is the church. Several respondents suggest that the church is an emergent meeting ground for new immigrants. Interestingly, churches hardly featured in old Chinese migration history but have since become a common identifier for some new immigrants.

The focus group discussion suggests that church associations often stem from personal beliefs and hence, there is a greater tendency for these community ties to persist:

*Wei Yang: Based on my observations, church compared to other societies is the most attractive to people like us who come from China.*

*Interviewer: Why attractive – because they have a lot of activities?*

*Zheng Hao: Because of the personal belief...*

*Interviewer: It keeps them there?*

*Zheng Hao: Sense of belonging when you join the church.*

*Wei Yang: I think it's because people from church are very kind. They are very helpful. When you are here and you are new, there are some people who can help you and make you feel at home. Then you will join them.*

In addition, I suggest that one reason for its success is the presence of institutional structures – in the form of regular weekly programme and a regular meeting place- which keeps these meetings sustainable. One respondent elaborates:

*“... Church groups seem the most prominent way (to integrate). I've a lot of friends in church groups... in the first two months, for sure, you will meet a bunch of church friends. They will come and pick you up, teach you how to eat Laksa and persuade you to join their church. I met people from church quite a few times...I attended. I went to church and joined them... I also went to one of the Buddhist groups... but I go there all for information. I don't have the belief but I want to understand the beliefs.”*

*(Shou Min, Mid-20s, Engineer)*

The regularity of church meetings makes it easy for immigrants to join and to stay plugged into the community. Shou Min attests to church groups having a very broad-

based membership, much unlike the clan organisations which focus on people of the same dialect groups:

*“Once people join church... I do respect those people. They are so... open! They can accept anyone as long as you share the belief. Within church groups, it is much more connected... When you meet church people, you feel different... I still keep in touch with my church friends – I attended their wedding and housewarming... they still invite us for activities.”*

Not only are new immigrants less involved in ethnic-based associations, they are beginning to frequent other associations which are more diverse. However, to state that immigrants lack community life is inaccurate. They are being involved in newer communities their predecessors did not relate to.

Overall, the data presents three themes. Most of the interviewees do not have family members in Singapore. When they do, it is usually because they emigrated as family unit. Most interviewees, even the professionals, have very small social circles in Singapore, even after working here for more than five years. Finally, most interviewees, unlike the old Chinese migrants (Topley 1961) who relied heavily on ethnic institutions, do not have ties with clan associations.

Therefore, there is a de-emphasis of personal networks in immigrants’ lives today. First, there is a shift from the reliance on ethnic ties to that of non-ethnic ties, as seen in the departure from clan affiliations. Second, the pattern of a fused religious and ethnic community relations, is slowly changing; while in the past, ancestral worship was closely linked to clan associations, religion today, is not necessarily

fused with ethnicity. As the respondents suggest, non-ethnic associations are new platforms for immigrants to meet a wide range of people. Overall, the declining reliance on personal networks that occurs today stands in opposition to Massey's concept of networks which are closely tied to kin and clan. However, this does not mean that migration networks are no longer important but that they are more closely tied to institutions today. In other words, migration networks which are anchored in personal relations have evolved in form and substance. In what follows, I discuss an emerging type of migration network which I term 'institutional networks'.

#### **5.4 Institutionalised Social Bases of Migration Networks: Increasing Reliance on Institutional Networks**

Personal networks are increasingly tied to institutions; I thus argue migration today is likely to be heavily dependent on institutional networks. I define institutional networks as the networks which an individual possesses in relation to formal institutions. Specifically, I suggest that migration networks are now more rooted in institutions rather than in personal relations. Personal relations however, continue to be necessary, but are more significant when arranged in institutional settings. From my data, many interviewees rely on their social networks in Singapore, but these networks exist within frameworks of non-ethnic institutions such as alumni groups or formal business associations. As such, this section also highlights a particular intersection between personal and institutional networks, and concludes that institutional settings trigger the formation of personal networks which would otherwise not have found connections with each other. I do so by showing how migration processes are increasingly institutionalised. However, I also argue that

there are interactions between personal and institutional networks; personal networks remain important, but it is the institutional context which triggers the formation of personal networks. Here, I expound on institutional networks by contrasting the various features to trust networks described by Tilly (2007: 5-6).

### *Recruitment of Immigrants*

Recruitment is one area which clearly shows that immigrants are turning to formal organisations rather than personal friends for help. Migrants rely on networks with recruitment agencies to secure a job overseas. Clearly, such institutional networks are bounded by business contracts, rather than moral obligations. As such, these institutional networks are markedly differently from ‘trust networks’. Cao Yuan describes how he found a job in Singapore:

*“Yes I had an agent and I had to pay fees of S\$10,000 to get here. It’s a lot of money so I had to borrow from friends and family. So far, I’ve paid back S\$5000 but there’s still S\$5000 left. Agencies are everywhere in China; all over the country! They advertise for study abroad programmes, or work abroad programmes or other programmes. A lot of them...”*

*(Cao Yuan, Early 20s, Chambermaid)*

At these conventions, a potential immigrant has a range of destinations to pick from. Cao Yuan recalls that all the traditional immigrant destinations had representatives there:

*“Many countries. Everything you want is there... so US, UK, Canada... Many. Actually, all the good countries are there... You know, the more modern and developed places. Of course African countries aren't there... only the 'good' countries.”*

Recruitment agencies are selling 'good' destinations to migrant workers. These agencies are proliferating in China and are commercialising the migration process. Interestingly, the demand for these overseas placements is huge, so much so that many non-professional workers resort to borrowing money in order to pay the agents. Sun Yang who works in the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry, shares about his job search:

*“(I contacted) a middleman from China, who is also working here. He got in touch with the middleman here and found the job for me... I had to pay the middleman fees – 40,000 RMB... I paid before I got here (borrowed from family members)... I guess if you want to go abroad, you need to pay some fees.”*

He contacted two middlemen with whom he never kept in touch with after the job placement was completed.

While I suggest that agents and their companies are part of larger institutions which serve to connect immigrant labour to job opportunities, I am nevertheless aware that many processes are not always regulated or formalised, thus leading to instances of exploitation. Comparatively, unlike trust networks which ensure that people in the home and host countries maintain contact with each other, institutional



networks often involve one-off interactions and impersonal processes. For example, one respondent's employers refused to pay him his salary:

*"I borrowed money from a bank (in China), and I haven't returned it. They are asking me for the money now... I borrowed 60,000RMB."*

*(Zhou Wa, Storehouse Worker, Mid-40s)*

It has been three years since he borrowed this sum of money and the interest continues to accumulate:

*"Adding the interest. [Takes out phone to show me a SMS that the bank sent to him] You look at this... They're telling me that I'm supposed to have paid up already and I need to call them. They want me to pay up now; bit by bit. And you look at the date... this was March 2011 and they are still asking me for the money."*

Furthermore, he is unable to clear his debt on a monthly basis as his previous company refused to pay him his wages:

*"When I came, it was 60,000RMB. [Refers to the message] Look here... it was due March 2011. It's June now so it has been three months. I borrowed it in 2008. I am still trying to pay it now, but with much less monthly payments. Remember the previous company owes me 4 months of salary... if I had gotten that, I would have cleared a portion of this debt."*

These narratives of immigrants borrowing money large sums from banks for an overseas placement, and being unable to clear the debt due to unforeseen

circumstances are unfortunately not uncommon. In addition, information is not always widely available nor the application processes transparent. As Zhou Wa elaborates:

*“When I first came, I was looking for job... but my experience was mainly in maintenance and they told me that it would be hard to find a similar job in Singapore. But after I handed over the money, I was not allowed to take it back... that 5,000RMB initially. Anyway, when they find the job in Singapore, they ask for the rest of the payment and won't really say what kind of job that is. They would say, you go and work and see how it goes.”*

Apart from ambiguous terms, respondents are often unable to articulate how the agent fees are being used. Wei Tian, who currently works in the F&B industry is clearly unaware of the entire processes:

*Interviewer: But, after paying the 5000RMB, there is no guarantee that the middleman can find a job for you right?*

*Wei Tian: No guarantee.*

*Interviewer: Other than the 5000RMB, what else do you pay for?*

*Wei Tian: Ok if they find a job for me in Singapore, I have to pay 45,000RMB, thereabout.*

*Interviewer: And this money goes to?*

*Wei Tian: This goes to the middleman, and I think the middleman has to give some to the other middleman in Singapore. I don't really know the situation.*

*Interviewer: Basically, you paid that sum of money to the middleman in China right?*

*Wei Tian: Yes. As for how much he gives to the middleman in Singapore, I really don't know. Also, this sum of money does not include the airfare; we have to purchase that on our own. So the money is just for the middlemen on both sides... I think I paid about 50,000RMB. Fees and airfare is already 48,000RMB. Then I had to buy things before I came here."*

In fact, all my respondents paid different amounts even if they originate from the same regions. Placement fees are therefore arbitrary and this inconsistency amongst application processes reveals the informal aspect of this business. In this case, the recruitment process is institutionalised yet informal.

To exacerbate matters, the lack of transparency allows institutional actors to control workers. Lin Yuan, a factory worker in her late 20s describes her experience with agencies:

*"When we come here... we know what to expect because we were already told of the working expectations before we came. For some people... they find that the salary is too low. And another thing is the passport... when we come here, the company keeps the passport. I*

*don't know if this is the law in Singapore. They only return it when we return and we need to pay \$5000 before we get it back."*

Yet, despite the inconsistencies amongst agents, I still consider these networks to be institutional and formal networks because they are arranged along formal organisational lines in the form of recruitment and companies. Moreover, they are driven by corporate economic agendas. Taken together, these traits are vastly different from trust or personal networks which hinge on reciprocity and obligation.

The professionals however, experience different kind of institutionalised recruitment process. It is a process that is more regulated and transparent. Given their wider social circles, they also tap on a wider pool of networks. This differs from trust networks which are socially and economically concentrated. Li Mei, an educator, describes how she found a job through an online government portal:

*"Well, I knew that the Ministry of Education (MOE) would look for Chinese teachers every year so I went to the website to look. Then I downloaded the form and emailed it back to MOE.... Everything was done via the internet... My husband had gotten the job and I was getting ready to come over already. So that worked out. It was about 2-3 weeks after I came that MOE contacted me...."*

Relatedly, her husband's relocation was planned by a headhunting company:

*"Oh, for my husband... it's because the office in Singapore went to Shanghai to look for workers... and he had a phone interview. After that, he came over... The Singapore company is linked to headhunting company over in Shanghai – this is how they find people from"*

*Shanghai. The Singapore company will call to interview and decide if they want to hire the person.”*

Here, the transaction occurs between the husband’s company and the headhunting firm; unlike in the case of the non-professionals, the company rather than the individual, pays for the job placement.

Evidently, there is a differential treatment of professionals vis-à-vis non-professionals (Figure 19). The professionals are serviced by systems which are well-regulated and have their companies pay the recruitment fees on their behalf, while the non-professionals have to bear the hefty recruitment fees on their own. For both groups, it is evident that the process of recruitment is fast becoming commercialised and institutionalised.

## Recruitment Processes

### ► Non-Professionals:



### ► Professionals:



*Figure19: Comparing the recruitment processes of professionals and non-professionals*

The recruitment processes of Chinese immigrants are increasingly institutionalised. This stands in contrast to the recruitment of old immigrants described in chapter three. Specifically, during the colonial period, recruitment patterns were concentrated and recruitment channels were based on ethnic ties; Chinese workers were recruited via Chinese clans or Chinese village communities and middlemen were always Chinese with links to specific Chinese communities. However, these concentrated patterns have overtime, become diffused due to commercialisation.

### *Migrant Organisations*

Adaptation is another aspect of immigrant lives which shows an increasing reliance on formal institutions. When difficulties arise, several respondents turn to migrant Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for help. One sought legal help from a migrant NGO:

*“So... I got injured at work but I have no insurance. I did need to see the doctor so I went. However, I had no money to pay for the operation so I went back to the company to ask for help. The company was not willing to pay so I came to the migrant organisation to ask for help. The organisation helped me file a report to the authorities and the case is currently being investigated. Right now, the company is making things difficult for me. The migrant organisation got a lawyer for me and I am just waiting to hear from the lawyer.”*

*(Cao Yuan, early 20s, Chambermaid)*

Migrant NGOs also help to appeal for their unpaid salaries, and request for higher wages. Wei Tian, who has been unpaid for months, sought help in official applications to authorities:

*“I do have two requests. One is for the migrant organisation to help me get the back the unpaid salary, and the other is... it seems Singapore recognises paper qualifications. I had a secondary school certificate from back home... if I have to renew my work permit (which is due soon), I’m wondering whether this could help me ask for a higher salary.”*

Much like Wei Tian, many Chinese non-professional Chinese migrants are unable to write formal letters and applications due to their lack of proficiency in the English language. Without a strong friendship support base, they eventually turn to NGOs for help. This finding goes against Massey’s model of migrant networks which suggest that migrants’ peers and kin are the first line of support in a foreign country. Institutional networks are thus on the rise. Relatedly, these institutional networks persist due to the lack of networks amongst Chinese immigrants in Singapore, and this is markedly different from trust networks which are self-sustaining as immigrants tend to congregate in certain areas. This example reveals that a growing pool of immigrants is turning to formal organisations for assistance.

### *Alumni Institutions*

Formal institutions are also rapidly the dominant source of social support for new immigrants and I reason that this is because these institutional networks,

characterised by broad-based memberships, are compatible with the diversity of new immigrants today. In these institutions with broad-based notions of membership, members are free to construct networks with a wide range of people, unlike trust networks which confines members to a relatively narrow range of opportunities.

The professionals also rely on formal institutions; but they usually do so for social support rather than for social assistance. According to Shou Min who works as an engineer here in Singapore, he got to know many friends from his hometown (Shandong) while in Singapore. This question then remains: If new immigrants from the same hometown only become acquainted in Singapore, how do they meet? I propose that personal networks are particularly robust in the context of in the institutions such as alumni association group. He describes how personal networks are established in the context of alumni associations:

*Interviewer: But how do you all find each other? Say, you're from Shandong uni and you come to Singapore. How do you find other people from Shandong university?*

*Shou Min: Oh. You must... let it grow. I mean, you know your friends...*

*Interviewer: So it's personal networks?*

*Shou Min: Yes, personal networks. Gradually it gets bigger. When a big event happens like in November 2011... it was 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my university... the vice-president of the university came over. We as a social group, we represent my university alumni... we organised a big party for her. We invited people from clan associations, business*



*China, Confucius Institute (at the National Technological University),  
some industrial leaders...*

Alumni institutions are therefore important avenues for new immigrants to interact. Unlike the clan associations which are centred on ethnic networks and districts of origin, alumni institutions are broad enough to accommodate a range of new immigrants, but still allow them to share the commonalities associated with being from the same educational institution. Shou Min explains that these institutions are social institutions:

*“I’m representing the China Alumni Associations, working with your local clan associations... I meet them every 3 months. The clan associations have a plan for the whole year, we have activities also, and also another group is.... Business China. There is also another group called Chinese Commerce something... so I am representing the China uni alumni (consisting of 3000 members) and we all meet every 3 months and support each other in the activities.”*

These activities range from social to business-related one:

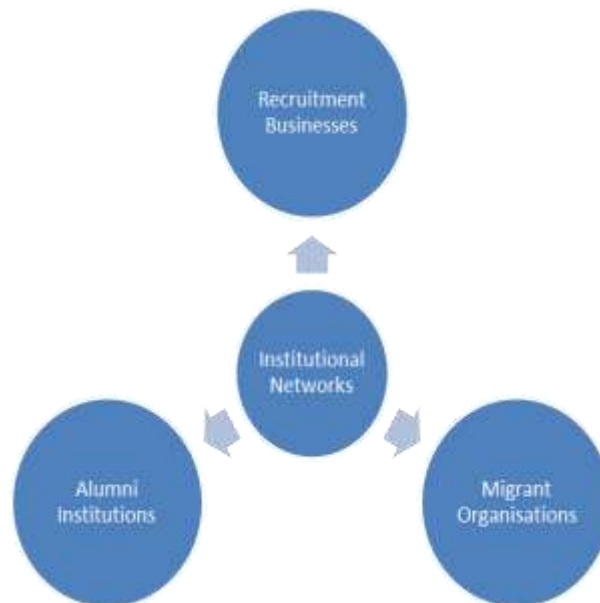
*“For Business China and China Commerce, most likely are business-related. For clan associations, it is culture-related. For us, it is new immigrants, also culture-related. We organise gatherings and parties.”*

Shou Min further discusses the activities which go on in alumni associations:

*“In Singapore, there are many China university graduates right... like me. I was only in the university in China for 3 months (before being*

*transferred to Singapore) but I consider myself a university alumni... Uni Alumni groups gather for food and wine very often. Beijing university, Tsing Hua, Shanghai Jiao da all have groups too. These top ones are registered already – they have an organisation and a team.”*

Alumni institutions are therefore emerging social bases for new Chinese immigrants in Singapore.



*Figure 20: Conceptualisation of ‘institutional networks’*

## **5.5 Summary**

In this chapter, I conclude that institutional networks – which constitute many ‘weak ties’ - underpin the social organisation of Chinese migration today (Figure 20). This is a departure from the old social organisation which depended on strong ties,

usually within the ethnic community. According to Granovetter's (1973) classifications of social networks, personal relations are strong and deep ties but do not have far-reaching effects; simply put, they do not have the 'strength of weak ties'. In contrast, I reason that an individual's networks to various institutions –also known as institutional ties- are wide-ranging and usually functional. Given their wide-ranging capabilities, they possess the 'strength of weak ties'. This means that immigrants could be marginally or periodically linked to an institution, and yet benefit greatly from vast amounts of information that circulates within and between these networks. Specifically, actors tend to get non-redundant or new information from social ties to which they are weakly connected to. Such weak ties become important in modern society in which network density, or the extent to which people know each other, is lower than traditional society. Since the network density is lower today, the bases of networks are inevitably more dispersed. Therefore, immigrants are likely to rely on institutional networks today. With this proliferation of institutional networks, the next chapter discusses functionally differentiated migrant institutions and how they contribute to the rise of the migration industry.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE RISE OF THE CHINA-SINGAPORE MIGRATION INDUSTRY**

With the proliferation of institutional networks, institutions become increasingly important to the processes of migration. The diversity of immigrant groups, coupled with the fact that new immigrants have few, if any, pre-existing social contacts in Singapore poses the question of how they find their way to Singapore. As argued, personal networks do not adequately explain how a wide array of new immigrant groups end up in Singapore for the first time. So if immigrants are relying less on personal relations alone, what kind of social organisation undergirds Chinese immigration today? In this chapter, I suggest that the conditions of globalisation have facilitated the exponential growth of immigration today, thus spurring growth in the migration industry. I present a two-fold conceptualisation of the migration industry. First, I define it as a functional differentiation of services. I list four functions of immigration services provided by private businesses, the state and non-profit institutions. Second, I explain that the migration industry emerges within the context of longstanding political and economic relations between China and Singapore. I use the case of the China-Singapore migration industry and argue that China and Singapore have unique economic and historical ties which allow for this industry to flourish.

#### **6.1 Migration Industry: an emergent theme in Migration Studies**

In recent years, there has been growing attention given to the concept of 'migration industry'. The transnational environment today has created unprecedented

opportunities for cross-border movements with increased mobility generating new demands for services such as shipping and air cargo companies, import-export firms, labour contractors, and money transfer houses (Glick-Schiller 1995: 55). These services in turn encourage more migration flows. For example, Giese (2003: 166) notes that the influx of Chinese immigrants into Germany is in part due to commercial agencies in China which deal with passport, visa and placement services. The concept is gaining importance because of growing recognition that migration research is presently inclined toward emphasizing agency and neglecting institutional perspectives. In addition, the large scale and rapid speed of global migration has resulted in the expansion of businesses both legal and illegal, and supports such cross-border movements. As Krissman suggests:

*“scholars have failed to systematically tie employers and their recruitment agents to their analyses of international migration even though these actors are well documented.”(Krissman 2005: 8)*

The ‘migration industry’ concept is useful as it focuses on the institutional actors involved in migration.

## **6.2 Critique of the Migration Industry**

This concept is commonly used loosely and for descriptive purposes. Here, I unpack its various meanings by presenting several critiques of the concept. First, the concept is primarily applied to illegal migration and is therefore, somewhat imbalanced. Salt and Stein (1997) popularised this concept in 1997 and suggested that it referred to both illegal and legal migration. Yet, research on migration industry is often focused on illegal migration; most discussions examine the informal and

unlawful organisation of human trafficking (Salt and Stein 1997). Therefore, I propose that a greater emphasis be placed on legal migration because the scale and scope of such migration today opens up many new areas to be examined. Second, I problematize the term ‘industry’. While this concept invokes notions of profitability and productivity, the state which is technically non-profit in nature, is actually extremely powerful in driving this development. For the purposes of my discussion, I question Hernandez-Leon’s (2005: 1) description of the migration industry defined as

*“the ensemble of entrepreneurs, businesses and services which, motivated by the pursuit of financial gain, facilitate and sustain international migration.”*

Specifically, I point out that some actors do not directly pursue financial gains but yet, are critical to sustaining international migration.

Most works identify various actors involved in migration processes, and usually refer to agents or middlemen or businessmen. However, with legal migration, the spectrum of actors extends beyond these existing categories. In their influential article, Salt and Stein (1997) demonstrate with European data that human trafficking is a huge “business”. Their notion of “migration business” is defined as (1997: 467):

*“... A system of institutionalised networks with complex profit and loss accounts, including a set of institutions, agents and individuals each of which stands to make a commercial gain.”*

There is reference to the emergence of actors and institutions that capitalise, often illegally, on rampant migration. I suggest that these mechanisms are likely to emerge

in the area of legal migration in the form of new actors and businesses. Therefore, I argue that actors could include people in private enterprises and also those in the non-profit and public sectors, and include both personal and institutional actors. These distinctions lead me to explore the increased role of the state in the face of prevalent migration. Third, migration industry is a somewhat paradoxical term. Migration processes work on the one hand with institutionalised and formalised procedures, but on the other hand, they continue to rely on personal and informal relations. Although the concept focuses on large-scale processes, it should not neglect the small-scale mechanisms which are still in operation today. Using smuggling cases from Ecuador and China, Kyle and Liang (2001) develop a synonymous concept called “migration merchants”, which refers to actors who profit from smuggling. Interestingly, although the migration industry perspective delves into issues of formality, complexity and organisation, the finding is that informal and small-scale operations continue to persist. Spencer’s work (2004) supports this thesis by showing that Mexican migrant smuggling to the US is still essentially a ‘cross-border cottage industry’. By this, he means that it relies on small-scale smugglers located within the Mexican immigrant community itself. While complex institutional systems and processes are emerging, traditional methods such as personal ties and small-scale operations persist. Fourth, while the concept emerged in the social science literature only in 1997 (Salt and Stein 1997), the services facilitating migration have existed before that. It is thus necessary to understand the older forms of immigration businesses alongside emerging ones. Research from the business school literature, especially Human Resource Management (HRM), is rife with work on expatriates, mobility and relocation (Dolins 2007; Forster 1992; Haines and Saba 1999). Works on the ‘executive search industry’ deals with the recruitment of

professionals are also not new, but research on the evolution of this industry remains sparse. ‘Immigration consulting firms’ (Tseng 1997) for instance, is a new service innovation, providing specialised advice on immigration services and the marketing of immigration opportunities. Today, new services emerge alongside these existing ones.

### 6.3 Functional Differentiation of Migration Services

I address the aforementioned criticisms of the concept by analysing various processes which facilitate migration. This section discusses the ways in which immigration as a process is functionally differentiated (Figure 21). As a result of this division of labour, there is a proliferation of organisations dealing with immigration procedures. These organisations include profit-driven enterprises, the state as well as non-profit support services.

Critique of migration industry concept	Propositions	Empirical case
1. The concept is primarily applied to illegal migration and is therefore, somewhat imbalanced.	Consider the legal aspects of migration	Immigrant Recruitment
2. The state which is technically non-profit in nature, is actually extremely powerful in driving this development.	Consider including the state in the conceptualisation of migration industry	State-led industry scanning, marketing and promotion
3. Although the concept seeks to emphasis large-scale processes, it must not neglect the small-scale mechanisms which are still in operation today.	Informal relations persists though the formalised and institutionalised migration industry is on the rise	Middlemen businesses
4. There are existing/older forms of immigration businesses alongside emerging ones.	Consider existing immigration-related businesses	Logistics and Mobility



*Figure 21: Conceptual critique and propositions*

In contrast to Massey's model of migration which suggests that migration is self-sustaining through personal ties, this section demonstrates how the processes have become more complex and thus require specialised migration services to sustain it.

### **6.3 China-Singapore Connection: Political and Economic Relations**

Migration industries are tailored to the conditions of various migration systems. The widespread and global scale of migration today affirms the presence of actors who mediate this process. These actors include recruitment professionals, lawyers, travel agents to name a few, and are termed 'important gatekeepers' (Hugo 1996). The migration industry phenomenon extends to many countries, and each has its internal variations. In East Asia, the migration industry is highly institutionalised with the state playing a large role and has formalised processes governing it (Surak 2011; Tseng 1997). In contrast, the case of Thailand shows the predominance of informal relations for the perpetuation of this industry. In particular, three types of networks undergird this industry: employee-employer and patron-client relations, agents and recruiters and the operation of syndicates (Singhanetra-Renard 1992: 193). Likewise, this industry is characterised by the initiatives of smugglers and backroom dealings (Kyle and Goldstein 2011) in Ecuador. In Mexican immigration to the US, ethnic entrepreneurs drive the industry with their personal relations (Hernández-León 2008).

I thus argue that there are certain characteristics of the China-Singapore political and economic relationship which allows for a migration industry to flourish.

To understand my case study, I first examine the China-Singapore connection. Singapore and China have economic partnerships on many levels. Since China opened up its economy in 1978, it has been establishing ties with Southeast Asia and in particular, Singapore and Malaysia, with hopes of greater economic integration. The establishment of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2010 was a critical development for these two regions. This FTA establishes an economic region with over a billion consumers and vibrant trade relations (Wong and Chan 2003). However, there is room for growth as the agreements regarding goods and services are more mature than those pertaining to financial markets (Laurenceson 2003). On the bilateral front, the China-Singapore FTA was signed in 2009. This agreement boosted the trade of goods and services thus enabling Singaporean manufacturers some advantages over their competitors, especially those in the region (Wong 2008). In 2011, China was one of Singapore's top trading partners, with trading activities valued at over S\$101 billion, second only to Malaysia (Department of Statistics 2012: 149).

### *Economic Collaborations*

As a developmental state, Singapore is actively pursuing economic interests abroad. From the 1980s onwards, Singapore was on a regionalisation campaign, which sought to strengthen economic ties with neighbouring countries. This was during a time when Singapore was undergoing an industrial restructuring. It was beginning to focus on value-added manufacturing processes and export-led initiatives. In this same spirit, the Singapore authorities have in recent years,

collaborated with their Chinese counterparts in several joint developments. The Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) in the 1990s is one such example.

I argue that these projects are highly institutionalised, and to some extent, they represent a special relationship between Singapore and China. The SIP project was driven by institutions - Chinese and Singaporean governments, their agencies, and various private corporations (Inkpen and Wang 2006). These projects which are governed and implemented by states, MNCs and related organisations are often aimed at boosting the FDIs of the parties involved (Phelps and Wu 2009). The heavy involvement of political and business organisations sheds lights on the political economy shaping China-Singapore businesses. Yeung (2000: 836) adopts the perspective of the “political economy of international investments in China”, and reasons that the success between China and Singapore are in part because Singaporean firms are plugged into a dense network of socio-political relationships. The political clout emanating from these networks facilitate the establishment of Singaporean businesses and projects in China. In sum, apart from economic abilities, Singapore must have had a good grasp of Chinese local governments and Chinese politics in order to establish economic projects in a post-socialist state, which was only beginning to adapt to capitalist practices.

It is within these political and economic contexts that relations between China and Singapore continued to grow. Economic collaborations and knowledge transfers continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with projects such as the Wuxi-Singapore Industrial Park, the Eco-City in Tianjin, Sino-Singapore Nanjing Eco Hi-tech Island and the Singapore-Sichuan Hi-tech Innovation Park to name a few. In addition, there are also unique historical and cultural characteristics between the countries. They have

historical links through migration and a shared language. These cultural similarities cement strong political-economic relationships.

Finally, as a result of these China-Singapore connections, specific institutional arrangements have been introduced to govern China-Singapore migration. According to Lin (2010), some common institutional arrangements and actors include the Operating Companies of Labour Service Cooperation<sup>6</sup>, the Intermediary Agencies for Overseas Employment<sup>7</sup>. There are less authorised channels such as employment agents and middlemen who seldom have Operational Qualification Certificate. These institutional arrangements encourage a sustained China-Singapore migration.

## **6.4 Singapore-China Migration Industry**

### **6.4.1 Immigrant Recruitment**

Since Chinese immigrants today are remarkably diverse, the processes behind recruitment become relevant. What kinds of social networks or social capital do they tap on if not for the traditional source of kinship relations? I examine the case of

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<sup>6</sup> Foreign labour service cooperation refers to the economic activities that domestic enterprises conclude contracts with foreign or overseas companies, intermediary institutions or private employers which are permitted to recruit or employ foreign workers, and recruit, select and dispatch Chinese citizens abroad (or out of the mainland) in an organized way to provide foreign employers with labour services pursuant to the contractual stipulations, carry out the management accordingly in accordance with the Provisions on the Measures for the Administration of Operation Qualification of Foreign Labor Service Cooperation. The enterprises that get the Operation Qualification of Foreign Labor Service Cooperation and Credentials of Labor Service Cooperation from the Ministry of Commerce are called the “Operating Companies of Labor Service Cooperation (Lin 2010: 198).”

<sup>7</sup> “Overseas employment” refers to the employment activities in which Chinese citizens sign labour contracts with overseas employers, provide work abroad and get remunerations for their work (Lin 2010: 198).”

legal migration and argue that the lack of social capital on the part of Chinese immigrants, translates into a heavy reliance on recruitment agencies. Specifically, there are information gaps between Chinese immigrant communities within China, and communities between China and Singapore. Yet, knowledge about migration opportunities circulates because government bodies and businesses respond by creating services which fill this need. This production of knowledge networks on a large scale has resulted in the emergence of various migration-relevant institutions. Two institutional trends are particularly evident amongst the recruitment of new immigrants: commercialisation of the recruitment processes and the state's involvement in recruitment.

#### *Commercialisation of Immigration*

The commercialisation of recruitment is apparent across the spectrum of migrants. The most obvious manifestation of this is seen by the presence of the large-scale organisation of fairs and conventions, whose purpose is to market overseas job opportunities. Migrating for work is a highly marketable activity and as China continues to liberalise, more people are encouraged go abroad. Accordingly, agencies are initiating more career and emigration conventions. As a respondent suggests, there is also an expansion of sources from which agencies select immigrants/workers:

*“Yes there are a lot of middlemen... I tell you, it's mainly the Northeast – Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning and Shandong. A lot of people from these places come to Singapore, but Fujian and Jiangsu as well...”*

*(Zhou Wa, Storehouse Worker, Mid-40s)*

In addition, potential immigrants have a wide selection of countries to go to due to the proliferation of destination countries as many advanced economies are in need of migrant labour. This is particular true for non-professionals as they become the “new industrial reserve army” in these societies which have a constant need for short-term migrant labour (Athukorala 2006; Castles and Kosack 2010: 24).

*“The fees required to come to Singapore are lower. To go to Canada or Japan, you will get more money but you pay more fees to go there. Also, if you go there, you need to learn the language first, like English or Japanese, so you need some employment training. To come to Singapore, you don’t need to... you just need to give them the initial 5,000RMB then they will find a job for you.”*

*(Wei Tian, Coffeeshop Assistant, Late-30s)*

Interestingly, destinations are ranked in a certain hierarchy. The placement fees vary depending on which destination one picks, thus indicating a pricing structure in this industry. Typically, migrating to Western countries cost more than moving to Asian destinations. Within Asia, Japan is usually the costliest and offers most short-term placement, perhaps due to its restrictive immigration policies. Wei Tian continues to share that his friends had moved to other destinations:

*“Some (of my friends) went to South Korea to be fishermen. At my village, there are a lot of people who come out to work. Some others went to Poland... others went to Japan. Oh I went to Japan before for 6 months.*

In Japan, he was involved in agricultural work such as “growing vegetables”. Interestingly, he relied on the same method as he did coming to Singapore – middlemen.

*“I found a job in Singapore through a middleman from back home... I spent... 100,000 RMB for half a year... Their contract was only for 6 months. We go in April and that was spring in Japan, and we work till October. When it is nearing winter, we go back... I liked it! It’s quite like Singapore.*

It also appears that this recruitment channel is a popular one amongst Chinese migrants from this hometown. Wei Tian followed a batch of fellow immigrants into Japan:

*“That time, a lot of us went there – about 118 of us! All of them came back but 2 ran away! So these 2 stayed on for over a year but eventually came home... we all grew vegetables... For half a year, I made 260,000RMB, much more than what I get in Singapore...”*

Recruitment in batches is evidently practised amongst middlemen. As I will show later, MNCs also have this practice of recruiting in batches but they do so through a professional recruitment agency. Unlike the recruitment processes amongst old migrants which depended on specific social ties, migrant recruitment today is a generalised and non-customised process. Interestingly, these immigrants describe the immigration experience as a form of consumption; they select a destination based on personal preferences, and then pay to get there. While the immigrants of the past

seldom had choices and had to work wherever they were assigned, the immigrant's work stint today reflects more choices.

### *Headhunting Industry*

Headhunting is an industry that mediates the relationship between a corporation and its potential hires. 'Client' refers to the corporation and 'candidate' refers to the potential hire. The work of this industry differs from that of the middlemen namely because they have different client segments. Headhunters typically place candidates in mid-level and lower-level managerial jobs, as well as professional, technical, and office-support jobs (Cole 1985; Finlay and Coverdill 1999). Recently however, one headhunter informed me that even established international firms are starting to take interest in the market servicing short-term migrant labour. This business of headhunting thus services a very stratified pool of customers and it tailors its services to the needs of clients. Headhunters search for potential candidates through various institutionalised means such as career fairs and job portals. Fazial shares his general strategy:

*“The bigger companies hold fairs and exhibitions but for my medium-sized company, but my company networks through the CV reviews and the phone calls and the network of referrals. The best candidates are always from referrals... it is always these candidates whom the company's HR picks. It's not really ones I get from my email inbox. When you refer, you build a certain level of trust and they refer you to someone they trust as well... I just have to put the ads the clients come to me... that's the general recruitment... I'll give you an overall*



*picture of how I recruit. I'll send my adverts; first, it is published in jobstreet.sg. We bought 2000 advert spaces – as long as we post, we get responses.”*

*(Fazial, Headhunter)*

These general strategies are complemented by personalised ones. I will develop this argument later by showing how headhunters rely on personal connections to recruit.

Although headhunters contribute to the institutionalisation of immigration, they still use personal connections. Extensive personal relations remain critical. As one headhunter informed me, the recruitment business is all about networks. Headhunters are required to frequently network with corporations so as to understand emerging manpower needs.

*“We have another kind of strategy. Say, I am the recruiter and you are my client company. If I give you a cold call, I say ok I am a recruiter, can I just understand that I have this candidate who has expressed interest in your company. Would you like to take a look at his/her credentials? I'm just marketing what I have here... but since you are open, you might say, ok please set up an interview for me. We don't have vacant positions at the moment. In the case whereby they hire, you pay me only when the candidate comes on board.”*

*(Natalie, Headhunter)*

This headhunter has to establish wide connections with corporations, so as to be aware of new opportunities.

The depth of his social networks becomes very crucial when the headhunter has to find specific candidates. Fazial thus leverages on all forms of social media and calls in order to connect with potential candidates.

*“We have another kind: you (as the company) have a need, very specialized and very hard to find. You might call... and they would say, ok I’ve done business with you before, and I need you on this new task. I need you to do headhunting for me. Then I will say, since you need me to do this search for you, I will need commitment and exclusivity... I would ask for 5% of the estimated fee to start off. So I will search them through the competing companies. So let’s say this is pharmaceutical company A.... I will call B, C, D to ask if these people are willing to move to A. Through referrals as well... it’s like a witch-hunt – LinkedIn, Facebook, any kinds of possible social media and you start asking for referrals. Then we will process and screen them and send the CV out to clients.*

Fazial is adopting a strategic use of social media, or what is termed “social recruiting” (Soni 2011). This kind of networking with the candidate extends beyond the recruitment phase. As the respondent explained, it is essential to maintain ties with his candidates after a successful deal. This allows him to build his base of professional networks. Continual networking is a strategy amongst headhunters.

*“After placing... to me, a candidate is not a transaction. I am still in touch with my candidates. I have a file... after placing, I put there ‘case closed – secured’. And I’ll get another one and so on. These are the people I keep in touch with constantly – Facebook, LinkedIn,*

*email, SMS and so on. Basically, if I place someone, the job is only one-third done.”*

*(Fazial, Headhunter)*

The placement is just one-third the job done. The bulk of the task is to maintain ties with the candidate to ensure that he/she transits smoothly into the job, and to build a base of social contacts for further use. Fazial describes his strategy for personal networking:

*“My dad is a cab driver. I give him my name cards, I am using him as a marketing tool – if you have a good conversation with a professional, give them my card. So one of them has called me up and said ‘I’m from Germany or US and I’m looking actively for a job’ and the job becomes easier for me. These personal networks allow me to find very special candidates who are directors and managers in their companies and instead of asking them, can I pitch my candidates to you, they would be telling me can I give you my CV? They would fly to Singapore for meetings and then they would call me up and meet in the hotel lobby. I’ve actually made one good friend this way. He’s somebody up there, from Bangladesh. He’s doing financial planning and analysis for a big pharmaceutical company. He wants to stay in this region and based in Indonesia but looking for a job elsewhere. So.... It’s networking everywhere!”*

Despite the presence of headhunting companies which appear to institutionalise the immigration process, the practice of personal networking remains essential to this

work. As argued in chapter five, personal and institutional ties are thus not mutually exclusive.

### *Outsourcing Recruitment*

This section shifts the perspective to that of the companies. Recruitment is being institutionalised as corporations are outsourcing this task to recruitment companies. Corporations are engaging specialised recruitment companies to recruit employees and this transforms recruitment into a rationalised and detached process. For professionals, the corporations they work for typically outsource recruitment to headhunting companies.

*“My husband came to Singapore because the office here went to Shanghai to look for workers... and he had a phone interview. After that, he came over. The Singapore company is linked to the headhunting company over in Shanghai... this is how they find people from Shanghai. The Singapore company will call to interview and decide if they want to hire the person.”*

*(Li Me, Educator, Late 30s)*

The process is usually impersonal, as with processes involving institutional networks. They usually involve ‘weak’ and temporary social ties driven by function rather than personal relations.

Similarly, for the non-professionals, the company interested in hiring workers approaches a recruitment agency. The difference between recruitment of professionals and non-professionals is that for the latter, recruitment is usually done

on a large scale and in batches, rather than the personalised approach adopted for the professionals. Steven, a human resource manager in a manufacturing multinational company (MNC) described how his company started hiring migrants from China:

*“We started recruiting Chinese workers as we couldn’t get workforce from locals to fill up the positions in logistics and warehousing work. The reason being... in terms of work nature, hardship... we had problems finding people. We went through an agent; we told them what the company is doing and our job nature and from there, they helped us look for workers with relevant experience. Relevant as in... don’t mind working in a factory and warehouse environment. From there, they will send us the resume, we will look through and the guys will select. The agent will then arrange the workers and bring them to Singapore. So once they are in, on the first day, we will do a company induction in Mandarin – what we’re doing, safety issues. The agent, prior to that, will take them around and show them how to take public transport from their rented flat...”*

Thereafter, batches of new recruits are put through an orientation programme with the company:

*“So once they come in and settle down, the agents will on and off come and visit them to ask if they are ok. After a while... they will get used to living here very fast, because they have friends here, so they will soon move out of their original houses that the agents prepared for them.”*

(Steven, HR manager)

The major stages of the relocation process – recruitment and orientation – are outsourced. This MNC makes known the types of workers needed to the recruitment agency, and the latter will deal with everything from recruitment to orientation. The MNC becomes involved only in the final decision-making stage:

*“Basically we leave it to the Singapore agent. The Singapore agent will outsource to the Chinese agent, who knows the people there. They select and the Singapore side goes to China to interview. Then they will find the most suitable ones and pass to us. We will then review and decide.”*

(Steven, HR manager)

This institutionalised process between MNCs and recruitment companies is rather transparent. Workers know where there are being allocated and companies are aware of the capabilities of the recruits. According to the HR manager:

*“Some of them here are diploma holders. When we recruit them, they know they’re working in logistics environment. They know what they are here for. In a way, they know they are not being over-promised. This is why we say some of them actually have the potential to do more but are reluctant to do so.”*

In contrast to the middlemen (addressed in the following section), these certified recruitment agencies enlisted by MNCs are more consistent with their processes and transparent with their objectives. Certified companies have clearer and more standardised recruitment objectives for the MNC and workers. Therefore, the more

institutionalised and established these agencies are, the clearer their functions and processes.

Incidentally, the outsourcing of cross-border recruitment has facilitated the development of other businesses. For example, there is always the need for information that can be accessed:

*“You’ll be surprised as to what you can find online. [Takes out a sheet of paper from file] This is a communication network that is done by the Chinese. From here, there is list of different countries that Chinese people are working in. There’s also a column on studying overseas... what I printed out is only on Singapore. So they tell you what are the jobs... what are the recruitment process, where to stay, what are the employment laws and benefits.”*

*(Steven, HR Manager)*

This manager refers me to a website entitled “Chuguo.cn” (translated to mean emigration) which contains relevant information such as job opportunities and current affairs in Singapore. Related companies advertise and market their immigrant services on such websites.

This production and proliferation of immigration-related or immigrant-related information is what Tyner (1999: 199) terms the “cyber-commodification” of immigrant labour. Many of such websites which are managed by consulting companies within China have emerged in recent years, and contribute to immigration services. Immigrant recruitment today is therefore heavily supported by professional services of third-party actors such as recruitment agents and information consultants.

### *Inconsistencies in the Middlemen Business*

Although the demand for the services of middlemen is on the rise, the processes surrounding them are not fully institutionalised; there are several inconsistencies across the board, usually with regards to application procedures and agent fees. These inconsistencies are the result of the migrant's lack of knowledge of local systems, which exposes the migrant to potential "exploitation" by unauthorised middlemen (Spaan 1994: 93). One respondent possesses scant knowledge of the middleman:

*Interviewer: So there's a middleman in Shandong and another middleman in Singapore?*

*Zhou Wa: Hmm, that I don't know, they didn't say.*

*Interviewer: Did they give you a contract?*

*Zhou Wa: No, they didn't. It's like this: if we want to go abroad, we go and make an inquiry and ask where we can go. Then we pay 5000RMB as a deposit. It's just a deposit – if I decide not to go, I can't take this 5000RMB back. If they successfully find me a job in Singapore, this 5000RMB can be transferred to the payment for the middleman fees.*

*(Zhou Wa, Storehouse Worker)*

Three critical aspects are missing: the middleman contact details, the job contract and confirmation of a job. Despite paying fees, this worker is left uncertain if he would even get a job. Under such conditions, workers are understandably helpless should



they encounter problems in Singapore. Sun Yang, who works in the F&B industry, recounts a negative experience:

*Interviewer: I'm very curious about the man you paid 40,000 RMB to. Is he a sole agent or does he belong to a company?*

*Sun Yang: Hmm, I'm really not sure. If I have problems in the shop, I call him.*

*Interviewer: But does he have an office in China too?*

*Sun Yang: Don't think so... he just recommends a job to me here in Singapore.*

*Interviewer: So you're not too sure if this is a person or a company that is making these arrangements for you?*

*Sun Yang: Really not sure, but it sounds like a company.*

*Interviewer: Have you met this person/agent before?*

*Sun Yang: Yes, only a few times.*

*Interviewer: Do you have his name card?*

*Sun Yang: No I don't.*

In this case, the worker lacks the contact information of the middleman and has no means of verifying if the company is still in existence. Unfortunately, this is very typical of the respondents who work for small enterprises in Singapore. In some cases, respondent encounter bogus middlemen/agencies and have since been unable to recoup the lost fees. In later sections, I make a distinction between this style of

recruitment and MNC-initiated ones; the latter are often more formal and transparent and thus less problematic. In exposing these inconsistencies between middlemen agencies, I show that despite its growing importance, the migration industry does not contain a regulated middlemen system. This leaves room to explore informal relations in this business. Overall, recruitment processes although increasingly institutionalised, still contain many informal and non-standardised aspects.

#### **6.4.2 The Role of the State**

Another way in which recruitment is being institutionalised is by the state. The Singapore state is actively involved in the recruitment of potential immigrants, and this is yet another instance of the institutionalisation of immigration. I refer to a case study from the education ministry. Due to the lack of local applicants for Chinese teaching positions, the Ministry of Education (MOE) recruits some teachers from abroad. A direct approach is to conduct recruitment fairs in major cities in China.

*“I do know of some colleagues from Northern China. I think this is because MOE heads to the big cities like Beijing to find these people. Also, they may be more headhunting firms there.”*

*(Li Mei, Educator)*

In addition, interested individuals may submit an application online via the MOE website. The availability of these formal channels demonstrates the presence of structured methods of recruitment, which stands in contrast to Massey’s idea of personal networks being instrumental in perpetuating migration flows.

There is also a more indirect approach. MOE, with the support of private enterprises, recruits students through various scholarships. A focus group I conducted revealed this. All three respondents came to Singapore on a scholarship and are working in the education industry now:

*Interviewer: I wish to know a little about how you came to Singapore... how did you get that scholarship – MOE<sup>8</sup> went over to your schools?*

*Zheng Hao: Yeah...*

*Interviewer: So did a lot of people get this scholarship?*

*Wei Yang: I think in each province, 10 to at most, 40, from the top high schools. And we also have to go through the examinations and interviews conducted by MOE.*

*Interviewer: So MOE brought people over?*

*Zheng Hao: MOE and NTU<sup>9</sup> and NUS<sup>10</sup> ... some of the professors also joined the interviews. So during the interview, we had one from MOE, one from NUS and one from NTU.*

*Interviewer: All of you went through the same?*

*Zhou Wen: Exactly the same.*

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<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Education, Singapore

<sup>9</sup> National Technological University, Singapore

<sup>10</sup> National University of Singapore

*Zheng Hao: It's standard. Every year there are hundreds of students coming to Singapore.*

For some years now, the Singapore state has been internationalising higher education, by way of globalising educational institutions (Ng and Tan 2010) and framing Singapore as an education hub (Sidhu, Ho and Yeoh 2011). This marketization of education is further institutionalised by way of standardisation. For interested applicants, there are standardised tests:

*“We also had a written exam. Math, Physics and Chinese... Oh yeah! Like an IQ test too. It was fun.” (Zhou Wen, Educator)*

According to another interviewee, government-linked corporations such as “Sembcorp, DBS, Singapore Airlines, Keppel” were present at these fairs. The students suggested that MOE played the role of the “middle person” or a “coordinator” between students and companies.

*“Our scholarships consist of two parts. One is offered by MOE under the standard tuition grant. The other is offered by other companies.”*

Students on this scheme typically have a bond to serve upon the completion of their studies. They are required to find employment in Singapore for at least three years. The involvement of “big companies” or government-linked companies (Yeung 2004) demonstrates the intersection between private industries and state activities. In this case, the state plays the role of a “coordinator” between private enterprises and potential students. On a larger scale, the involvement of both the private and public sectors suggests that there is a proliferation of channels of recruitment. The social

bases of recruitment networks are more varied today as they can involve large organisations and the state.

This involvement of institutions is a contrast to recruitment patterns of the past which rarely involved the state, and relied mostly on close and personal ties. Furthermore, in the past, migration opportunities were never publicised whereas immigration conventions occur regularly today. In fact, as the focus group discussion shows, specific immigration fairs do occur between China and Singapore today – MOE and corporations regularly head to China to recruit students. However, I qualify that the details of this state-sponsored education are lacking, perhaps due to it being a very recent phenomenon. This large-scale PRC student migration to Singapore therefore remains a topic to be explored in migration studies.

#### *Industry Scanning and Destination Promotion*

Non-profit agencies are equally essential in the conceptualisation of the ‘migration industry’. Specifically, I emphasize the role of the state. While states are not profit-oriented enterprises, they do fuel the migration industry by creating an environment that is favourable for the industry to flourish. This state-industry nexus is particularly salient in light of the Singapore state’s influence over migration policies and frameworks (Massey 1999). By pursuing this argument, I am suggesting that although migration services have largely been privatised, they are still very much within the purview of the state. This is similar to the instances of migration industries in East Asia; Surak (2011) contends that the state supports the advancement of migration industries. This role of the state thus surfaces a paradox in the concept of the ‘migration industry’. On the one hand, the growing industry

suggests that migration is being commercialised and the state has shifted immigration responsibilities to the private sector. Yet on the other hand, it is the state's withdrawal from direct roles which creates the optimal conditions for migration industries to grow. This paradox foregrounds the persisting role of state in immigration. On other occasions, the state pursues explicit immigration agendas, and the migration industry latches onto it. In Tseng's (1997) account of the immigration industry in Taiwan, she notes that the country's drive for more business migration programmes, usually spearheaded by the government, reinforces the role of private agencies. With increasingly specialisation in the immigration markets, private agencies look set to grow. The state is therefore simultaneously involved and uninvolved. Overall, these scenarios support the argument within globalisation studies that increasing mobility does not result in a declining role of the state. On the contrary, it emphasizes the persisting, if not increasing, role of the state (Teitelbaum 2002).

In Singapore, government institutions are progressively more involved in immigration issues. While these institutions are not profiting economically from the placement of immigrants, I argue that they are instrumental in advancing the migration industry through immigrant selection, marketing and promotion, operations and by surveying industry needs. These institutions shape the climate for other institutions to carry out their activities pertaining to immigrants. The National Population Talent Division <sup>11</sup>(NPTD) for example, is a fairly new establishment

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<sup>11</sup> The National Population Talent Division (NPTD) strives to achieve a sustainable and cohesive population that supports a vibrant economy, with a strong Singaporean core. To do this, NPTD drives the coordination and implementation of population policies across Government agencies. NPTD's areas of responsibilities encompass the following: (a) Supporting marriage and parenthood;

which deals with new immigrant issues such as integration, talent and naturalisation and Engagement and Outreach. Another key institution is Contact Singapore <sup>12</sup>(CS). Formed in alliance with the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the Economic Development Board (EDB), the CS website states that it “actively links Singapore-based employers with professionals to support the growth of (our) key industries”. More specifically, government agencies play a facilitative role in the development of the migration industry. Skilled foreigners and skilled overseas Singaporeans from particular industries are targeted by the state to come to Singapore to work in order to meet industry demands. A marketing representative at CS explained that they approach various institutions for potential immigrants, and these immigrants fill specific ‘industry needs’:

*“Because they have their own profiles... For example, Peking Uni Medical Faculty alumni. It’s very specific so it makes sense for us to work with them because we are specifically looking for doctors. But we don’t go down to the level of individuals, which headhunters do.”*

CS organises programmes overseas with the objective of spreading information on the possibilities and prospects of working in Singapore. However, as a state-linked organisation, it does not recruit nor does it deal with immigration applications. It merely provides information to overseas communities.

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(b) Engaging and rooting talent; (c) Naturalising and integrating our new immigrants; and (d) Engaging overseas Singaporeans. (Source: [https://www.nptd.gov.sg/content/NPTD/about\\_nps.html](https://www.nptd.gov.sg/content/NPTD/about_nps.html))

<sup>12</sup> Contact Singapore is an alliance of the Singapore Economic Development Board and Ministry of Manpower. We engage overseas Singaporeans and global talent to work, invest and live in Singapore. Contact Singapore actively links Singapore-based employers with professionals to support the growth of our key industries. We work with investors to realise their business and investment interests in Singapore. (Source: <http://www.contactsingapore.sg/>)

*“Yes, they can contact us if they wish to, usually for details or for specific job descriptions. They can always go to the job portals. We actually work with industries and avail for them a free platform to put in job scopes that they need.”*

It does so through channels such as schools, industry associations, universities and alumni groups:

*“Alumni... For example, you know that the top institutes are your IITs and IIMs<sup>13</sup>. These institutions have alumni institutions in Singapore. They actually help... if I am not wrong, they will work with alumni back home and tell them about job opportunities in Singapore. So they are like mini-CS as well.*

*(Ms Goh, Contact Singapore)*

As such, the state taps on existing education and industry institutions to reach its target audience, who are usually professionals from specific industries which are not adequately staffed in Singapore. As I have argued, recruitment channels today, consist of institutionalised avenues such as schools, industry associations and alumni associations. In contrast, the case of old Chinese migration shows that the British adopted a laissez-faire policy during the colonial era, leaving the Chinese businessmen to recruit fellow Chinese workers from various districts in China.

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<sup>13</sup> Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM) are top schools in India



### *Fulfilling Industry Needs*

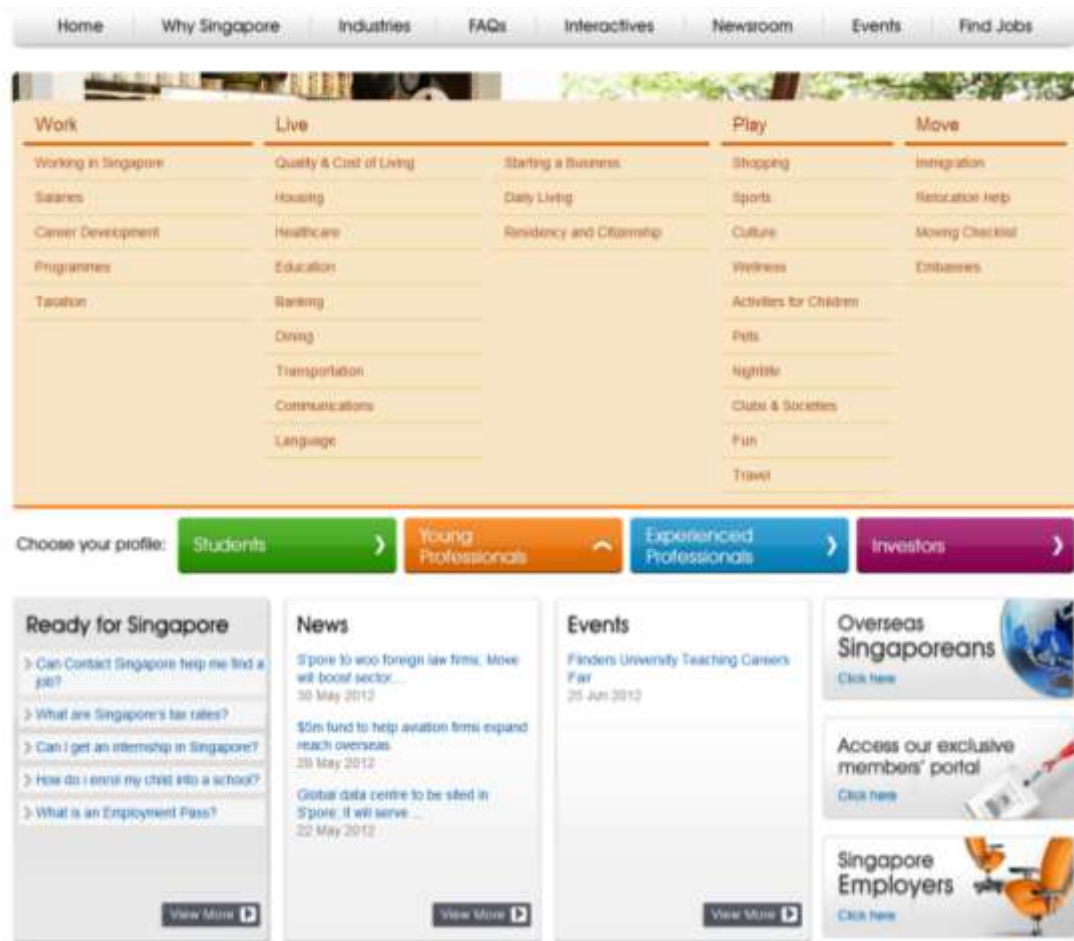
Furthermore, the objective of CS is also institutionally-oriented; it works with organisations to fill the needs of larger industries. It also explicitly aims to fulfil the needs of local industries, by identifying key industries which require skills which the local population lacks. Specifically, it tries to locate niche skill-sets and identify budding industries, before looking at various sources for potential immigrants.

*“(We) fulfil industry needs. In a nutshell, that’s all we do. Because employers would need certain skill sets that they have tried but are unable to find within Singapore. Hence the need to look out of Singapore.... Some industries don’t sound new but the kind of skill sets they are looking for are apparently also facing shortages across the world. Things like Integrated Chip Design which is used in electronics... Electronics is not a new industry but this is a skill set which is required quite widely. Like I said, Interactive and Digital Media (IDM). We are in need of healthcare folks as well – doctors and allied health professionals which means the nurses, physiotherapists, speech therapists. And then there are also those niche industries, the budding industries like cleantech, commodity trading, data analysis, computing. These are all very niche and specific.*

*(Ms Goh, Contact Singapore)*

Anticipating the needs of emerging industries gives CS a strategic role in shaping the incoming migrant population. Following which, they put in place structures and initiatives to encourage the relevant pool of people into Singapore. The CS website

contains a plethora of information concerning living and working in Singapore (Figure 22).



*Figure 22: CS Website catering to potential immigrants – students, young professionals, experienced professionals and investors*

The information ranges from locating job opportunities to moving checklists and relocation help. This one-stop portal for potential immigrants simplifies the immigrant process for interested parties. It is only the state I argue, which has the resources and institutional connections to combine in one platform all related resources. This role while non-profit in nature, is fundamental to subsequent profit-driven initiatives such as headhunting, relocation and opportunities for private agencies.

### *Institutional Matching*

In addition, I argue that this facilitative role allows the state to match the supply of immigrants to the demand of various institutions. ‘Institutional matching’ as I term it, is the basis of the work of CS and related government institutions. Ms Goh elaborates:

*“Basically... if you see the make-up of CS, we have two parent organisations: MOM and EDB. So that already tells you very clearly what’s our mandate... we actually look for skilled talent outside of Singapore for employers who can’t meet or can’t fulfil the vacancies of those specific skill sets within Singapore. Like they can’t find those skill sets within Singapore.”*

However, CS is deeply involved in facilitating rather than actively pursuing immigration:

*“Actually, we don’t really help them (new immigrants) find a place in Singapore... maybe the way to understand CS is that we are just a facilitator. At the end of the day, whether a foreign talent is hired or not is not our call... We just match.”*

Much like bureaucracies, they adopt rationalised and impersonal processes. Again, this relates to the concept of institutional networks (chapter five) as links which are impersonal and even, temporary. When asked if they keep in touch with potential employees who make inquiries with them, the representative responded negatively:

*Ms Goh: Well if they tell us that they actually found a job in Singapore through our programmes then yeah we would know. But a lot of times, we don't know.*

*Interviewer: So what happens after the guy is hired? Does he still maintain ties with this organisation?*

*Ms Goh: Not really... We are just one channel, not the only one... And at this point, with the internet creating a borderless world in that sense, there is no one single channel. Like you said, there are the private recruiters. They are also companies because they can just transfer people.*

As I proposed in chapter five, the usage of institutional networks is increasingly more common. They are also weak ties and broad-based which allow individuals who have these networks to freely construct other networks with a range of other institutions. In contrast, trust/personal networks permit a limited scope of interactions (Tilly 1007: 5-6). True to this, an immigrant's institutional ties to CS constitute only one of many channels through which immigrants tap on.

### *Marketing and Promotion*

As an arm of the state, CS has the resources to forecast various needs, and the infrastructure to market existing opportunities across the globe. These objectives are executed through various marketing and promotional campaigns. The marketization of immigration is yet another instance of immigration moving away from informal

and personal ties to formal business relations. CS does this in two ways. First, it actively organises events and networks with potential skilled immigrants:

*“We market events sometimes. Because at CS, we hold events like Careers Singapore, specific to industries and the different markets. For marketing and communications, we do publicity for these events.*

*(Ms Goh, Contact Singapore)*

Through these events, CS is able to gather a database of potential immigrants to Singapore:

*“We do have a database of potential candidates but I think the key difference between us and private companies is that we usually do more broad-based engagements. Recruitment companies are very one-to-one... Broad-based meaning we hold events, we invite people who potentially possess that skill set to come and join and meet us at that event.”*

*(Ms Goh, Contact Singapore)*

As part of the state, CS has the resources and the mandate to engage in broad-based promotion of immigration unlike private companies which have specific targets to meet on a monthly basis.

Second, marketization of immigration occurs through a strategic structural decision: CS has a global presence. As an organisation, CS has area offices in major cities across the globe. Its sheer presence in various regions ensures that its

marketing campaigns reach a wide spectrum of professionals. According to Ms Goh, CS has area offices in several regions, which serve to engage potential immigrants:

*“So basically, who we call Area Directors (the people based in our offices overseas)... they will work with industry associations and schools to look for those specific skill sets we need to meet...”*

Despite having a far-reaching presence, CS does not actually recruit people. It merely acts as an ‘immigration trigger’ – it forges an international presence, with the hope of encouraging talent to look for opportunities in key industries in Singapore.

Operationally, the work of CS is planned along institutional lines. The area offices work to establish links with local institutions, mostly education and industry ones. Local institutions serve as the point of contact between Singapore and a potential pool of specific skills. This multi-level institutional networking aims to create communication channels between Singapore and overseas groups.

*“Our Area Directors will work with markets and approach schools and offer to contact what you call ‘Work in Singapore’ information sessions to their graduating students. Typically, they would be those who are Masters or post-Docs. Then, we also conduct these types of ‘Work in Singapore’ information sessions with industry associations. Say for example, there is an industry association in China that keeps a database or has a member base of interactive and digital media artist. So we will actually check with them if they are happy to have us speak at one of their events just to provide perspectives on the possibility of working in Singapore.”*

*(Ms Goh, Contact Singapore)*

The distinctive feature of CS' work is its industry-oriented approach. Its marketing strategies often emphasize the presence of prominent MNCs in Singapore:

*“If I am talking about interactive and digital media talent, what sells would be the big brands that have set up offices in Singapore, like Lucas, Double Negative, Ubisoft. So rather than only going to the US or the UK, there is a place outside of these countries which is Singapore that these offices are located.”*

*(Ms Goh, Contact Singapore)*

It is this industry agenda that drives new immigration. Along with marketing the work opportunities and lifestyle in Singapore, CS promotes Singapore's industry potential. Ms Goh elaborates:

*“What CS will try to bring across is the fact that we have many different budding industries and established industries here. So at the core of what we do is really to fulfil industry needs... Because we basically have to make sure that our employers and the companies which set up businesses in Singapore actually can run their businesses with the manpower needs that they have.”*

Therefore, the ultimate objectives of these marketing initiatives are state-driven; they are to support the work of MOM and EDB or the state's agenda pertaining to manpower and economic development. Since the state essentially designs the scope of the migration industry, it deserves attention as a vital actor in the migration

industry although it is not explicitly profit-oriented and does not directly contribute to the revenue generated from immigration services.

#### **6.4.3 International Mobility Industry**

These state-led initiatives encourage the growth of existing immigration-related businesses. One business that executes the recruitment services is called the international mobility industry, which focuses on providing logistical and administrative services, usually to expatriates. Kieran, who works as a mobility consultant describes his job:

*“My work is actually expat assignment consultant, so it’s not really recruitment... So we have a pool of clients (companies/MNCs) already and they bring their employees, say for example, from the US to Singapore... I deal with things from immigration to tax to house-hunting, shipment and everything. My company works with existing employees who are recruited in their home country and they bring them to Singapore, for example. So they are existing employees of the client company.”*

The mobility industry is highly institutionalised, and involves several organisations; specifically, immigrants are represented by organisations which interact with other organisations throughout the entire relocation process. Personal networks are less apparent as various institutions facilitate this process.



Overtime, the mobility industry develops and becomes more differentiated. Niche areas, in the form of highly specific roles, are thus established. Destination service consultants are such examples:

*“We also work with some field consultants who do settling in orientations, like a tour guide... Destination service consultants provide consulting on what the area is like, what’s there to do in Singapore, what does Singapore look like, where the nearest grocery is, where the nearest hospital is. And also, they help with getting maids for example.*

*(Kieran, Mobility Consultant)*

The job of the mobility consultant is to help expatriates settle in a new country, but this often does not entail direct interaction with the expatriate. The relationship between the consultant and his expatriate client is impersonal. A typical process involves mainly organisations dealing with other organisations. This resonates with my earlier argument that institutional networks are usually impersonal, unlike trust/personal networks (Tilly 2007: 5-6) which were more commonly used in the past. Kieran describes the lack interaction with clients:

*“I don’t work with the immigrants. The expatriate’s company works with my company and my company doesn’t interact with the immigrant at all... I am the project manager.”*

*(Kieran, Mobility Consultant)*

Tax officers, shippers and destination services consultants are specific roles related to the expatriate relocation process. As a ‘project manager’, this interviewee is

engaged whenever an organisation has a relocation assignment. He does not liaise directly with the expatriate but only with his client organisations and other service providers. The differentiation of roles and professions within the industry is indicative of the maturity of this sector. Given the frequency of cross-border movement today, it is likely that the services of this industry will continue to be in demand.

## **6.5 The Growing Migration Industry**

Finlay and Coverdill (1999) suggest that the emergence of this industry points to an important shift in hiring processes: while hiring is traditionally done within the firm, it is today, a function that is often performed externally. This outsourcing of hiring, I suggest, is made possible due to the large pool of potential workers created by conditions of globalisation; as mobility becomes increasingly prevalent, the possibility of drawing labour from various parts of the world is made more feasible. One headhunter shares how he recruits and tells me that China is a growing supplier of immigrant labour:

*“We have presence in 34 countries. Our database is a network of all the countries. Based on that, the bulk of the money we are making is from China... We are probably one of the biggest recruitment consultancies in China; we entered the market 14 years ago. In other parts of Asia, we have boutique offices. So basically, the portal is being used by the China audience... what I do understand is that, for every single accountant... probably out of 20 candidates, I would dare say probably 11 from China. I’m serious. Either they are there in*

*China applying or they could be Singaporean-based Chinese (has worked here for the last 3-4 years). Surprisingly they are huge in quantity... their competency in English is usually lower but... they are extremely good technically, and some companies understand that since they are accountants, they don't have to be very good in English... If they are accountants coming from China, 75% I would dare say, are ladies. This would mean that my candidates come from a background where they don't have to do national service. For me to get a person of 3 years of experience, that's easy for me. They are everywhere. But for fresh graduates, even more! We are looking at 3-4 years of experience.... that's the one we're looking for, the bulk."*

*(Fazial, Headhunter)*

Employees from China are certainly capable and well-suited for many jobs. The sheer number of interested individuals from China makes it a growing market for headhunting businesses. Singapore, as a destination popular amongst Chinese immigrants, stands to gain from this large supply of labour. For the reasons of state-led initiatives in Singapore coupled with China's increasingly mobile and educated population, I contend that the China-Singapore migration industry has to potential to grow further.

In this chapter, I have referred to the political and economic relations between China and Singapore, which provide a strong foundation for China-Singapore migration. I have argued that this allows for the flourishing of a migration industry. Empirically, I demonstrate this through an examination of the following issues: recruitment by organisations, the state's role in industry scanning, the proliferation of

social support organisations and the continual existence of logistics and mobility companies. I conclude that current usage of this term remains one-sided as it tends to focus on the illegal, profit-oriented, formal and new aspects of immigration businesses. As such, I propose four considerations to this concept. With these understanding, the China-Singapore migration industry looks set to grow.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

This thesis examines Chinese migration to Singapore by using the concept of migration industry. In chapters one and two, I started with the critique that the literature treats the accounts of migrant daily lives and institutional changes separately. As a consequence, how ground-level realities impact on the larger institutional context is overlooked. In this thesis, I integrate the perspectives of networks and institutions to show how changes in migration network dynamics affect the migration industry. The significance of integrating these two perspectives are a) to distinguish between old and new migration, b) to show the transition from old to new migration networks and c) to suggest that the migration industry has come to play an important role in contemporary Chinese migration to Singapore.

In chapters three and four I discuss migration in the colonial and global economy. In so doing, I differentiated between old and new migration. I also described the transition from the colonial economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy. The colonial economy focused on resource extraction from various colonies. This economy was dominated by the tin mining and entrepôt sectors. Both these sectors depended heavily on Chinese coolies. However, circumstances changed from 1978 when China liberalised its economy. This period also saw the rise of the NICs in East Asia, which further strengthened the Asian economies. This encouraged the migration of professionals and blue-collar workers from various parts of China, a major departure from the colonial period when the majority of migrants from China were blue-collar workers from the Southern province.

Since the 1980s, the migration context became increasingly globalised. The global economy has widespread influence in generating unrestricted capital flows. Relatedly, while migration to specific regions in the past was dependent on personal ties, migration today relies on international institutions which place migrants in many countries and in many sectors of the economy. In contrast to the colonial economy, the global economy, is driven by markets irrespective of borders and is dominated by multinational corporations. With regards to labour migration, this era saw the rise of organised labour export and increasing trade with China. Unprecedented numbers of Chinese migrants are moving across the globe today. In chapter four, I identified the trends of the new immigration - transnationalism, diversification and professionalization. This new physical and socio-economic mobility and diversity have impacted on the current patterns of Chinese migration. Chinese migrants hold jobs which cut across many sectors and are more diffused in the economy and society. The organisation of migration has shifted away from one which was dependent on ethnic and regional ties. In place of personal networks are networks which are rooted in institutions, hence the significance of institutional networks.

This global context has given rise to new migration networks. In chapter five, I elaborated on the transition from old to new migration networks. What I termed the 'new network dynamics' of migration refers to the rise of institutional networks, concomitant with the decline of personal networks. In putting forth this argument, I suggest that the networks of the past have changed. Specifically, networks are now more easily formed across space and hence, they are more diffused. Networks proliferate, but due to its wide-ranging scope, many of these are 'weak' institutional ties. This is because traditional societies which are often more communal, have a

high network density whereas urban contemporary societies which are more individually-oriented, usually have a low network density.

However, this does not mean that contemporary societies no longer rely on personal networks. Rather, I argue that personal networks take on new forms and exist as virtual and/or transnational networks. Broadly, I categorise these new forms of networks as institutional networks. Some examples include recruitment organisations, migrant NGOs and alumni institutions. The findings in this study show that respondents are more reliant on these institutions than on personal relations. In addition, respondents are using fewer familial networks, and also have weak ties with fellow new Chinese immigrants. Unsurprisingly then, their social lives are less dependent on traditional Chinese institutions such as clans and temples. These findings point towards more institutionalised and less personalised bases of migration networks.

Overall, these institutionalised migration networks come together to constitute the migration industry. In chapter six, I argue that the migration industry is now critical to contemporary Chinese migration. I suggest that the context of globalisation has given rise to the exponential growth of migration today, contributing to the growth of the migration industry. I refer primarily to the China-Singapore migration industry for several reasons. China and Singapore have unique economic and historical ties which have allowed the migration-industry to flourish. This industry consists of actors in both the private and public sectors, which provide migration-related services. These include recruitment and headhunting, sponsorship and logistics services. As China continues to liberalise and more people are encouraged to go abroad, Chinese immigration is set to become a highly marketable

activity. This thesis proposes an emerging organisation of Chinese migration constituted by changing networks and institutions.

My examination of the changing social organisation of Chinese migration also highlights areas which warrant more attention. While the literature describes many instance of new immigration, it overlooks the historical and comparative significance of Chinese migration. This historical and comparative perspective remains less developed in migration studies. Second, there may be other institutions involved in the migration process which this study has overlooked. With the growing prevalence of immigration, it is likely that more institutions - both profit and non-profit- will emerge. Migration-related institutions remain an under-researched area. Third, the institutionalisation of migration looks set to grow. In a global environment where states are constantly in competition with each other for the best talent, there are compelling reasons to believe that institutionalised migration continues to be the trend. State-sponsored education for example, is a recent phenomenon. There may also be sports-related migration which facilitates the movement of top athletes around various countries. Finally, the migration industry is set to grow as the Asian economies grow from strength to strength. There are few case studies of the influence of the migration industry on immigration. The concept of migration industry is limited to its descriptive value. This thesis is a step towards utilizing it as a theory and explanation for migration in the context of globalisation.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview points for Chinese Professionals

### General Questions about yourself

1. Age/age range:
2. Which industry do you work in:
3. What is your highest qualification (eg. Bachelors, masters, PHD):
4. Place of birth:
5. Were you working in other cities before you came to Singapore? If so, name the cities:
6. In which year did you come to Singapore?
7. How long do you intend to stay in Singapore?
8. Are you (underline one):
  - a. a permanent resident
  - b. a new citizen
  - c. holding on to some kind of employment pass

### Coming to Singapore

1. Why did you decide to come to Singapore (write a few points/sentences if possible)?
2. How did you find a job in Singapore? (underline one)
  - a. I was posted to Singapore by my company
  - b. I approach by a recruitment company in my home town
  - c. Government agencies in Singapore gave me the job here
  - d. Others: \_\_\_\_\_
3. If you were sent by your company, did they offer you relocation services such as housing and allowance for settling in:
  - a. Yes. If yes, what assistance did the company offer? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No
4. How long did it take you to relocate to Singapore?
5. Do you intend to stay in Singapore?
6. If you intend to leave Singapore someday, where do you wish to go?

### **Adjustment to Life in Singapore**

1. What do you usually do during your free time? (write a few points/sentences if possible)
2. Who do you usually hang out with during your free time? (write a few points/sentences if possible)
3. How many PRC friends do you have in Singapore? (write a few points/sentences if possible)
4. Generally, where did you meet most of your PRC friends (eg. Office, housing estate)? (write a few points/sentences if possible)
5. How many Singaporean friends do you have?
6. What do you usually do during your free time?
7. Generally, where did you meet most of your Singaporean friends (eg. Office, housing estate)?

### **Organisations and Association**

1. Do you belong in any clubs or societies (eg, Chinese immigrant associations or country clubs)?
  - a. If no why did you not join? If yes, why did you join? (write a few points/sentences if possible)
2. Do you find that as a working professional, you have very few opportunities to mingle with PRCs and Singaporeans outside of work?
  - a. If so, what suggestions do you have to improve this situation?
3. When you encounter problems with your employment pass or accommodation in Singapore, who do you turn to help solve these problems?

## **Appendix B: Interview points for Recruitment Companies/Personnel**

### **About the International Mobility Industry**

1. How long has it been in existence?
2. Who are the trends in the industry these days?

### **Recruitment of Talent**

1. How is this done? For example, does your organisation conduct emigration fairs abroad?
2. How is Singapore marketed to potential new immigrants?
3. Am I right to say that recruitment strategies are different in different companies since it is after all, a matter of competition?
4. In Singapore at this point in time, what are the challenges of recruiting foreign talent?
5. Apart from recruitment, what other services does your organisation provide to foreign talent?

### **Maintaining Ties with Clients**

1. After clients have been recruited or placed, does your company still maintain contact with them?
2. In your opinion, have you seen many cases in which immigrants rely on their own networks (rather than recruitment companies) to secure a job overseas? Is this trend increasing/decreasing?

## **Appendix C: Interview points for Government Organisations (i)**

### **About Contact Singapore/ Emerging migration industry in Singapore**

1. When did Contact Singapore begin its operations?
  - a. What are its functions apart from seeking out talented individuals who would like to move to Singapore?
  - b. What kinds of professionals are you targeting? Does it go by industry, age-range, nationality?
  - c. How is it different from private recruitment companies?
2. “Contact Singapore actively links Singapore-based employers with global talent and provides updates on career opportunities and industry developments in Singapore.” – How is this conducted in operational terms?
3. We work with public and private sector partners to facilitate the interests of potential individual investors in Singapore. – Contact Singapore does the ‘scouting’ work for private companies as well?
4. Contact Singapore brings professionals into Singapore. What happens after – do these people maintains ties with this organisation?
5. If not for the work of Contact Singapore and other related organisations, how difficult would it be for immigrants to find their ways here? In the past, how did skilled migration to Singapore occur?

### **Marketing Singapore to the World**

1. Target groups? Are these people here for long-term purposes? (new immigrants, permanent residency)
2. “It aims to attract global talent to work, invest and live in Singapore” - What the biggest draw to Singapore and also the most unattractive trait?
3. Is your organisation involved in holding international emigration fairs abroad?



## **Appendix C: Interview points for Government Organisations (ii)**

### **About NPTD**

1. When did NPTD begin its operations
2. From the website, it appears that NPTD organises a lot of events for new immigrants and overseas Singaporeans.
3. After these events, how does NPTD maintain ties with these people?
4. Apart from events, how else does NPTD assist new immigrants?

### **Recruitment of Talent/Talent Migration**

1. One arm of your organisation deals with 'Talent Engagement and Outreach'. How is this done? For example, does your organisation conduct emigration fairs abroad?

### **Integration**

1. What are the existing social integration plans? Relatedly, what kinds of events does your organisation organise in this area?
2. Are all new immigrants made to go through certain integration programmes? If not, how are new immigrants made aware of such adaptation programmes?
3. How are integration programmes organised? In generic ways or through specific sub-groups such as occupation or language or country of origin etc?
4. What are the challenges in this regard?

### **Network Dynamics (How connected are new immigrants?)**

1. Apart your organisation, NIC and maybe even Contact Singapore, which other government agencies such work with new immigrants?
  2. Are new immigrants generally aware of such governmental support?
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