

Identity Formation and Social Integration: Creating and Imagining the Chinese Community in Prague, the Czech Republic

Adam Horálek, Ter-hsing James Cheng, and Liyan Hu

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese community in Prague is fairly new, established more or less after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, with next to no history in the communist era. Despite its small size, it is still the second largest Chinese community in the Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs¹) after that in Budapest and is worth studying for at least two major reasons. First, for the last decade, its size has remained stable, though its internal composition has changed significantly. In general, the community is not settled, has little communal life or communal areas within the city (e.g., a Chinatown), and is demographically, economically and socially diverse despite its relatively compact place of origin. The increased interest of

A. Horálek (✉)

University of Pardubice, Pardubice, Czech Republic

T.-h.J. Cheng

Soochow University, Taipei, Taiwan

L. Hu

Tongji University, Shanghai, China

Chinese tourists and investors in Prague may, however, result in a reassessment of the goals and future of the community. In general, the development of the Chinese community in Prague is unique and differs greatly from that of similar communities in Western and Southern Europe, the USA and elsewhere outside the CEECs. The second reason for studying Chinese in Prague is that it can serve as a case study to understand general trends in Chinese migration to the CEECs. Even though the founding of contemporary Chinese communities there in the early 1990s differed from place to place, the timing, longitudinal development, general motivation factors, place of origin and so forth are not unlike those in other CEECs.

The unprecedented human flow into Europe during the present “refugee crisis” may change the whole migration policy of the European Union (EU) and especially the stereotyping of “us” and “them.” The terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015 suggested that it was necessary to question the sustainability of the EU’s security policy, multicultural values and welcoming of immigration. Czechia and other post-socialist members of the EU are continuously portrayed as conservative and immigration-negative countries with a much smaller share of foreign nationals in their populations than their Western counterparts. Recent events will not foster any change in this direction and may result in further restrictions on migration to Czechia, including by Chinese.²

In the 1990s and the early 2000s, Czech Chinese were the focus of intensive scholarly research, predominantly by orientalists and sinologists (Bakešová 1996a, b; Obuchová 1999, 2001, 2002; Moore 2002; Moore and Tubilewicz 2001). However, there was little study from a demographic, geographic or sociological perspective, mostly because of the language barrier (cf. Čermák and Džúrová 2008). Since 2003 there have been almost no further publications from any perspective. One reason is that the Chinese community has stagnated. Even so, the stagnation is not the equivalent of homogeneity or consolidation. The group remains incoherent, non-settled, non-identified, non-evolved and pioneering. Most studies on Asian immigrants in Czechia focus on Vietnamese as the largest non-European foreign community in the country, so a major aim of this study is to widen the focus. The first part carries out a statistical analysis of the Chinese community in Czechia and in Prague between 1989 and 2013 in the framework of historical circumstances, geopolitical changes, globalization, migration and ethnic development. As we demonstrate in the last section, the Vietnamese and Chinese communities develop in different ways, have different

strategies and constitute different communities. Still, as Chinese are usually assumed to be dominant (owing to their worldwide demographic dominance), Vietnamese are often seen as Chinese from the Czechs' orientalized perspective. The later parts of the chapter delve deeper into the Chinese community, aiming to explain its internal heterogeneity and behavioral specifics, and its patterns of adaptation and integration from an intergenerational perspective.³

FORMATION OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN CZECHIA SINCE 1989

The Chinese population of Prague is small, dispersed, without a central cultural or hometown institution and, compared with other Chinese communities in the world, not very communal. Its history goes back to the early twentieth century, but the contemporary Czech Chinese community is recent. There was a small Chinese Christian community in Czechoslovakia before World War II, predominantly from Wenzhou in Zhejiang. However, it moved en masse to Western Europe because of the war and post-war political developments in the country (Latham and Wu 2013: 30).

World War II and consequent developments resulted in dramatic migrations across Central Europe. In Czechoslovakia, almost all the German population, about 3 million people, was deported. For the first time since the Middle Ages, Czech lands became 99 % ethnically homogenous. For the next four decades (1948–1989) of communist government, people experienced an almost monolithically ethnic society, except for migrants admitted within the framework of multilateral cooperation under the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon).

When the Velvet Revolution succeeded in 1989 and the Iron Curtain fell, of 10.2 million people in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia only some 50,000 were of nationalities⁴ other than Czech or Slovak—that is, less than 0.5 % of the total population. In 1994, only 104,300 foreign nationals (then including Slovaks) lived in Czechia, making it the second most homogenous society after North Korea. At that time, only 54 Chinese had permanent residence in Czechia, all of them from the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Since 1989 there has been a combined transformation of post-totalitarianism, post-industrialism and globalization, and its challenge is expressed in terms of political, economic, social, cultural and sociogeographical structures (Hampl et al. 2007: 476). In spite of the pressure of transformation, the Czech Republic is an immigration and transit

country and is located in the “buffer zone” between Western and Eastern Europe (Drbohlav 2003).

In the two decades after the independence of Czechia in 1993, the population of foreign nationals rose four-fold to more than 440,000 in 2013. Most of the foreigners are nationals of other EU countries (39 %), mainly Slovaks, Poles and Germans. Among the non-EU nationalities the three traditionally dominant groups are Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Russians. The Ukrainians are the most populous minority, which has been steadily growing since the early 1990s as they constitute the main workforce for non-qualified jobs, principally in construction. Slovaks are very well enculturated, encounter almost no language or cultural barriers and usually do qualified jobs, and unlike other foreign nationals they earn a higher than average salary.

The third largest foreign nationality is the Vietnamese with almost 60,000 residents in 2013, comprising 0.54 % of the population. After 1998, Vietnamese became the third biggest foreign nationality in Czechia when they surpassed the Polish minority. Whereas Hungary faced massive Chinese immigration in around 1990, Czechoslovakia experienced massive immigration from Vietnam. The reason lay in the earlier bilateral cooperation between socialist Czechoslovakia and Vietnam. Vietnamese students were educated in comparatively large numbers at Czech universities and formed the framework for post-1989 migration from Vietnam. Today, this community, unlike the Chinese one, is stable, settled and integrated, with a big second generation of Czech-born Czech-speaking Vietnamese (Freidingerová 2014). The Chinese, approximately 5500 strong, take 13th place and are a rather marginal minority, concentrated in Prague.

The four most populous minorities represent nearly 65 % of the minority-ethnic population, though only 2.7 % of the total population. Chinese make up a very marginal proportion of the population. Given Czechia’s ethnically homogenous past, it is obvious that Chinese in Prague experience a completely different environment from those in Western Europe and the USA.

According to Ľubica Obuchová (2002), the contemporary Chinese community in the Czech Republic can be divided into four groups depending on their time of arrival. The first group is the oldest and settled in Czechia before 1989. These Chinese came to Czechoslovakia in the framework of Comecon, intermarried in some cases with local people, learned Czech, integrated into the majority population, and nowadays represent an informal “bridge” between the Czechs and Chinese immigrants.

The second group is Chinese “Bohemians” (former students of Czech studies), who had their first experience in Czechia in the pre-1989 era but returned there after 1989. They have good Czech, understand local culture and use that knowledge for business purposes. They stay in touch with China. The third group emerged in the same period as the second one (after 1989) but it exemplifies a classical pattern of chain migration. Its members settled in Czechia to establish businesses, often in logistics or hospitality, or worked as specialists, and later brought the rest of their families and fellow villagers. The last group is characterized by Obuchová as non-settled, recent and fluctuating, with no previous foreign experience and within an established migration chain. They represent a modern variation of guest workers whose intention is not settlement but to earn money (2002: 10).

Despite political changes, the region of origin of Czech Chinese has not changed over time. Most Chinese in the Czech Republic come from Wenzhou and Qingtian. Qingtian in particular and Wenzhou in general are traditional emigration regions, especially for those going to Europe. The first migrants from this region emigrated in the late nineteenth century. As Mette Thunø (1999) explains, the vast majority of emigrants to continental Europe (but not the UK) are from the rural areas of Wenzhou rather than from the towns and cities. However, according to Latham and Wu, in the Czech case, the Chinese are predominantly “white-collar urban migrants, former civil servants and employees of state-owned enterprises looking to make their fortune in business overseas, as opposed to the poor rural migrants often found in other countries” (2013: 31). Both types can be found in the contemporary Chinese community in Czechia.

The proportion of Qingtian Chinese in Czechia has probably increased over time. Obuchová (2002) shows that in 2001 they comprised around a quarter (according to her research sample). Research by Horálek more than a decade later showed that Qingtian Chinese made up more than 42 % and that almost three in four respondents were from Zhejiang.⁵

The Chinese boom happened between 1991 and 1995, when the number of Chinese rose sixteen-fold, from 261 to 4210 (CZSO 2015). Most Chinese arrived in the CEECs in 1988 and 1989, especially in Hungary.⁶ The “Hungarian fever” (1989–1990) gave rise to a new Chinese community of more than 27,000, mostly from the Wenzhou area (Nyíri 1999a: 251). This happened because of a bilateral visa-free agreement between the PRC and Hungary was signed in 1988 (Nyíri 1999b). The Hungarian fever must be seen in the context of global Chinese migration, which rapidly expanded to the European continent in the 1980s and 1990s (Pieke 2004).

“New migrants originating from the PRC began to occupy a greater proportion among the overall Chinese emigration” (Liu 2005: 293).

The emerging Chinese community in post-socialist Hungary led to restrictions and the abandoning of visa-free migration, resulting in the termination of this unique Chinese immigration wave. Immediately afterwards, the Chinese population of Hungary dropped by almost two-thirds. Most moved to neighboring countries, including Czechoslovakia. Following are the grounds for the continuing migration strategy of Wenzhounese and Qingtianese in Czechia.

In the early 1990s, countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary were seen as gateways to the EU, especially Germany.⁷ Traditional Chinese communities in Europe, such as those in France, Britain and Italy, have increased greatly in 1990s and 2000s (Marsden 2014). The biggest influx in the 1990s and 2000s was to the UK, France, Italy and Spain, totaling 1,090,000 new Chinese migrants between 1998 and 2011. The CEECs gained 50,000 new Chinese over the same period.

Since 1995 the population of Chinese in Czechia has fluctuated between 3300 and 5600. The Chinese still do come and go, and only a little portion of the community remains stable. This is a unique demographic development compared with the situation of other foreign nationalities, such as the Vietnamese. All other Asian nationalities in Czechia have increased significantly over time. Even the largest Asian community there—Vietnamese—rose by almost 600 % between 1994 and 2013. Other Asian nationalities, such as the Mongolians, Japanese and South Koreans expanded in the second half of the 2000s.

SETTLEMENT STRATEGIES OF CZECH CHINESE

Marketa Moore and Czeslaw Tubilewicz (2001) mention two major conditions of Chinese migration to Czechia: the absence of an active migration policy to discourage foreigners from settling permanently and the Chinese perception of Czechia as a gateway to the EU (cf. Chu 2009). There was no active migration policy until Czechia joined the EU in 2004. However, because of the Sino-Czechoslovakian visa agreement of 1956, Chinese citizens with service passports were entitled to visa-free entry. This was the easiest administrative way to get residence status in Czechia (Moore and Tubilewicz 2001).

“Since administrative restrictions made obtaining a work permit in the Czech Republic difficult, the most convenient way to legalize their stay was

to set up a company . . . This practice inevitably led to an increasing number of Chinese phantom companies that never functioned as business units but acted solely as administrative devices for obtaining residence permits” (Moore and Tubilewicz 2001: 614). In the Czech case the argument of E. M. Mung that “entrepreneurship represents a central element of the strategy that the Chinese employ to reproduce themselves as a group” (Mung 1998: 133) is also valid. However, according to statistics, of 5500 Chinese, only 219 held valid trade licenses. That is low compared with most foreign nationalities and in conflict with the general stereotyping of overseas Chinese as business oriented. Czech Chinese are mostly known for their ethnic restaurants. Most are “low-cost” restaurants customized to the taste of the Czech majority. There are several hundred of them throughout the country. Most Chinese working in restaurants are employees, very often relatives, and few companies and owners run more than one restaurant. Many such restaurants are registered by Czech owners with the Chinese as employees, thus having a Czech business partner was one way of getting a work permit and a residence permit.

In 2001, Moore and Tubilewicz (2001: 615) observed that the Chinese had started to replace their service passports with private ones, which was considered a major shift in their status, from official to migrant. After 2004, the service passport diminished in importance when Czechia joined the EU. Czech immigration policy was reassessed to adhere to EU rules, and work permits for nationals from “third countries” became more accessible and valid throughout the Schengen Area.⁸ Today, Chinese migrants mostly apply for a work permit, but that makes them much more mobile. The youngest adult Chinese immigrants go to Czechia without prior foreign experience and next to no knowledge of foreign languages, and mainly along established migration chains. This strategy reinforces the domination of migrants from Qingtian in the Chinese community in Prague and Czechia. On the other hand, they are the most fluctuating part of the community.

Between 2010 and 2014 some 14,430 foreigners applied for Czech citizenship, of which 11,802 received it (81.8 %).⁹ Very few of them were Chinese. The reason lies partially in the *de facto* status of many Chinese. They do not meet the requirements for Czech citizenship, predominantly because they often leave the country. However, the Chinese do not consider Czechia as their “final” host country, so they have little interest in obtaining Czech citizenship. The EU legal system adopted in 2004 provides foreign nationals with wide autonomy and thus no urgent need for citizenship.

Most applicants were Chinese women marrying Czechs. There have been only 161 such marriages in the last two decades. During the same period, 702 Chinese were born in Czechia, compared with 9000 Vietnamese and 28,549 foreign nationals. So the Chinese comprised 2.5 % of all children born in Czechia to foreigners. The Chinese represent only 1.25 % of the foreign population in the country, so their fertility rate is much higher than the foreigners' average. However, they are 20 % less fertile than Vietnamese.

CHINESE COMMUNITY FORMATION

The Chinese in Czechia follow a similar pattern of settlement in core areas to the Chinese elsewhere overseas, but with one big difference—they barely create a community.¹⁰ Some 60 % of the Chinese in Czechia live in Prague (Latham and Wu 2013). However, as Moore and Tubilewicz (2001: 614) show, the trend is toward further dispersion. Whereas in 1993 some 90.5 % of all Czech Chinese lived in Prague, in 2000 only 58.6 % did (Moore and Tubilewicz 2001: 614). However, they are concentrated in the neighborhood of the capital.

There are no ethnic enclaves, usually associated with the country of origin, in Prague, except for the Asian “bazaar,” a business and cultural center called Sapa on the southeastern edge of Prague.¹¹ Mainly associated with the Vietnamese community, it includes other, mostly Far East Asian, minorities, including the Chinese. Chinatowns are a key symbol of Chineseness and are important for its preservation (Christiansen 2003). Although current migrants tend to move to non-ethnicized and open immigrant neighborhoods in ethnoburbs (Zhou 2009), not only in the USA but also in the UK, France and Italy, they are still aware of Chinatowns or at least of ethnoburbs. The situation in the CEECs is different: the new Chinese migrants settle widely and copy the already existing social and economic clusters. Prague is no exception to this pattern.

As noted above, according to our research, most Chinese in Prague come from Zhejiang. Many respondents and interviewees who originally said they had come from Shanghai or Hangzhou admitted while being interviewed that they actually came from Qingtian or Wenzhou. It can be assumed that the real proportion of people from Qingtian, or who arrived along migration chains from Qingtian, may be even higher. Apart from Zhejiang, the Chinese in Czechia come from Shanghai, Beijing, Shandong and the

northeast. The language used by members of the Prague Chinese community is predominantly Putonghua. The Chinese use simplified characters. However, they also speak regional dialects. Despite the regional and ethnic homogeneity of the group, there are three distinct dialects among the Chinese in Czechia from Qingtian as well as other dialects, which, although marginal in the Prague community, represent other regions of China. Regional patriotism is commonplace in Chinese communities throughout Europe, especially among Qingtianese, Wenzhounese and Siyinese, and it leads to subethnic divisions within ethnic communities (Christiansen 2003).

The social and economic stratification within the community is related to age, among other factors. In general, the older, the wealthier. The wealthier group is represented by Chinese senior officials or businessmen and their spouses, mostly living in residential neighborhoods of Prague. The women enjoy being retired in Prague or being a housewife. They appreciate the space, cleanliness, quality of life, cost of living and so on. Men more than 50 years of age go to Czechia for business or other types of work. They moved to Prague before 2005, so they have lived there for at least a decade, though not continuously. They are well traveled and often return to China for several months or even for a year at a time. Women return to China mostly to take care of aging parents or grandchildren, while the children build their careers. Men return to China mostly for business and administrative reasons. They do not see Czechia as their homeland but as a place to live, and they consider themselves Chinese who live in Czechia. They usually do not speak Czech, though most speak English. Most come from parts of China other than Qingtian or Wenzhou (e.g., Shanghai, Beijing and the northeast).

Most respondents were aged 21–40. Those under 30 are predominantly single, while those over 30 are married. Most are employees in family businesses (largely restaurants) and have lived in Prague since 2001. They do not consider Prague to be their lifelong destination. Those above 30 years old have their families with them in Prague—most married before leaving China. Almost all of them came from Qingtian or other parts of Zhejiang. The youngest (under 20 years of age) came to Prague with their parents, work in family businesses and are expected to take over the businesses when their parents retire, although many of them hope not to do so. Only two of the respondents were born in Prague (or Czechia). The age composition of Chinese respondents shows social differences between cohorts. They tend to live in different parts of Prague, come from different places in China and speak different dialects. Nevertheless, there is one

commonality across age, and that is their view of Prague as only one stop on their lifelong journey.

According to Hendrick Serrie (1998: 191–196), there are five major types of social organization among overseas Chinese. The first is based on kinship and its members are recruited through birth or marriage. The second is based on surnames understood as ancestral lineage. The third is residential, based on the territorial proximity of its members within the Chinese community. The fourth is based on place of origin, usually the province, county, dialect or town in China. The fifth is contractual—that is, open to all. Most previous studies on the Chinese community in the Czech Republic (Obuchová 2002; Moore 2002) confirm that only the two last types are present among the Chinese in Prague, and even then not to much avail. As Moore and Tubilewicz (2001: 624) said, unlike “their counterparts in Hungary who organized themselves through numerous associations, Chinese in the Czech Republic lacked interest in establishing ethnic organizations.”

Hometown associations among Prague Chinese include the Wenzhou Tong Xiang Hui, Qingtian Tong Xiang Hui and the Fujian Tong Xiang Hui, but in 2015 these associations had little impact on the Chinese community. The Central Association of Chinese Businessmen in the Czech Republic (Jieke Huaqiao Zongshanghui), established in 1995, and the Association of the Chinese in the Czech Republic (Lǜjie Huaren Lianyihui), established a couple years later by Tang Yunling, a pre-1989 Chinese immigrant, are relatively important.¹² Whereas the first focuses only on Chinese businessmen, the latter was established with the idea of serving the community and becoming a platform for mutual cooperation, help and cultural exchange. There are other institutions of a communal character (e.g., two Chinese newspapers), but they have a limited impact on community-building. Although associations have some impact on the settled and older part of the community, they attract little attention from the younger generation, especially the tiny second generation.

Many scholars, including Min Zhou (2009) and Pál Nyíri (2014), argue rightly that overseas Chinese have a transnational identity. Pál Nyíri (2014) even says that in Hungary, children of the new migrant cohort are trained in transnationalism rather than in accepting their ethnic-minority position in the host society. These migrants maintain their Chinese citizenship and close emotional ties with the PRC. Transnationalism is seen as the most suitable way of accommodating to the host society, not just in Czechia. The core idea of transnationalism among migrants, as Linda Basch argues, is that

it is a “process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (Zhou and Lee 2013: 25).

INTEGRATION AND INTERGENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG CZECH CHINESE

In the following, we focus on how the emerging second generation differs from the first and how both generations integrate into the host society. Levitt’s research confirmed that immigrants always maintain a connection with their original countries and simultaneously integrate into their new societies. However, he argues that the second generation does not maintain a strong connection with the host country but is still “regularly influenced by people, objects, practice and know-how from their ancestral homes” (Levitt 2009: 1225). Yet the second generation of Chinese in Czechia seems to relate more strongly to the values and norms of their original countries than to Czechia. Here we are confronted with the problem of how to define the second generation.

In the case of immigrants not born in the host countries, the lines between immigrants’ identities seem to blur more quickly. Brettell and Nibbs suggest that “today’s second generation no longer necessarily chooses to emphasize one identity over the other but that their identities are more fluid and multifaceted” (2009: 679). Members of the second generation accept the cultural identity of their families. However, another form of their cultural or social identity is to integrate into the new world in which they live. The second generation seems to adapt more easily to a set of different identities than the first generation. The second generation of Czech Chinese sticks to the values, norms, and identities of their families and follows a mobile trajectory of social integration. Most of our second-generation informants were born in Czechia.¹³

Of our 139 first- and 36 second-generation interviewees, 55.4 % were men. As for the first generation, about two-thirds were under the age of 39. Some 65 % were married. Three out of four (75.4 %) had at least a high-school education. More than half (51.8 %) of respondents had lived in Czechia for between 10 and 19 years, 44 % for between 1 and 9 years and only 4.4 % for more than 20 years. Their former jobs in China included hospitality and catering (16.5 %), wholesale trading in textiles or shoes (14.4 %), retail trading in textiles or shoes (7.9 %), the civil service (3.6 %),

the financial sector (6.0 %), enterprise (other kinds of companies in addition to textiles, shoes, etc.) (15 %), students (16.5 %) and others (20 %). In Czechia, most work in restaurants (35.3 %) and as wholesale traders in textiles or shoes (40.3 %), while 37.8 % are employers, 5.9 % managers and 51 % employees. Some 48.5 % of respondents received help from relatives to get their current jobs, while another 25 % were helped by compatriots in the Czechia. Some 19 % found jobs by themselves.

As for the second generation, 47.2 % of Chinese respondents are between 13 and 20 years, 44.5 % between 21 and 29, and 8.3 % 30 or above. Some 48.6 % of them are still students, 33.3 % have lived in Czechia for 1–5 years, 36 % for 6–10 years and 30.6 % for 11 or more years. Some 91.7 % were born in China. As for educational levels, 27.8 % were college educated, half graduated from high school and 16.7 % had only elementary school education.

In this section, we focus on whether the model of “social integration” of the second generation will follow that of the first generation as a result of their similar “cultural identity.”

The family background of the second generation, which plays a vital role in its social integration, is substantial. About 41.7 % of respondents belong to economically well-situated families while 55.6 % of respondents are from averagely situated families.

Connection with Homeland

We deduce that the first generation will keep a stronger connection with their homeland because of the necessity to do business and maintain their social life. To measure the four variables related to “homeland connection” we used (1) interest in Chinese news; (2) watching Chinese television; (3) pride in being Chinese; and (4) trusting the Chinese. We found that there is a significant difference between the first and second generation. The first is interested in Chinese political, social and economical news.

An interest in Chinese news probably helps maintain social networks in the host country, especially among the first generation. “Watching Chinese television” reveals no significant difference between the first and second generations. Watching television via the internet or satellite is quite easy to do. However, compared with the variable “concern for Chinese news,” the first generation prefer to watch Chinese television and turn the information received into topics of conversation. Watching television or exchanging information about the Chinese political and social situation is a vital part

of daily life. Chinese immigrants also like to share the confidence of rising China with their counterparts.

Regarding national identity, pride in being Chinese demonstrates that respondents remember their roots and are proud of recent economic development in their country. China is the second biggest country by territory and Gross Domestic Product. Many Chinese immigrants know this. When they say, "I am really proud of being Chinese", they seemingly express real feelings of satisfaction. Many cannot agree with the attitude to work of local people and they are lazy. This reduces their desire to integrate into local culture and social life. The first and second generations share this feeling of national pride.

On the other hand, the Chinese in Czechia do not trust one another. This is because of the increasing difficulty of social integration—greater mistrust leads to less integration. Most Chinese only trust their close relatives or friends. Their social networks are narrow and they guard against intrusion by outsiders. This happens also because many Chinese migrate to obtain similar jobs, and there is a lot of competition among them. On the other hand, low trust is commonplace in China, and they bring it with them to Czechia. However, the mistrust does persuade Chinese immigrants to have less contact with Czechs. The Chinese seem to integrate less than Vietnamese immigrants.

Social Integration

Here we use nine variables to examine and discuss factors regarding social integration, including use of the Czech language, having Czech friends, having an interest in Czech history and culture, the degree of social integration into the host society, views about whether or not Czechs are friendly to the Chinese, views about the living environment in the Czech Republic, the extent to which the Chinese watch Czech television, the extent to which they trust Czech people and whether or not they are discriminated against by Czechs.

Language is an essential means of social integration, and people who can speak the local language can integrate more easily. It is harder for older people to learn a new language. Only 31 % of respondents speak good Czech, while nearly 70 % of the first generation speak only a little or no Czech. They seldom use Czech with Czech customers, so it is not difficult to imagine that the first generation lives separately from Czech society in its

own small social circle. Here there is a significant difference between the first and the second generation.

Social networking with local people occurs less in the case of the first generation than in the case of the second. The first generation has Czech friends only through inevitable work contacts. The interaction between them and Czechs is limited to business, and after work they seldom interact with them. The second generation has Czech friends from school or other places, as well as work, so it is understandable that more social interaction takes place between young Chinese and local young people. The first generation only make local friends because of work, and the social relationship is narrow and hardly promotes social integration into the host society. Statistically, however, the difference in social integration between the first and second generations is not marked from the perspective of “social networking with local people.”

If immigrants show an interest in Czech history, they are more likely to interact with local people. However, 70.5 % of the first generation expressed little interest in Czech history and culture. Their main place of entertainment is the casino, which local people seldom visit.

The Chinese like to talk about Chinese politics and social news, but they seem less interested in Czech news. The same is more or less true of the second generation, which is even less interested in Czech news. The Chinese still live in Czechia as outsiders. If language is indeed the most important road to social integration, few Chinese want to learn it. They think the current state of interaction with Czechs is sufficient for their “comfortable” life in the host country.

Watching local television is also important for social integration and interaction with local society. Television programs show daily life and reflect local values and life styles, and they are a way of learning Czech. However, few first- or second-generation Chinese watch much Czech television. This is partly because of the language gap, but also because they are too busy at work.

Some 73 % of the first generation think it is not easy to integrate into local society, and 50 % of the second generation agree. Chinese immigrants are seemingly more willing to stay in touch with China and keep their own national identity than to integrate. For them, the concept of community does not refer to a specific dwelling place, where the Chinese live together. Although most Chinese live inside the Czech “community” and they often meet Czechs face to face in their daily life, it does not mean the Chinese can easily integrate themselves into the local society.

It could be argued that members of the first generation retain their “national confidence” in order to be less dependent on the host society and ready to undertake further migration. This might also explain the low drive among the Chinese in Czechia to integrate.

There is a significant difference between the first and second generation with regard to discrimination. On the one hand, the first generation recognize their homeland as one of the most powerful states nowadays all over the world, and owing to their national confidence, generally speaking, they more or less enjoy the living environment in local society no matter how they are imagined by the local society. However, such a large percentage of the second generation perceiving discrimination puts a definite limit on their integration. The first generation perceives themselves as less discriminated than the second generation according to our survey, and the feeling of being discriminated against seems to interfere with the greater social integration of the second generation.

Most Czech Chinese appreciate life in the Czech Republic but feel no need to understand its history and culture. They see it as a good place for Chinese immigrants to live. However, having a good living does not mean achieving better social integration for Chinese immigrants.

CONCLUSION

This chapter shows that new Chinese immigrants in Prague have adopted a number of pragmatic strategies to accommodate themselves in Czech society, but that they have reproduced and sometimes even compounded their internal heterogeneity and thereby stymie any effort toward institutional integration and formal communization.

Our study are among just a handful since 2003 that have carried out longitudinal field research. It is therefore divided into two parts. The first focuses on history and an up-to-date demographic analysis and comparison of the ethnic Chinese population of Czechia with other foreign nationalities. The second presents outcomes of the two fieldwork projects conducted by us between 2010 and 2015.

The contemporary Chinese community in Prague began in 1989. The Velvet Revolution and subsequent political developments in Czechoslovakia and other CEECs prepared the ground for unprecedented Chinese immigration into the region. The flow of the Chinese is very much smaller than that into Western Europe. It started in Hungary during the so-called “Hungarian fever” in 1989 and 1990. In just a short period of time,

Hungary received an influx of 27,000 Chinese. Subsequent restrictions by Hungary on immigration caused a further flow of “Hungarian” Chinese to other CEECs, including Czechoslovakia. Since then, Prague has become home to the second largest Chinese community in the CEECs.

Chinese immigrants have experienced, and still experience, a host society that has unique features. As a result of historical events in the mid- to late twentieth century, Czechia became one of the ethnically most homogenous countries in the world. Czech society, which had almost no contact with immigrants for half a century, was very conservative in its immigration policy and was not so receptive to foreigners. Because of these unique characteristics as a host society, and the country’s rather peripheral location in the framework of world migration, there are still only a small number of foreign nationals residing in the country, amounting to about 4 % of the total population, two-and-a-half decades after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Czech Chinese comprise a small foreigner group numbering only 5500. The milestone was 2004, when Czechia joined the EU. The swift change in immigration rules and residential law for citizens of third countries resulted in much internal reassessment of the Chinese and other foreign nationalities by Czechs. Chinese immigration increased rapidly as a result, and the proportion of Czech Chinese from Qingtian and Wenzhou has increased over time. Since the early 2000s a second generation has emerged.

Despite increasing numbers, the Chinese in Czechia have slowly dispersed since the 1990s. Although Prague concentrates the largest proportion of the Chinese in Czechia, the ethnic Chinese community in the capital city does not take the form of an identifiable ethnic community as in other countries. Therefore the two research studies presented here have focused on the community’s heterogeneity in terms of identity, integration and intergenerational dichotomy. The first used a psychological ethnicity questionnaire to examine the ethnic identity of Czech Chinese in the context of their communal heterogeneity. The second focused on the social integration of the Chinese into Czech society and their connections to China, and made an intergenerational comparison. In the second project, we concluded that both generations display “high cultural identity and low social integration.” The lack of intergenerational difference is because most second-generation Chinese were born in China or in a place other than Czechia. Social segregation, on the other hand, is a result of an unsettled communal life resulting from the community’s still unsettled demography.

In summary, the Chinese in Prague barely create a community in the first place. They settle widely, partially because of the mistrust within the society,

and find themselves in the already existing social and economic clusters which represent typical migrant resettlement patterns for the CEECs. Despite the fact that most Chinese in Prague come from Qingtian and Wenzhou, and predominantly their language is *Putonghua*, the demography and social organization of the society are still very patchy. There are Chinese associations in Prague but they have little impact on community formation and attract mostly members of the older generation.

There are two major socioeconomic groups distinguishable by age. The wealthier group is represented by Chinese senior officials, businessmen and their spouses residing mostly in neighborhoods of Prague. Those under 30 are mostly single, are employees in family businesses, poorer and speak much better Czech. Still, the language barrier seems to be an optional marginalization strategy. Most first-generation Chinese have Czech friends only through inevitable work contacts. All generations think the current state of interaction with Czechs is sufficient for their “comfortable” life. This is partially owing to the fact that most Chinese do not consider Prague (or Czechia) to be their lifelong destination. Even those under 30 mostly go to Prague with their families, and the second generation Chinese are mostly foreign-borns and they loose their and parent’s bonds to Prague as a homeplace.

Our work points to arguable conclusions that, currently, the Chinese in Prague retain their own “national confidence” in order to be less dependent on the host society, that they become more transnational and expect further migrations, and that they still live in Czechia mostly as voluntary outsiders.

NOTES

1. In the geographical framework as formulated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
2. Czechia is the short version of the official name of the Czech Republic.
3. Our analysis is based on two major fieldwork projects carried out among Czech Chinese between 2011 and 2014, conducted independently of each other and with different aims. The research conducted by Adam Horálek used mainly psychological ethnicity questionnaire and semistructured narrative interviews. That by Cheng Ter-hsing James and Hu Liyan focused on a quantitative sociological analysis of integration processes within the community and its intergenerational dimensions. The two reports have been combined in an attempt to remedy the lack of studies on community organization and configuration as opposed to migration networks and processes (see Zhou and Lee 2013).

4. Czechoslovakia comprised two nations (Czechs and Slovaks), four nationalities (Germans, Hungarians, Poles and Russians) and other ethnic groups (e.g. Roma people). All other non-autochthonous peoples were labeled as foreigners (and in statistics still are). The Czech statistical office now distinguishes between two types of minority: foreigners by their citizenship and autochthonous ethnic minorities possessing Czech citizenship (these are not included in presented numbers).
5. Neither of the research samples was representative of the whole population of Czech Chinese, and the methodology differs too.
6. Nyiri in his paper “Chinese Migration to Eastern Europe” (2003: 243–244) detached four main flows of Chinese migration: (1) from Russian Far East to European Russia; (2) from Moscow to Hungary, Romania and the Czechia (1991–1993) to look for better business opportunities and safety; (3) from Hungary to Czechia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Russia and the rest of Eastern Europe; and (4) from Hungary and Czechia to Germany, Austria and Italy.
7. Karsten Giese (1999: 199) shows that in 1980s the “invasion” of the Chinese into Europe went through Germany, which became a transit country for further migration to Western Europe and North America.
8. The term “third country” refers to non-EU and non-European Free Trade Association countries (e.g. Norway, Switzerland and Iceland).
9. Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, <http://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/statistika-poctu-podanych-zadosti-a-pocet-nabyti-statniho-obcanstvi-ceske-republiky.aspx> (accessed on November 8, 2015).
10. Data presented in this section come mainly from the research conducted by Adam Horálek, unless stated otherwise.
11. According to Zhou and Lee, ethnic enclaves refer to “urban clusters of immigrants from the same sending country” (Zhou and Lee 2013: 24).
12. See also Česko-čínská obchodní asociace (Czech-Chinese Business Association, CCOA), <http://www.ccoa.cz/en/home.php>
13. Ter-Hsing James Cheng and Liyan Hu conducted a survey specifically for this research in 2010. The main issue was to make a comparison between the first and second generations on the issue of cultural identity and social integration in Czechia. Accordingly, we designed two questionnaires for the first and second generations of Chinese immigrants. We adopted a face-to-face interview for the survey, and we trained two Chinese college-level students as our research assistants. Demographically, we restricted the first-generation participants to those above 19 years who had lived in Czechia for at least one year, and the second-generation participants to those above 13 years who had lived in Czechia for at least one year. In addition to the questionnaire, we conducted in-depth interviews with six Chinese immigrants who were owners of restaurants and textile shops, or were college students.

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