

# Channels of Entry and Preferred Destinations: The Circumvention of Denmark by Chinese Immigrants

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## ABSTRACT

As globalization spread during the 1990s, and especially since the turn of the millennium, European states have increasingly claimed their right to assert their sovereignty by regulating migration at the level of the individual (OECD, 2001: 76-81). Political parties have succeeded in gaining support on policy statements pertaining exclusively to migration. For example, recent legislation in Denmark restricts the categories of persons eligible as refugees to “Convention refugees” satisfying only the narrowest international criteria set out in the UN Refugee Convention. The civil rights of asylum seekers are restricted by prohibiting marriage while their applications are under review. To limit family reunification among immigrants, the present Danish Government has even prohibited immigrants with permanent residence status and Danish citizens from bringing non-Danish spouses under age 24 into the country.

These attempts at border enforcement and immigration control have been described by some critics as the endeavours of European Union (EU) members to build a “Fortress Europe” against immigrants from developing countries. Policy decisions and the implementation of various measures from finger printing to radar surveillance to control immigrants have corroborated such perceptions, but this paper will show that gaining entry to a highly controlled country such as Denmark from a poorer country such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is fairly straightforward. Politicians may wish to convey the impression of being in control of international mobility by launching diverse anti-immigration acts, but since the immigration embargo of the early 1970s all EU countries have received millions of immigrants, and increasingly permit or accept immigrants of various kinds to reside and work within their borders (Boeri et al., 2002). Immigration from developing countries is not evenly distributed throughout the EU, but rather targets specific destinations. This article will attempt to explain the direction of Chinese immigration flows to Europe in response to labour-

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market demand, rather than as a consequence of “loopholes” in a country’s legal or welfare provisions.

By analysing historical and demographic data on the PRC Chinese in Denmark, I attempt to demonstrate that, despite being a European country with one of the lowest asylum rejection rates for PRC Chinese, the scope of Chinese asylum seekers and regular and irregular migrants arriving by way of family reunification remained limited in the 1990s compared to southern, central, and eastern European countries. My analysis of Danish data in relation to Chinese migration suggest that destinations related to the globalization of Chinese migration is more determined by labour and capital markets than the presumed attraction of social welfare benefits provided by a European welfare state such as Denmark.

## INTRODUCTION

In July 2000, when 58 Chinese were found suffocated after they attempted to gain entry into the United Kingdom locked in a truck, European policy makers were suddenly made aware of the tragic circumstances accompanying irregular migration from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In the United States, similar tragic circumstances of irregular immigration from the PRC were exposed to the public when the freighter *Golden Venture*, crammed with 291 illegal Chinese immigrants, was stranded just off New York in June 1993. In the late 1990s, several freighters carrying irregular Chinese migrants were stranded off Australia and Canada, further highlighting the persistence of human smuggling from the PRC. The Dover incident was tragically only one among many similar occurrences testifying to the global scope of Chinese human smuggling.

A few months following the Dover tragedy, the EU Commission called on member states to develop and apply immigration and integration policies, because of the “growing public concern expressed in all member states in recent months”. In its communication, the Commission was concerned with combating illegal migration, but emphasized that the right to seek asylum should remain the cornerstone of EU policy (Commission of the European Communities, 2000: 9, 22). One year later, the Commission again proposed a full-fledged common European policy to combat irregular immigration (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). In fact, since the EU summit in Tampere, Finland, in 1999, when EU countries pledged to establish a common asylum policy, the EU Commission has issued numerous urgent proposals concerning illegal migration and asylum policies compared to other immigration issues (EU, 2002).

The preoccupation by EU countries with issues concerning irregular entry either as “illegal” or as signifying “bogus asylum seekers” demonstrates their concern over particular aspects of immigration, in particular, the presentation of the “refugee” and the “irregular migrant” in official discourses as either bogus or persons

with criminal intent (Whitaker, 1998). Moreover, immigration is presented as an individual decision, rather than a choice embedded in complex transnational economic, ethnic, and social networks (Sassen, 1996: 64-67).

As globalization spread during the 1990s and especially since the turn of the millennium, European states have increasingly claimed their right to assert their sovereignty by regulating migration at the level of the individual (OECD, 2001: 76-81). Political parties have succeeded in gaining support on policy statements pertaining exclusively to migration. As a case in point, recent legislation in Denmark restricts the categories of persons eligible as refugees to “Convention refugees” satisfying only the narrowest international criteria set out in the UN Refugee Convention. The civil rights of asylum seekers are restricted by prohibiting marriage while their applications are under review. To limit family reunification among immigrants, the present Danish Government has even prohibited immigrants with permanent residence status and Danish citizens from bringing non-Danish spouses under the age of 24 into the country.<sup>1</sup>

These attempts at border enforcement and immigration control have been described by some critics as the endeavours of EU members to build a “Fortress Europe” against immigrants from developing countries. Policy decisions and the implementation of various measures from finger printing to radar surveillance to control immigrants have corroborated such perceptions, but this article will show that gaining entry to a highly controlled country such as Denmark from a poorer country such as the PRC is fairly straightforward. Politicians may wish to convey the impression of being in control of international mobility by launching diverse anti-immigration acts, but since the immigration embargo of the early 1970s all EU countries have received millions of immigrants, and increasingly permit or accept immigrants of various kinds to reside and work within their borders (Boeri et al., 2002). Immigration from developing countries is not evenly distributed throughout the EU, but rather targets specific destinations. This article will attempt to explain the direction of Chinese immigration flows to Europe in response to labour market demand, rather than as a consequence of “loopholes” in a country’s legal or welfare provisions.

By analysing historical and demographic data on PRC Chinese in Denmark, this study attempts to demonstrate that, despite being a European country with one of the lowest asylum rejection rates for PRC Chinese, the scale of Chinese asylum seekers and regular and irregular migrants arriving by way of family reunification remained limited in the 1990s compared to southern and central and eastern European countries. My analysis of Danish data in relation to Chinese migration suggests that that destinations related to the globalization of Chinese migration is determined more by labour and capital markets than the presumed attraction of social welfare benefits provided by a European welfare state such as Denmark.

## EXPLORING THE NORTHERN PERIPHERY: CHINESE HISTORICAL IMMIGRATION TO DENMARK

In the twentieth century, Denmark received the same flows of Chinese migrants as the rest of Europe (Thunø, 1997). Chinese sailors had been recruited onto Danish ships since the late eighteenth century (Feldbæk, 1997: 169), but by the beginning of the twentieth century, sailors from Guangdong and Fujian provinces settled in Denmark much like their colleagues in other European ports, such as London, Liverpool, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Hamburg, and Antwerp (Benton and Pieke, 1998). In the 1920s and 1930s, dozens of the thousands of peddlers and traders from southern Zhejiang province arrived in Europe overland by way of Moscow or across the sea to Marseilles. They soon also crossed the Danish border and thus constituted a major group of the pioneering Chinese migrants in Copenhagen prior to World War II (Thunø, 1999; Zhou and Wu, 2001).

After 1949, emigration was prohibited by the Chinese Communist Party, but Chinese immigration to Europe continued by way of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Labour import from the New Territories to the United Kingdom initiated extensive re-migration to western continental Europe during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Watson, 1976). Denmark also received its share of Hong Kong immigrants who quickly expanded the catering trade in Chinese ethnic food, starting with a Chinese restaurant in Copenhagen in 1949. The Hong Kong migrants brought the concept of take-away food with them from the United Kingdom and during the 1960s and 1970s they established dozens of mom-and-pop shops all over the country (Thunø, 1997).

In 1978 when the PRC initiated economic reforms by opening China to the world, permission was given primarily for relatives of emigrants to leave the PRC to reunite with family members abroad. Later in 1985, formal legislation reassured all Chinese citizens of their right to leave the country, although obtaining a passport required the approval of the individual's work unit and proof of an overseas sponsorship. As a result of the Chinese Government's decision to allow outward mobility, emigration to Europe resumed on a larger scale than before. Family ties and family reunification policies in Europe relaunched chain migration from the very few regions in China that, prior to 1949, had specialized in emigration to Europe (Benton and Pieke, 1998).

Despite the infusion of young blood, the Chinese communities in Europe remained rather insular and detached from the Chinese in other parts of the world. Relatives and friends were quickly integrated into the Chinese ethnic catering trade and turned this economic niche into self-sustaining entities in many European countries. Likewise in Denmark, where the approximately 500 Chinese immigrants commenced to invite their relatives and kin from southern Zhejiang province

(around the city of Qingtian in the hinterlands of Wenzhou city), Fujian province (around the provincial capital of Fuzhou), Guangdong province (around the city of Canton and the Pearl River Delta), and from the New Territories in Hong Kong to assist the aging community in their restaurants and carry-out (Thunø, 1997: 123, 109-166). In 1989, the number of mainland Chinese had increased twofold, while immigration from Hong Kong and Taiwan remained stable (Thunø, 1997: 124).

The 1990s saw a change of events with the intensive integration of China into the global liberal economy as foreign investments and living standards rose. At the same time, the Soviet Union disintegrated, central and east European regimes collapsed and Europe fused geographically by opening up its internal borders to both human and global capital movements. These major political and economic events turned Europe, as a migration destination, from being peripheral into a destination with high economic potential for would-be migrants. For Chinese emigrants and their migration facilitators Europe became increasingly popular.

Sharply higher numbers of migrants from traditional Chinese emigration areas now arrived in Europe, but also migrants particularly from Fujian province now also suddenly emerged as newcomers in the 1990s. Initially, immigrants from the traditional emigration areas migrated by way of family reunification schemes according to classical chain migration structures to those areas in western continental Europe where they had a network of friends and kin, or they moved in their pursuit for business opportunities and entered central and eastern European countries, or travelled directly from the PRC to countries such as Hungary with the help of migration facilitators or as entrepreneurs on business visa.

In contrast, thousands of emigrants from certain areas of Fujian province suddenly appeared in Europe in the 1990s, although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that province had specialized in emigration to British Malaya (Malaysia) and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). Having few opportunities to seek family reunifications in Europe, these migrants had to find alternative ways to obtain residence permission in Europe (Pieke, 2002; Pieke et al., forthcoming). A few families from the area around the provincial capital of Fuzhou in Fujian province had lived in Denmark since the 1950s and 1960s and, as family ties were revived, several hundred Fujianese arrived primarily via family reunification. Currently, the two dominant immigration trajectories from the PRC to Europe are the family-based Zhejiang configuration<sup>2</sup> and the global Fujian configuration. These configurations are both represented in the history and present circumstances of Chinese immigration to Denmark, and today Chinese immigrants from these regions constitute the majority of all Chinese immigrants. Only the latest trend in immigration from north-eastern China, as observed in, e.g. France (see Guerassimoff, this issue), has not yet become evident in Denmark.

In terms of economic development, the Chinese immigrants in Denmark primarily entered the catering trade of ethnic Chinese restaurants and take-away shops. This niche not only includes Chinese immigrants from mainland China, but also from Taiwan and Viet Nam. The rising demand for skilled cooks from urban areas has given rise to labour immigration, especially from Shanghai and Beijing.

Chinese immigrants in Denmark share their migration history with many other Chinese immigrants all over Europe. Despite a century of settlement in various parts of the European continent, their history of developing a few ethnic economic niches such as catering in northern Europe and garment production in southern Europe, is surprisingly similar. The “traditional” destinations of central and northern Europe, however, no longer seem as attractive as before.

A destination such as Denmark with its long history of migration from China, an economic ethnic Chinese catering niche, a liberal migration regime, high asylum recognition rates, and a generous welfare system, is not a target country for current Chinese immigration. Apparently, global Chinese migration is determined by other factors than the prospects of family reunification, political asylum, and welfare benefits. Rather, Chinese immigrants are found in large numbers in Prato near Florence (see Ceccagno, this issue) or Budapest (see Nyíri, this issue). As not all European locations seem to attract Chinese migrants with equal force, it is argued below that a few destinations are characterized by certain commonalities related to economic prospects for migrants and to a certain type of migration regime, as presented in the case of Denmark, and that such factors influence global Chinese migration networks more than border enforcement and migration policies.

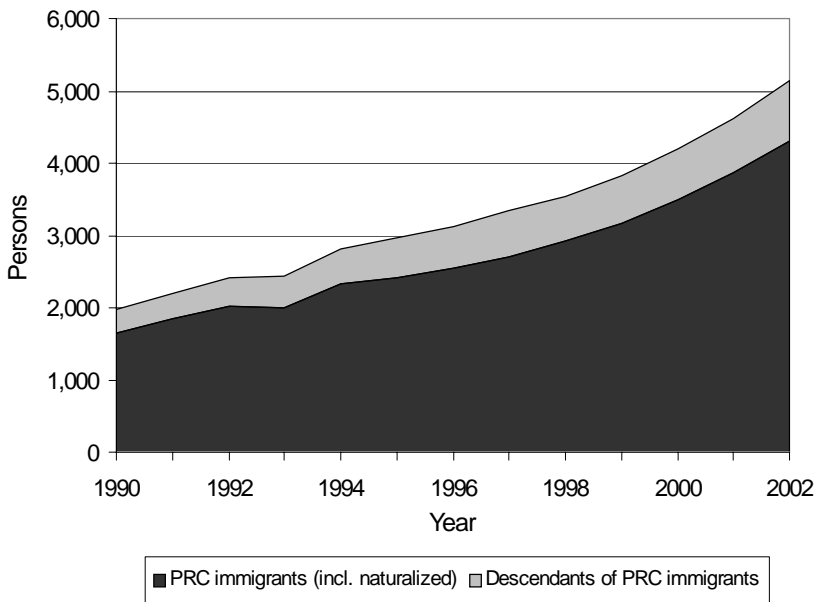
#### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON CHINESE MIGRANTS IN DENMARK: RESTRICTED RISE DESPITE IMMIGRATION EMBARGO

On 1 January 2001, 310,000 immigrants<sup>3</sup> and 90,000 descendants<sup>4</sup> were registered as living in Denmark. Of these, the majority (74%) themselves originated or had parents from developing countries, constituting 7.4 per cent of the overall Danish population, increased from 4.4 per cent in 1991 (Indenrigsministeriet, 2001). The total number of registered mainland Chinese immigrants and their descendants remained stable at 5,000 on 1 January 2002 (see Figure 1),<sup>5</sup> but the inflow of 872 Chinese during the previous year versus an outflow of 213 illustrates the rise in immigration from mainland China to Denmark.

Following the general trend of increased immigration to Europe during the 1990s, the number of immigrants from mainland China to Denmark also soared. A two-fold increase of mainland Chinese immigrants in 2001 compared to 1990 (dis-

counting descendants) is, however, a modest increase compared with certain countries in southern, central, and eastern Europe. It should be noted that an additional presence of irregular Chinese immigrants beyond the official statistics is unlikely. Irregular seasonal labour from the Baltic countries and Poland are found in Denmark in the construction and agricultural sectors, but because the comprehensive Danish welfare system depends completely on the possession of a personal identification number, irregular immigrants of more distant geographical origin may find it difficult to subsist in Danish society over longer periods of time (described in detail below).

FIGURE 1  
IMMIGRANTS FROM THE PRC  
AND THEIR DESCENDANTS IN DENMARK, 1990-2002



Source: Statistics Denmark (personal communication); [www.statistikbank.dk](http://www.statistikbank.dk).

Figure 1 depicts this relative upsurge in the number of PRC immigrants during the 1990s until the beginning of 2002. The surge has taken place despite the 1973 immigration embargo blocking entry to economic migrants to avoid repeating the mistakes of the “guest worker programme” of the 1960s, and to protect the Danish welfare system from exploitation by immigrants. International human rights obligations have, however, forced Denmark to grant entry to close family members, asylum seekers, and students, scholars, and specialized labour (e.g. Chinese cooks). The 1973 ban on immigration was, therefore, accompanied by several exceptions

constituting channels of entry. Moreover, I will argue below that immigration regulations may easily be circumvented by professional migration facilitators who rely on long established networks of Chinese from Zhejiang and Fujian in Denmark. Global Chinese migration could potentially target Denmark as a destination country, but as Figure 1 indicates, Denmark does not figure very high on the list of priorities of either migration facilitators or potential immigrants.

### THE MAIN CHANNEL OF ENTRY TO DENMARK FOR PRC IMMIGRANTS: FAMILY REUNIFICATION

In 2001, 11,000 foreigners were granted family reunification in Denmark, increased from 5,000 in 1993 (Danish Immigration Service, 2002b: 26, 40). This also applied to PRC nationals and an increasing number of spouses and children were reunited with their family members in Denmark. Data from The Danish Immigration Service (Udlændingestyrelsen) confirm that since 1994 some 1,500 Chinese were granted entry to Denmark by being related to Danish citizens (ethnic Danes or ethnic Chinese) or to Chinese refugees. Family reunification was the primary channel for PRC nationals gaining entry to Denmark.<sup>6</sup>

Family reunifications among Chinese nationals in Denmark are illustrated in Figure 2 by the demographic composition of Chinese immigrants and the growing number of children born to Chinese nationals in Denmark.<sup>7</sup> The largest age cohorts are young (25-34 years) and middle-aged adults (35-44 years) who establish families and have children, causing a significant rise during the 1990s in the number of children between the ages of 0 to 9 years. In 2002, there were more than four times as many descendants (454) in the age group 0-9 years (Figures 1 and 2) as in 1990 (100) (Denmark Statistics, 2001).

Prior to 1 July 2002, family reunification with spouses living outside Denmark was only granted to immigrants who had been in Denmark permanently for more than three years and to refugees and naturalized immigrants. Immigrants applying for spouses to join them in Denmark had to demonstrate that he or she was able to provide for the spouse both financially and in terms of accommodation. Naturalized Danes did not have to provide such evidence, making it considerably easier to act as guarantor for a spouse from, e.g. the PRC.

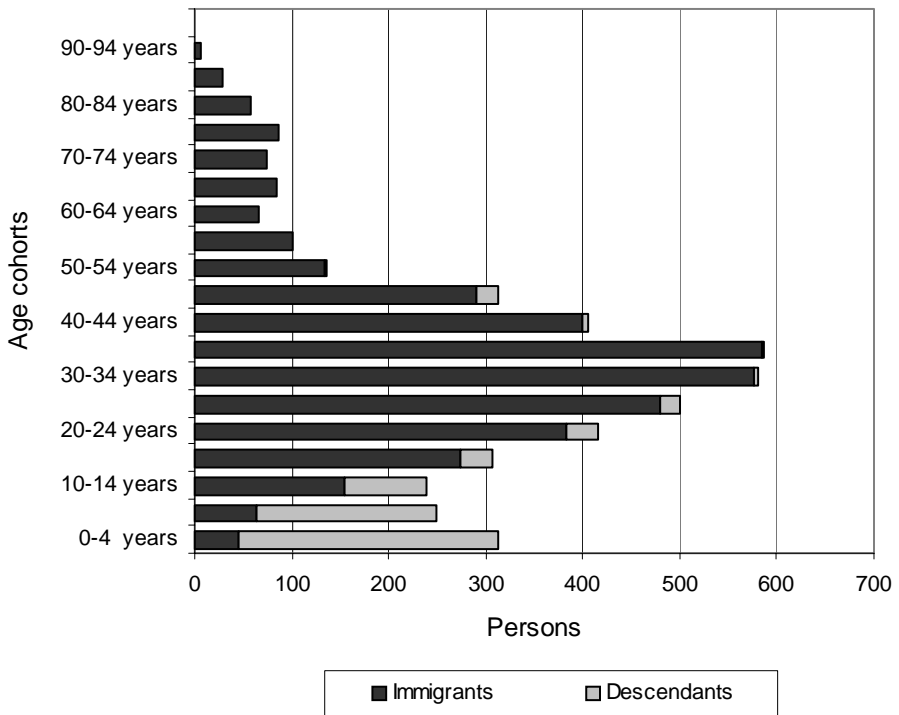
These regulations pertaining to family reunification may explain the increasing tendency among Chinese nationals during the late 1990s to become naturalized (Figure 3).<sup>8</sup> Acquiring Danish citizenship primarily allows PRC immigrants to travel without a visa to more countries and to vote in national elections. The rate of participation in local elections, for which PRC immigrants and naturalized Chinese immigrants are eligible if they have lived in the country for more than

three years, is low (Elklit et al., 2000: 60) and we may assume that becoming a Danish citizen is important for other reasons. One such reason could be the possibility of sponsoring a spouse from China without any financial obligations. For male Chinese immigrants a spouse can entail the opportunity to open a fast-food mom-and-pop shop or, in general, the opportunity to profit directly by concluding a so-called “fake marriage”. This was confirmed by the Chairman of the *Fuzhou tongxianghui* (Native Place Association of Fuzhou), among others, who explained that immigrants from Fujian have been arriving through family reunification channels or as tourists.<sup>9</sup> Arriving as tourists is usually the Chinese expression for coming to find somebody for a “fake marriage”.

For the sponsoring party, fraudulent marriages are very profitable with prices ranging as high as EUR 30,000-40,000 (personal communications), or the equivalent of the sums demanded by emigration facilitators in China to destinations in Europe (Batha, 2001; Pieke et al., forthcoming).

FIGURE 2

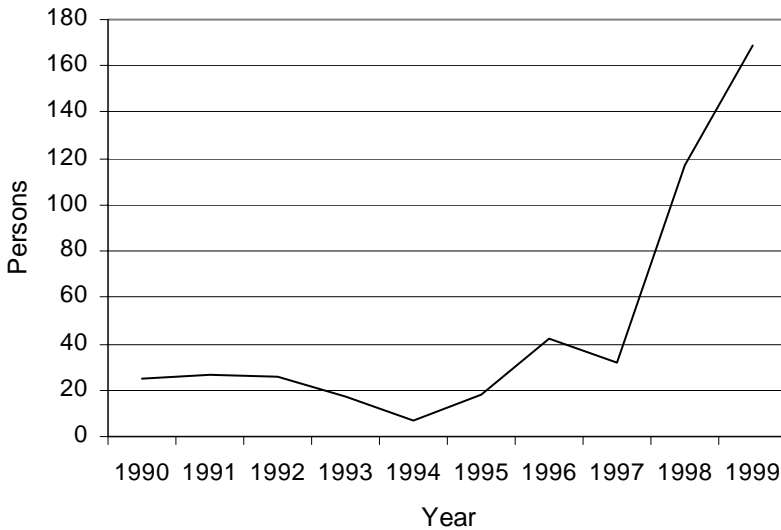
PRC IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS IN DENMARK, JANUARY 2002



Source: Statistics Denmark, [www.ds.dk](http://www.ds.dk).

FIGURE 3

ANNUAL NATURALIZATION OF PRC CHINESE IN DENMARK, 1989-2001



Source: Statistics Denmark, personal communication.

Unfortunately, statistical evidence of marriages between Chinese holding Danish citizenship and Chinese nationals from the PRC is not available from the Danish authorities. Nevertheless, fake marriages (*jia jiehun*) are a well known phenomenon among the Chinese in Denmark. However, in the summer of 2002, the Aliens Consolidation Act was amended and now also requires the naturalized Danish citizens and refugees to provide evidence of their ability to maintain the spouse financially and of their close relationship to Denmark. Moreover, immigrants are now eligible to apply for Danish citizenship only after nine years of permanent residence in Denmark.<sup>10</sup>

The gender diversification of Chinese immigrants suggests another explanation for the rise in the number of Chinese immigrants in Denmark through the channel of family reunification. A peculiar female overrepresentation for young adults between 25 and 34 years of age and middle-aged adults aged between 35 and 44 can be seen in Figure 4A and 4B. This propensity already started in 1994 when, for the first time, the number of Chinese female immigrants exceeded that of their male counterparts (Thunø, 1997: 284). In a European context this trend is unusual, since Chinese men tended to emigrate first to be joined at a later stage by their spouses, or returned to China to find a spouse to bring back to Europe. This trend seems to have gradually been reversed as urban Chinese join the traditional rural immigrants, making gender representation among Chinese migrants more equal (Thunø and Pieke, forthcoming).

FIGURE 4a  
CHINESE MALE IMMIGRANTS AND DESCENDANTS, JANUARY 2002

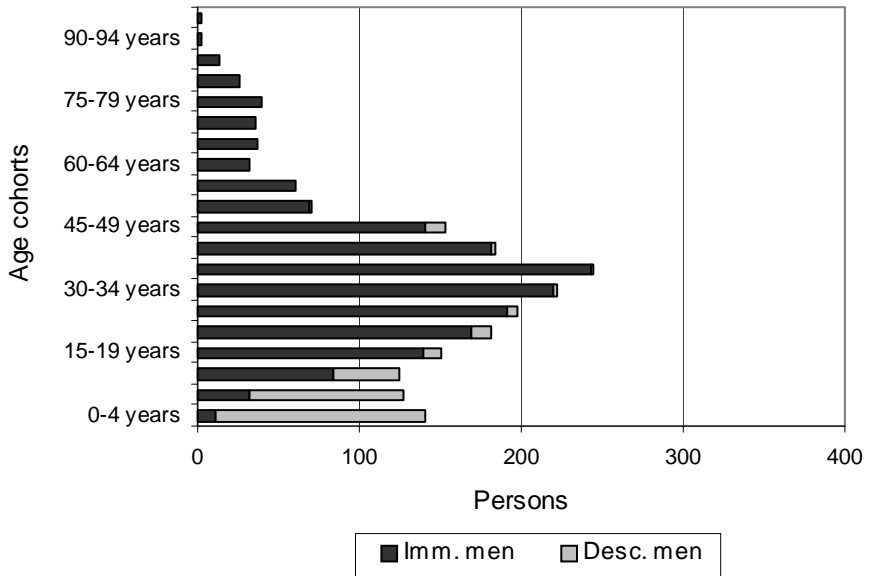
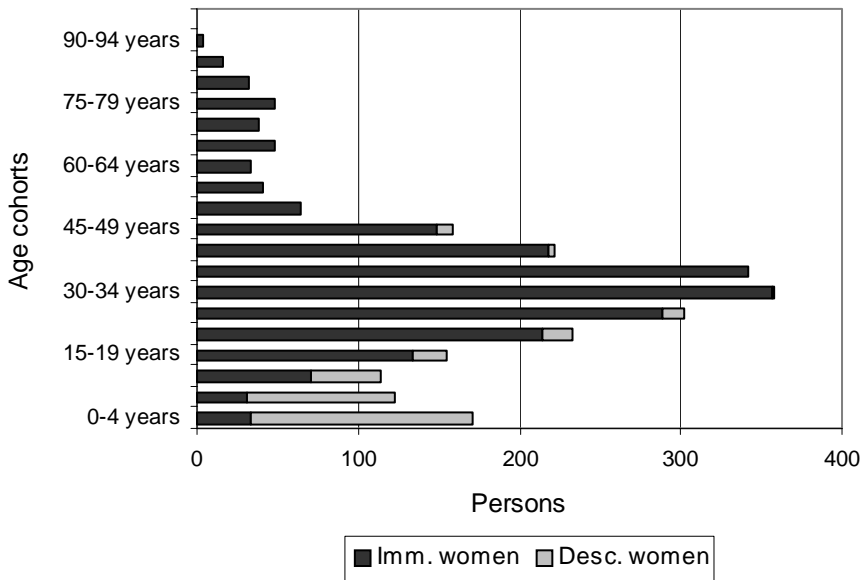


FIGURE 4b  
CHINESE FEMALE IMMIGRANTS AND DESCENDANTS, JANUARY 2002



Source: Statistics Denmark, personal communication, [www.statistikbank.dk](http://www.statistikbank.dk).

In Denmark, the female dominance may also be explained by many cross-cultural marriages between Danish men and Chinese women, rather than between Chinese men and Danish women. Official statistics on these marriages are unreliable, but a membership list for an association for Chinese academics in Copenhagen called “*Huayi*” (Chinese friendship association) is indicative of this situation. Of the 26 member families, nine are Danish-Chinese and in all the man is Danish and the woman is Chinese. There are no couples on the list where the women are Danish and the men Chinese.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, several cross-cultural marriages between Danish male students or expats in China and Chinese women are known to have been contracted as a result of increasing educational and financial cooperation between Denmark and the PRC.

Gender, age, and ethnicity seem to be factors determining the choice of partners for both Danes and Chinese with a direct bearing on the demographic profile of the Chinese immigrants in Denmark. Although inter-cultural marriages do not constitute a majority of family reunifications in Denmark, the case of female overrepresentation because of marriage to Danish men is an aspect of immigration to Europe that is frequently ignored in the dominant discourse on immigration from developing countries to Europe. Immigrants are often represented as essentially different from Europeans and as unwilling to interact with European civil societies. A closer gender and age analysis of the immigrant data reveals that the increase of immigrants, in this particular case from the PRC, is primarily because of family reunification of immigrants in the age cohorts of young and middle-aged adults, but *also* to children born in Denmark and young Chinese women marrying Danes.

The life experience in Denmark of both the children born in the country and the young Chinese women living with their Danish husbands will be essentially different from the majority of immigrants who were reunited with their families from the Zhejiang and Fujian provinces. Even newly arrived Chinese from Zhejiang with a history of residence in Denmark for almost a century and with well established networks based on family relations experience a different kind of integration into Danish society than the immigrants from Fujian. The Fujian immigrants share a history of immigration to Denmark going back only to the 1960s, when they were invited to Copenhagen to participate in the catering trade by other Chinese immigrants (Thunø, 1997). Despite these rather weak links to Denmark, the increasing number of members in the Native Place Association of Fuzhou testifies that PRC immigration from this particular province was dominant in the 1990s (membership of the Native Place Association of Fuzhou had increased from 60 families in 1993 to 100 families in 1999, and the Chairman of the association estimated that a total of 1,500 persons from Fujian (including children) were living in Denmark by the late 1990s).<sup>12</sup> The sharp increase in arrivals of Fujian immigrants has changed the Chinese ethnic labour market situation, especially

with the new Fujianese immigrants tending to find work outside the larger cities, implying yet another type of integration into Danish society.

These various types of immigrants suggest that their immigration from the PRC to Denmark is determined by other factors and that their presence and integration into Danish society are contingent on various aspects related to gender, age, class, and ethnicity. Having arrived in the 1990s, they are part of the global Chinese immigration flows portrayed in academic migration literature as soaring and transnational in nature, and are driven by the search for employment or profitable business operations (Ong and Nonini, 1997; Pieke et al., forthcoming). The demographic profile of the PRC Chinese in Denmark in relation to family reunifications reflects a smaller increase during the 1990s compared to other European countries, and a more permanent settlement pattern, where immigrants may be joined by their spouses only after several years of residence in Denmark, marriages contracted with Danes, and many families with children.

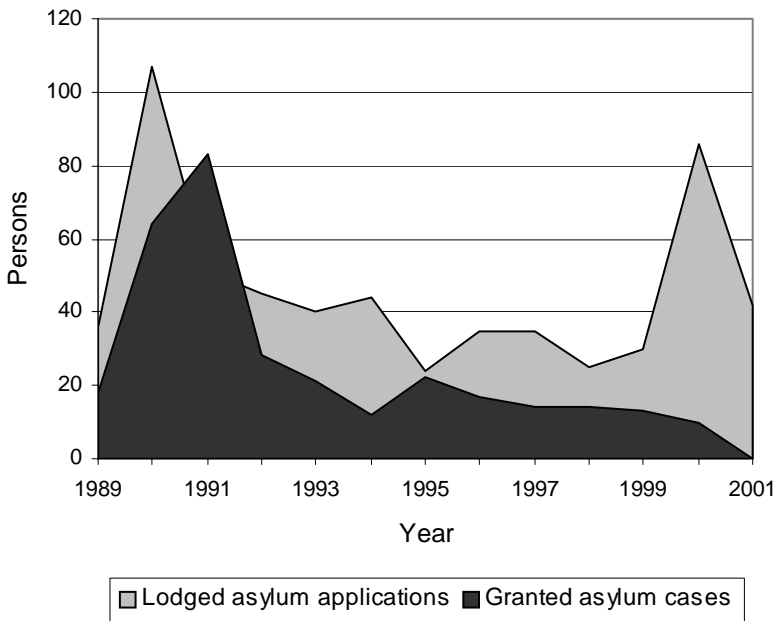
#### OF INTEREST TO ONLY A FEW: POLITICAL ASYLUM SEEKERS AND IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN DENMARK

On 4 June 1989, the Tiananmen incident in Beijing and in other Chinese cities in relation to the democracy demonstrations legitimized some of the first asylum claims lodged by PRC Chinese in Europe and other states. Between 1989 and 1994, following the tragic confrontation between students, workers, and soldiers in the PRC, more than 300 asylum applications from mainland Chinese were received in Denmark<sup>13</sup> of which 70 per cent were accepted by the Danish authorities (Figure 5). Until 1999, asylum applications were filed by PRC Chinese on the grounds of issues such as the Chinese one-child policy. This policy was deemed to constitute a human rights violation in the United States, but not in Denmark. As a result, in the period from 1995 to 1999, the number of PRC applicants granted political asylum dropped to 54 per cent of all refugee applications from PRC Chinese. In 2000, there was an upsurge in the number of refugee applications when 120 asylum claims were presented on the grounds of being persecuted for being Falungong practitioners or political activists in democratic party cells in the PRC, of which 86 were accepted.<sup>14</sup> It remains to be seen how the Danish authorities assess such claims based on human rights violations in the PRC as they are increasingly cited as grounds for asylum applications from PRC citizens in other parts of the world.

In 2002, the gross number of political asylum applications from PRC citizens diminished significantly in Denmark to only 50 cases, which is among the lowest number in a decade (UNHCR, 2003a: 11). Compared with the trend in asylum applications of PRC Chinese submitted in industrialized countries, this reduction

is atypical because asylum applications submitted by PRC nationals increased in 2002 with 26,000 applications, or 25 per cent compared with 2001. This places PRC nationals as number four in terms of the number of lodged asylum applications in the world (UNHCR, 2003b: 13). In Europe<sup>15</sup>, the PRC is the seventh largest application nationality with 12,000 lodged applications (UNHCR, 2003a: 11).

FIGURE 5  
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS FROM CITIZENS OF THE PRC  
RECEIVED AND GRANTED IN DENMARK, 1989-2001



Source: Danish Immigration Service, [www.udlst.dk](http://www.udlst.dk).

The decline in the numbers of asylum seekers from the PRC in Denmark suggests that the incidence of asylum claims is influenced by international media reporting on restrictions in national refugee policies, especially if one considers the concentrated media coverage of the amendments to the Danish Aliens Consolidation Act in the summer of 2002.<sup>16</sup> The expected repercussions from the recent Danish legislation on refugees seem to be already diverting asylum applications from Denmark to less restrictive countries such as Sweden, where the number of refugee claims increased during 2002 (UNHCR, 2003a: 2).

If the recent restrictions in the Danish refugee policy are causing the decline in refugee applications from PRC nationals, then previous asylum policies under

which 316, or 50 per cent, of all PRC Chinese applicants were granted refugee status in the period from 1989 to 2002 (representing 57 per cent of all nationalities and making it the highest acceptance rate in Europe for 1996-2001) should have made Denmark a very attractive destination for PRC Chinese asylum seekers indeed. (Danish Immigration Service, 2002b: 15; Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002), especially when compared to such popular destinations for asylum seekers as the United Kingdom, which accepted only 10 per cent of all asylum applications in the same period (Migration Watch UK, 2002).

Considering Denmark's high acceptance rate compared to other European countries, the figure of 600 PRC Chinese applying for refugee status since 1989 is actually not very high (Danish Immigration Service, 2002b).<sup>17</sup> The Chairman of the Native Place Association of Fuzhou was of the opinion that Chinese, especially Fujianese, applied for political asylum in Denmark only because they actually arrived in Denmark by mistake. Somewhere along the route to the United States migration facilitators seemed to have failed and abandoned their "cargo", leaving immigrants to seek asylum in Denmark.<sup>18</sup> The Danish police do not believe that asylum seekers who fail to obtain refugee status in Denmark remain in the country clandestinely.

The Danish national police expect the 96 Chinese whose asylum applications were rejected between 1999 and 2001 to have left Denmark (a further 35 Chinese were escorted out of the country or accompanied to China during the same period).<sup>19</sup> However, this view is contradicted by recent statements from lawyers whose clients had their claim for asylum or for family reunification rejected but are still living in Denmark as taxpaying migrants with ID-cards and access to the national welfare programme. Regularization is possible despite the rejection of family reunification or asylum status because the Danish authorities do not coordinate their information (Quist, 2002). Hence, Chinese whose claim for asylum or family reunification status has been rejected remain in Denmark and even become regularized without the knowledge of the Danish authorities. Unfortunately, no evidence regarding these regularization methods is available specifically for PRC Chinese.

Similarly, the number of irregular migrants in Denmark is also believed to be limited and something primarily affecting southern Europe rather than Scandinavian countries where there were stricter controls by labour unions and local authorities. Since the early 1990s, however, this perception has been challenged in reports by Danish labour unions in the construction and agricultural sectors, who find an increasing number of irregular labour migrants, primarily from Poland and the Baltic countries, working on tourist visas (Nielsen, 1999; *Politiken*, 2001).

In 1999, irregular labour in the Danish construction industry was thought to correspond to approximately 1,500 regular positions, further increasing by 10 per cent

in 2002 despite new law enforcement efforts, including harsher employer sanctions, introduced in 2000 (Bygge-, Anlægs- og Trækartellet, 2002). Although these figures are modest compared to undocumented labour in southern Europe, criticism has been directed from the Public Prosecutor's office at the Danish police who were found to be ill informed regarding new legal provisions on irregular labour migrants (Birkemose, 2002). Labour unions also repeatedly complained that the police neglected its duties regarding workers without work permits (*Politiken*, 2002).

Despite this apparent failure to control irregular labour in Denmark, there is no reference to Chinese in any of the reports on undocumented seasonal employment in the agricultural sector, nor have they been observed on construction sites. In fact, Chinese with permanent resident status in Denmark are rarely active in these two sectors making it even more unlikely to find irregular labour from the PRC in green houses and on construction sites. If PRC citizens work as undocumented labourers in Denmark, they would probably be employed in Chinese restaurants owned by ethnic Chinese. A recent large-scale investigation of 1,800 members in the Union for Hotel and Restaurants (HORESTA) was conducted and revealed that tax evasion was the primary problem in the catering sector (Domino, 2002).

In Chinese restaurants, information about employees is habitually withheld even from academics, and if any answers are forthcoming, those offering them are "just helping out" or "just leaving" (personal observations). The indulgent attitude of the police toward undocumented labour in other sectors suggests that Chinese labour may find work in Denmark on a three-month tourist visa, as rejected asylum seekers, rejected family reunion applicants, or as undocumented labour without major difficulties. It is improbable that undocumented PRC Chinese make up a major share of the employees in Chinese restaurants, since, in contrast to the irregular Baltic seasonal workers, their aspiration is to become regularized. However, in contrast to the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, Spain, Sweden, and Italy, Denmark never implemented any regularization programmes for undocumented labour immigrants (Boeri et al., 2002: 36-37; Castles and Miller, 1993).

The fact that Denmark has only a limited number of Chinese immigrants despite some of the highest asylum acceptance rates in Europe, appears to contradict popular claims of asylum shopping according to the most generous asylum regimes, and implies that the human rights regime is only one among other aspects influencing migrants' choices of destination. Likewise, the modest number of asylum claimants in Denmark compared to southern Europe implies that the Danish welfare provisions available to political refugees, which both the Social Democratic Party and the present liberal government perceive as a strain on the Danish economy,

do not seem to be one of the major determinants in the decision to claim asylum. The low number of undocumented Chinese workers in the catering industry, in spite of the ease with which immigrants seem to find employment without a work permit, also suggests that the presence of asylum seekers and irregular migration as such depend on other factors, such as, e.g. the ethnic labour market. This is also supported by the fact that only few Chinese arrive as contract labour migrants to Denmark.

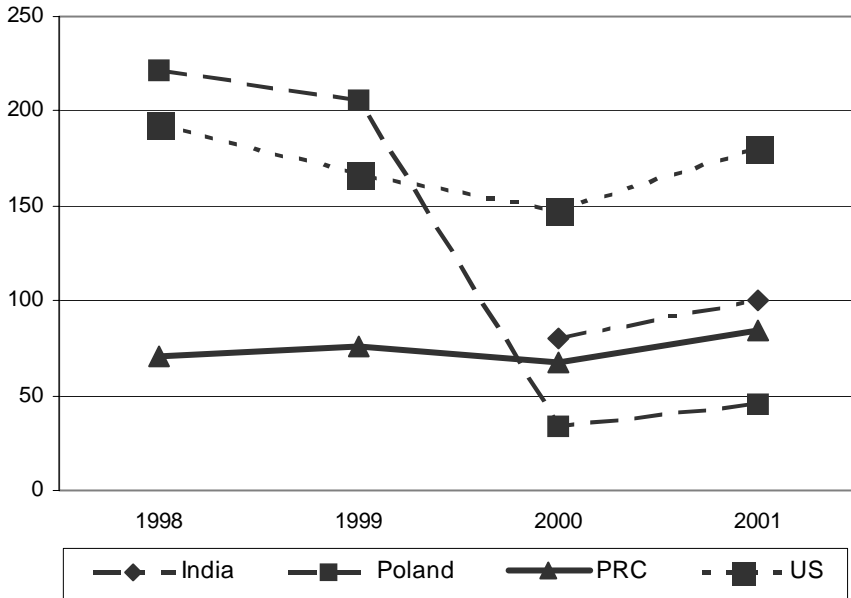
## CHINESE LABOUR MIGRATION TO DENMARK

Despite the halt to immigration implemented in 1973, Denmark continued to issue residence and work permits to foreign workers with special skills not available in Denmark. These special skills included, among other professions, teachers, researchers, consultants, embassy personnel, musicians, and also Chinese cooks and medical doctors. According to the recent legislation on immigration, foreign workers with particular skills may obtain residence and work permits for three years within 30 days, if they have an offer of employment in accordance with the “green card” list of IT-experts, medical doctors, nurses, researchers in the natural sciences and technology, and engineers of various kinds (Danish Immigration Service, 2002a).

With the implementation of recent Danish legislation more Chinese specialists may be expected to obtain residence and work permits in Denmark, although Chinese nationals have constituted one of the largest nationality groups of specialists in Denmark since 1998, along with American, Polish, and, more recently, Indian professionals (Figure 6). Since the early 1970s, a significant share of work permits were issued to Chinese cooks who were deemed irreplaceable by domestic cooks unversed in Chinese gastronomy.

Since 1998, less than one hundred residence permits were issued to Chinese specialists annually, which may point to limited demand for ethnic Chinese labour in the catering niche. In fact, since the late 1990s, it is either the high unemployment among ethnic Chinese cooks in Denmark which seems to have affected the decisions of Danish authorities responsible for these special work permits, or resident Chinese have submitted fewer applications for Chinese labour immigrants. Although fewer permits were issued to Chinese cooks, it seems that in recent years more work permits have been issued for highly skilled Chinese technicians, engineers, and medical doctors instead. This indicates that the Chinese ethnic catering economy has become saturated and is not being replaced by an alternative ethnic economy with the same needs, but rather for a few highly skilled Chinese in medicine or engineering.

FIGURE 6  
ASYLUM APPLICATIONS FROM CITIZENS OF THE PRC  
RECEIVED AND GRANTED IN DENMARK, 1989-2001

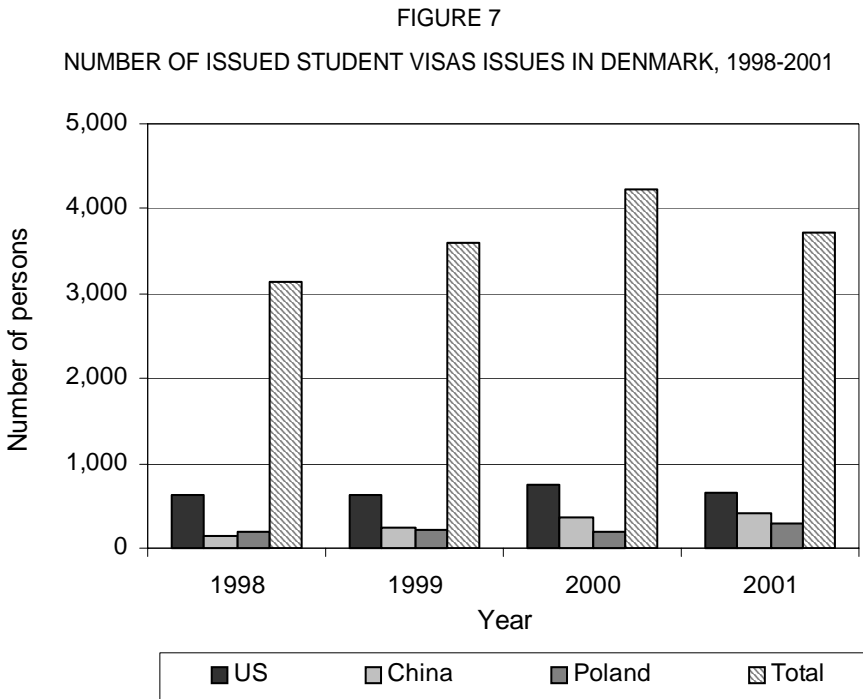


Source: Danish Immigration Service, 2002a: 25, [www.udlst.dk](http://www.udlst.dk).

### ENTERING EUROPE ON SCHOLARSHIPS: IMMIGRATION OF HIGHLY SKILLED CHINESE TO DENMARK

Although Denmark does not have a long history of receiving or inviting Chinese students to study in the country compared to France and Germany in the 1920s, or the Chinese students in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, a few Chinese students received tertiary training in agriculture at higher educational institutions in Denmark prior to 1949 (Thunø, 1997). When the PRC began to send Chinese students abroad as part of the economic reforms initiated after 1978, Chinese students and scholars were primarily attracted by scholarships and foreign student visa programmes offered by the United States, Canada, and Australia. These deliberate policies to attract high-skilled labour from developing countries through higher education made the United States the largest receiver of foreign students (32%) from countries all over the world, but especially from the PRC (OECD, 2000: 180). In contrast, western European countries started only recently to focus on internationalizing education to attract foreign students from outside the EU. Thus, they receive only a fraction of the students from the PRC (OECD, 2000: 177-179; Mahroum, 2001: 33).

Denmark is no exception to this European trend with an increase of foreign students in tertiary education from 2,284 (58% were from EU countries) in 1995 and 1996 to 3,661 (59% were from EU countries) in 1999 and 2000 (Danish Ministry of Education, n.d.). PRC students constitute the largest share of students from non-OECD countries in Denmark (Figure 7).



Source: Danish Immigration Service, 2002a: 30, [www.udlst.dk](http://www.udlst.dk).

PRC students have arrived regularly in Denmark since the commencement of three regular annual scholarship programmes for Chinese students in 1973. In 1978, the Chinese wished to increase this number and 20 scholarships for Chinese students per year, including unnumbered postgraduate scholarships, were provided by the Danish state. Finally, in 1981, an educational exchange agreement was signed between the two countries, increasing the number of Chinese students to Denmark each year (Thunø, 2002). Hence, Chinese students in Denmark and Danish students in China became part of an educational exchange programme intending to establish friendly relations and enabling students to go abroad. To attract professionals by providing study possibilities in Denmark was not the main reason for these scholarship programmes.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, the Danish Government has on occasion denounced the idea of attracting high-skilled labour via the educational system by pointing to the unfairness of causing “brain drain” in developing countries. This might be so, but the main reason, in fact, seems to be the difficulty of sustaining one of the Danish welfare state’s cornerstones: tuition and free education for all at all levels. Free education in contrast to expensive American and increasingly also European university education would potentially attract numerous foreign students, which the Danish state is reluctant to finance. Since the general opinion in Denmark is still opposed to a commercialization of education, most universities reject tuition fees for students (*Universitetsavisen*, 2001).

Only in the 1990s when specific university programmes, such as engineering, failed to attract a sufficient number of Danish students did Denmark start to demand sufficient financial means from, e.g. engineering students from the Baltic and central and Eastern European countries to continue to study for their M.A. in Denmark. By offering apprenticeships in Danish companies, it was anticipated that they would settle in Denmark to balance the lack of engineers (Jongsma, 1999). In 2001, three universities offering engineering degrees were granted permission to invite a total of 100 engineering students to Denmark on a combined state and commercial scholarships.<sup>21</sup> Other universities and educational institutions are now also striving to attract students, since government funding was recently allocated primarily according to the number of exams taken by students. As a result, Danish educational institutions are adjusting themselves to new financial principles and are trying to attract more independent foreign students by increasing the number of courses taught in English (Eiby, 2002). As a result, the number of Chinese students enrolling at engineering colleges has increased considerably over recent years in response to these shifts in educational policies.<sup>22</sup>

PRC embassy personnel dispatched from the Chinese Ministry of Education estimated that in the last two decades a few thousand Chinese obtained a higher educational degree or various kinds of academic training in Denmark. Of this group approximately 300 live permanently in Denmark today. Some arrived on scholarships or were self-paying students and remained in Denmark after graduation, while others arrived as spouses (usually Chinese women) some of whom have also graduated from Danish tertiary education institutions (Thunø, 2002).

A survey and interviews conducted between October 2001 and March 2002 with 15 PRC Chinese (11 men and four women) who earned their Ph.D. degrees from Danish universities as scholarship students of the Danish state or as self-paying students indicate their reasons for extending their stay in Denmark. They are all from major cities in northern China and most are married with one or more children. Chinese men are all married to women from China while three of the four Chinese women in the survey are married to non-Chinese men. Parents and sib-

lings of informants typically live in China. Most of the informants studied engineering, but two women graduated in the humanities or social sciences. Today, they all work in various private Danish and international companies or at the universities where they studied. Except one, they all state that they have jobs according to their qualifications and earn salaries according to Danish national standards (Thunø, 2002).

Apart from economic reasons, one of the findings in the pilot study was that the family, rather than political causes, determined the ex-Chinese students' choice to settle in Denmark. Work also seems to play an important role in their decision. First of all, the fact that their Danish education was immediately acknowledged by Danish society appears to have influenced their decision to stay rather than return to the PRC. The bleak outlook for their children and the educational system in China also played an important part in their choice to settle in Denmark. Studies conducted with Chinese intellectuals in the United States also confirm the significance of such motives (Zweig and Chen, 1995: 46-50; Thunø, 2002).

The 15 highly skilled and integrated Chinese in the pilot study are representative of a tacit aspiration of the Danish state. Immigrants such as these PRC Chinese with a higher education in engineering from a Danish institution and an aptitude to integrate on the terms of the Danish state are the officially favoured type of immigrants. Until recently this kind of student immigrant was easily controlled under scholarship programmes and, in some cases when the graduates decided to stay in Denmark, a close to ideal settlement result was achieved, but this seems set to change in the near future. According to a proposal by the European Commission, the EU's Bologna Declaration (1999) on the mutual exchange of EU students is to be given an extra dimension by admitting 4,200 sponsored students (2004-2008) from developing countries to EU universities as a parallel to the US Fulbright programme.<sup>23</sup> EU programmes and funding for such students, along with the globalization and commercialization of education in general and increasing living standards in the PRC, will undoubtedly induce growing number of PRC students to enrol in European educational institutions.

In the United Kingdom, the globalization and commercialization of education has already started with schools and colleges admitting Chinese students to secondary schools and undergraduate or preparatory courses. According to a Chinese official newspaper, in 2002, 20,000 or half of all the Chinese students in Britain, are enrolled in British secondary schools. The paper states that it is really not that difficult to apply, they just need to choose a school; send for the application forms; send a report card, curriculum vitae, and other relevant documents; wait for the approval of the school, and then apply for a visa (Wang, 2002). In Denmark even institutions for life-long adult learning where no academic degrees can be obtained are advertising in the PRC to attract Chinese students who are now arriving in such numbers that the schools cannot even admit them all (Olsen, 2002).

As European education systems are undergoing radical changes based on liberal economic principles and commercialization of education, educational institutions are turning their attention toward the growing number of affluent families in the PRC. The previous form of immigration of Chinese scholarship students and scholars under strict control to return to the PRC is no longer the only flow of student migration. European institutions will be able to recruit even more intensely than at present given the expected income increases in the PRC and the limited number of high-quality higher educational institutions in China. For Chinese students or immigrants a student visa is fairly easy to obtain and secures a much safer and cheaper way into Europe, although intermediaries in the PRC also make a high profit on introducing students to European institutions (Wang, 2002). Student migration has already become another channel of entering the European Union alongside the channels of entry mentioned above, but, until recently, Denmark has only received a minor share of all student migrants and even less decided to settle as immigrants in Denmark.

#### REASONS FOR CIRCUMVENTING DENMARK: THE UNATTRACTIVE ETHNIC AND NATIVE LABOUR MARKETS IN DENMARK

It has been shown above that despite the Danish 1973 immigration embargo, immigrants from the PRC continued to arrive through various channels and their numbers doubled during the 1990s. Family reunification schemes allowed a majority of PRC Chinese to enter Denmark and to gain permission to settle, while other channels also used by PRC immigrants include asylum claims, temporary skilled professional programmes, student and researcher visa programmes, and undocumented entry. Various channels may be used singly and in combination to enter Europe and Denmark, but today only a few thousand PRC Chinese are living in Denmark.

The limited entry by PRC Chinese in a time of increasing emigration from the PRC to Europe cannot be explained solely by historical Chinese immigration patterns converging in central and southern Europe. The Chinese were among the first groups of third-world immigrants in Denmark and their one-century-old migration history is similar to the rest of Europe, albeit on a smaller scale. Global Chinese migration, however, no longer follows the patterns of historical Chinese immigration, nor the ensuing networks. While family reunion is a continuing option for legal entry into Europe, this entry channel is increasingly accompanied by undocumented entry.

Chinese emigrants from areas in the PRC with weaker linkages to Europe through historical migration patterns such as the Fujianese are more inclined toward former labour-exporting countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal) or countries experiencing total

restructuring in central and eastern Europe (e.g. Hungary, Czech Republic) (Pieke et al., forthcoming). As these countries develop and expand their economic growth and catch up with the economic development of previous labour-importing countries in Europe, both their governments and established transnational companies contribute directly or indirectly to immigration from certain countries such as the PRC. Irregular ethnic labour markets, such as garment manufacturing in Italy and Spain, or an “underground” ethnic economy based on wholesale businesses in Hungary, are tolerated by the authorities who, moreover, on various occasions during the 1990s also introduced lenient migration regulations toward PRC Chinese (see Nyíri, Ceccagno, and Nieto, this issue). In addition, weak labour unions and amnesties regularizing undocumented labour migrants have turned these countries into attractive destinations for Chinese immigrants. The Danish economy is also part of the integrated world economy, but the Danish state still seems to be in control of the national economy and able to regulate the labour market. While economic globalization is restructuring parts of the labour market, major labour unions continue to be powerful in most labour market segments. Separate ethnic economies, as may be observed in Italy or Hungary, would not be tolerated on a permanent basis by the Danish authorities or the labour unions. Consequently, immigrants from third-world countries in Denmark have not established themselves in ethnic niche economies as seen in the United States (Portes and Manning, 1986), but have developed ethnic niche economies in the catering or retail sectors that are integrated in the national economy.

While some immigrants are able to enter the ethnic niche economies, other immigrants encounter difficulties entering the Danish labour market. In fact, only 53 per cent of all third-world immigrants (including refugees) between 16 and 66 years old were registered on the Danish labour market in 2001, and 13 per cent of this registered potential workforce were officially unemployed, compared to 4 per cent of the national labour force. This situation has been explained by reference to generally low educational levels among immigrants (12% of men and 9% of women obtained a Danish professional education degree), a preference for women to work at home, many traumatized refugees among the immigrants, and “racial” barriers on the national labour market (Boeri et al., 2002: 105-123; Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration, 2002: 130; Viby Mogensen and Matthiesen, 2000). Compared to other OECD countries the labour market participation rate by immigrants in Denmark is among the lowest, and their unemployment rates among the highest – even in the late 1990s with the economic upturn (OECD, 2001: 55-56; 156-157).

Available data illustrate the participation of Chinese immigrants on the Danish labour market. It reveals a low labour market participation by Chinese immigrants in 1999, similar to, although slightly better than, third-world immigrants generally in Denmark. Only 62 per cent (924 persons) of the 2,450 PRC immigrants be-

tween 16 to 66 years of age (excluding students) were registered as part of the active labour force, and of this group 9 per cent (134 persons) were officially unemployed. Only a fraction of the 263 Chinese immigrants have their own business, while as many as 1,090 persons are employees (Statistics Denmark, n.d.)

That information is in contrast to the self-image of the Chinese immigrants in Denmark, emphasizing high working morale, self-ownership, and no official unemployment (Thunø, 1997). Data on the distribution of the active Chinese workforce in 1993, 1997, and 2001 reflect a continued, albeit declining, concentration of Chinese immigrants working in the hotel and restaurant sector, combined with limited advancement in participation rates in other sectors. This situation suggests that over the last decade of economic growth, Chinese immigrants have more than doubled, but are still primarily employed in the ethnic catering niche. Entering the new millennium, the catering niche seems to have become saturated and immigrants are either unemployed or they have increased their participation rate in the business and services sectors.

In 1993, 44 per cent (294 persons) of the entire active Chinese labour force worked in the catering sector. In 2001, this share dropped to 36 per cent, but in terms of active persons, the catering niche expanded to hold almost twice as many immigrants (561). A thorough investigation conducted during the first half of 2002 among 95 per cent of all Chinese restaurants and fast-food outlets in the Copenhagen area confirms that the new Chinese workforce in the catering sector is employed either as non-tax paying workers, since many restaurant owners were disinclined to talk about their employees, or they have moved out of the capital to provincial towns to establish their own businesses. Only a few PRC immigrants who arrived during the 1990s were found to have their own fast-food shop in the capital area.

Since Chinese restaurants cannot expand their market shares indefinitely, some Chinese immigrants have made considerable progress in two other labour market segments: manufacturing and business service. There are 175 Chinese immigrants now employed in manufacturing (wood and paper) and 231 in companies providing business services (travel companies, consultancies) compared to, respectively, 42 and 79 in 1993. However, since 1993, in relation to the entire Chinese labour force, these sectors have only increased by 5 per cent for manufacturing and 3 per cent for business services. In conclusion, the Chinese do not seem to have developed an alternative ethnic niche during the 1990s, nor do they seem to have entered the Danish labour market in any significant way.

During a decade of economic growth in Denmark, and despite their increasing numbers, PRC Chinese, similar to other immigrants, have been able to find work as employees within a few Danish labour market sectors, but more than 100 are still officially unemployed (mostly cooks) and a large proportion are still completely outside the labour force and have never officially worked (38%). Although

many Chinese immigrants officially unemployed may actually be working or “helping out” in Chinese restaurants, e.g. Chinese women who work without being registered as such, the Chinese appear to face similar difficulties entering the Danish labour market as other immigrants. The high demand for vocational and language skills are difficult for many rural Chinese immigrants to meet, and many unskilled, low-wage service jobs found in other countries are simply not available in Denmark. Chinese immigrants are thus left to work in Danish provincial towns without any supporting ethnic communities, or they continue as unregistered and exploited labour in the restaurants owned by other Chinese immigrants.

Although migration to Denmark is possible, the bleak labour market situation in Denmark seems to be the major reason why Chinese immigrants still prefer other destinations in southern and central Europe. Immigrants entering Europe via the family reunion channel prefer to head for countries where they may expect to find employment and high incomes. Many would-be emigrants in Zhejiang province can count on a wide web of family relations in countries all over Europe, and seem to prefer other destinations that offer better prospects for employment than Denmark. Even Chinese asylum immigrants whose chance of success would be better in Denmark than in other European countries avoid Denmark and prefer to apply in countries such as France and the United Kingdom. One explanation might be that in contrast to Denmark, where asylum seekers are kept idle in detention centres, they were permitted to work during the processing of their applications. Finally, immigrants coming to Denmark with the help of immigration facilitators are thought to come by mistake, suggesting that migration brokers also see no potential labour market for Chinese immigrants in Denmark, which is needed to guarantee them a return on their investments.

For more than a century, the flows of immigrants from the PRC to Europe have been directed primarily towards western Europe, including Denmark, but during the last decade or two Chinese immigrants have increasingly headed for new European destinations. In the 1980s and 1990s, new networks of emigrants from Fujian province and north-eastern China have been reaching Europe, as well as students from China’s urban centres. They have primarily gone to southern, central, and Eastern Europe as well as to Paris and London, where employment is available as a by-product of a gradual division of the national labour markets into a native and immigrant segment, corresponding to high-skill jobs and secondary jobs with low pay under precarious conditions (Dickens and Lang, 1988; Piore, 1979). Such dual labour markets are found, in particular, in major cities with a high demand for low-wage service jobs and in countries with labour-intensive production methods, such as the garment industry in Italy and France.

In Denmark, labour intensive jobs are relocated to low-wage countries such as Poland and the Baltic countries, and the development of a dual labour market with

immigrants working in the service or construction sectors is still largely inhibited by labour unions and labour legislation. As a consequence, new PRC immigrants with low education and limited social capital will encounter difficulties finding employment and tend to bypass Denmark in their search for work. PRC Chinese with a higher education obtained in Denmark and who remained in Denmark after graduation are also relatively few, but the reason for this development is rather to be found in Denmark's exchange with the PRC in terms of scholarships for Chinese students and scholars, as well as linguistic barriers (OECD, 2001: 110-112).

## CONCLUSION

During the 1980s and 1990s, the figure for third-world immigrants from Asia living in EU countries, such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and even Denmark grew significantly. Europe is hardly a strong fortress against immigration considering the growth in PRC Chinese immigrants who recently appeared in many European countries and who had arrived through a variety of channels compared to the early 1980s (OECD, 2001: 63-68). Traditional flows under the heading of family reunification to Europe of PRC Chinese migrants fleeing political persecution, unemployment, or displacement because of war and conflict in East Asia, have lately been joined by new types of immigrants who have been displaced by political transformations in the PRC after 1978. Economic growth in a context of a global market economy has created high unemployment both among rural workers in Zhejiang and Fujian provinces, and among urban workers in north-eastern China. Both rural and urban Chinese constitute a mobile workforce actively searching for means of improving their income and to acquire capital wherever earnings are high. This new type of Chinese immigrant does not seem to be looking for shelter in a country with generous welfare benefits such as Denmark, but rather to secure employment and high income within a short time.

The number of Chinese immigrants in Denmark has more than doubled since 1990; the total rise is relatively modest compared to countries in southern and central and eastern Europe. Most entry channels to Denmark are available to Chinese immigrants, but they arrive primarily for the purpose of family reunification. Undocumented entry by PRC Chinese seems confined to a few persons who arrive in Denmark unintentionally on their way to other destinations, such as the United States and Canada. Finally, some Chinese immigrants initially arrived as skilled labour (primarily cooks or doctors) or as students and decided to stay in the country, but they are only a few hundred and a small fraction of the total number of immigrants.

Contrary to the official discourse in Denmark, immigration does not particularly target this country, nor do immigrants arrive to exploit the Danish welfare pro-

gramme. Immigration from certain countries (Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan) has increased in response to high recognition rates of refugees and family reunifications. Since the Danish labour market has been unable to absorb many immigrants, the Danish welfare system has come under growing pressure. However, the same welfare state concept secures high minimum wages and the protection of the weakest unskilled workers through labour legislation and strong labour unions. As a result, a segmentation of the labour market into a highly skilled and an unskilled labour market with low wages for immigrants has yet to develop.

In many OECD countries the growing recourse to outsourcing as a consequence of economic globalization has increased the hiring of regular and irregular immigrants, as demonstrated by PRC Chinese working in New York or southern Europe. Companies active in sectors such as textiles/garments and services can cut their welfare costs and evade labour legislation by outsourcing to subcontractors who hire workers on self-defined conditions. In that way, liberal economic globalization displaces labour in the PRC and creates job opportunities in industrialized countries, and generates transportation, communication and cultural links which in turn increase mobility (Portes and Walton, 1981; Sassen, 1988).

With the increasing pace and scope of communication, Chinese immigrants are well informed about the economic opportunities available in Europe. Since the Danish labour market is limited both in terms of low-wage service jobs and outsourced labour-intensive production, few opportunities apart from a saturated ethnic catering niche have developed in Denmark, thus lowering its attraction for potential emigrants from the PRC or Chinese immigrants already in Europe. Although migration flows are also influenced by other factors, such as ethnic networks, the small increase of PRC immigrants in Denmark compared with other European countries shows that the direction of Chinese immigration flows of the 1990s was driven by the demand for labour created by the segmentation of labour markets in post-industrial European countries.

## NOTES

1. See the *Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven og ægteskabsloven med flere love* (Law on changing the Aliens Consolidation Act and marriage law and other laws), no. 365, 6 June 2002.
2. For migration configurations, see Pieke et al., forthcoming.
3. An “immigrant” is defined by Statistics Denmark as a person born outside Denmark holding foreign or Danish citizenship and whose parents are also born outside Denmark holding foreign or Danish citizenships.
4. A “descendant” is defined by Statistics Denmark as a person whose parents are both born outside Denmark as foreign nationals.

5. For some unknown reason immigrants from Hong Kong ceased to become registered by Statistics Denmark after 1991. In 1991, 140 immigrants were registered by Danish authorities as coming from Hong Kong and they and their descendants (numbers unknown) should have been added to the official number of PRC Chinese after 1997.
6. The data are on the number of family reunions granted by the Danish authorities, but not all Chinese were necessarily coming to live in Denmark after having received their family reunification permission. However, we should expect a majority of those granted permission have arrived to stay in Denmark.
7. Since 2000, children born in Denmark of Chinese parents are also included in the statistics of family reunifications.
8. Prior to the amendments made to the Aliens Act in May 2002 foreigners were eligible to apply for Danish citizenship after a minimum of five years of permanent residence in Denmark. Being able to communicate in Danish was also a requirement, among others.
9. The interviews with Chairman of Fuzhou tongxianghui took place on 31 January 1995 and 26 August 1999, in addition to an interview with Chairman of Danish Chinese Business Association, which took place on 23 July 1999.
10. See the *Lov om ændring af udlændingeloven og ægteskabsloven med flere love* (Law on changing the Aliens Consolidation Act and marriage law and other laws), no. 365, 6 June, 2002.
11. The formal name of the list is the *Huayi renyuan mingdan* (January 2001), or the name list of the Chinese Friendship Association.
12. The interviews with Chairman of Fuzhou tongxianghui took place on 31 January 1995 and 26 August 1999, in addition to an interview with Chairman of Danish Chinese Business Association, which took place on 23 July 1999.
13. Two application figures are used in Danish statistics on asylum applications. A processing figure illustrating the number of asylum applications accepted for processing in Denmark, but excluding applications from persons who are returned to a safe third country and persons transferred or re-transferred to other EU Member States under the Dublin Convention. In contrast, the gross application figure illustrates all persons applying for political asylum in Denmark (available since 1998) (Danish Immigration Service, 2002b: 8).
14. Private information from translators and anonymous cases from PRC nationals processed by the Danish Refugee Board (an independent court-like body whose most important task is to process appeal cases after the Danish Immigration Service has refused to grant asylum), [www.fln.dk/publ/inf33/html/kap07\\_3.htm](http://www.fln.dk/publ/inf33/html/kap07_3.htm).
15. For the United Kingdom, data are only available from January to September.
16. See e.g. Castles, 2002; Lyall, 2002.
17. In Denmark in 1998, 45 per cent of the gross figure of all refugee applications were granted, 29 per cent were not processed in Denmark, and 19 per cent were rejected (the rest pending or closed) (Danish Immigration Service, 2002a: 18).
18. Interviews with Chairman of Fuzhou tongxianghui on 26 August 1999.
19. Personal communication with Rigspolitichefen, Afdeling E (Danish National Police), 29 July 2002.
20. Interview with authorities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 April 2002.
21. *Bekendtgørelse om stats- og virksomhedsstipendier til udenlandske ingeniørstuderende* (Government notice about state and company scholarships for foreign engineering

- students), no. 1381, 22 December 2000. See report by Danish private companies at Chinese educational conferences in Beijing and Shanghai soliciting Chinese engineering students to Denmark, *Overvældende interesse for SDU-studierne i Kina* (Immense interest for SDU-studies in China), [www.sdu.dk/Nat/nyheder/kinaint.htm](http://www.sdu.dk/Nat/nyheder/kinaint.htm).
22. Since 1995 Ballerup Engineering College close to Copenhagen has offered classes in English for foreign students and especially students from China (interview with Director of Study programme, Ballerup Engineering College, 1 March 2002, interview with Chinese student at Ballerup Engineering high school, 18 October 2001).
23. See EU Commission, "Erasmus world: a European higher education scheme to attract more students from third countries and enable European students to study in other countries", IP/02/1066, 17 July 2002, Brussels; EU Commission, "Studying, training, voluntary activity in the European Union: towards common entry and residence criteria for third country nationals", IP/02/1437, 7 October 2002, Brussels.

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VOIES D'ACCES ET DESTINATIONS DE PREDILECTION:  
LE CONTOURNEMENT DU DANEMARK  
PAR LES IMMIGRANTS CHINOIS

A l'heure où la mondialisation prenait son essor dans les années 90, et plus particulièrement au tournant du millénaire, les Etats européens ont tenu à réaffirmer de manière de plus en plus ferme leur droit souverain à réguler les flux migratoires au niveau des individus (OCDE, 2001: 76-81). Des partis politiques ont suscité un mouvement d'adhésion sur la base de déclarations traitant exclusivement des migrations. C'est ainsi qu'une loi danoise récente restreint les catégories de personnes admissibles en qualité de réfugiés aux seuls « réfugiés au sens de la Convention », imposant par là les critères internationaux les plus étroits définis par la Convention des Nations Unies relative aux réfugiés. Les droits civils des demandeurs d'asile sont restreints par l'interdiction du mariage tandis que leur demande est à l'examen. Afin de limiter le regroupement familial parmi les immigrés, le Gouvernement danois en place a même interdit aux immigrés ayant un statut de résidents permanents tout comme aux citoyens danois de faire venir dans le pays des épouses étrangères de moins de 24 ans.

Ces mesures de renforcement des contrôles aux frontières et de limitation de l'immigration ont été décrites par certains observateurs comme la manifestation de la volonté des membres de l'Union européenne d'édifier la « forteresse Europe » pour faire obstacle à l'immigration en provenance des pays en développement. Diverses décisions politiques, à quoi s'ajoute l'application de différentes mesures allant de la prise des empreintes digitales à la surveillance radar destinée à contrôler les immigrants, sont venues corroborer cette perception. Le présent article s'attache pourtant à démontrer qu'il est relativement simple, pour le ressortissant d'un pays plus pauvre comme la République populaire de Chine (RPC) d'entrer dans un pays sous haute surveillance tel que le Danemark. Les politiques aimeraient sans doute donner l'impression qu'ils contrôlent la mobilité internationale en faisant voter toutes sortes de lois destinées à lutter contre l'immigration, mais depuis l'embargo du début des années 70 sur l'immigration, tous les pays de l'UE ont accueilli des millions d'immigrants et autorisent dans une mesure croissante les immigrés de différentes catégories à résider et travailler sur leur territoire (Boeri et al., 2002). L'immigration en provenance des pays en développement n'est pas uniformément répartie sur tout le territoire de l'UE, mais vise plus précisément un certain nombre de destinations spécifiques. Cet article tente d'expliquer ce qui pousse l'immigration chinoise en direction de l'Europe, chose qui s'explique par la demande sur le marché du travail davantage que par les « lacunes » pouvant exister dans la législation ou le dispositif social d'un pays.

En analysant les données historiques et démographiques relatives aux ressortissants de la RPC sur le sol danois, l'auteur s'efforce de démontrer que même si le

Danemark est l'un des pays européens ayant le plus faible taux de rejet de demandes d'asile émanant de nationaux de la RPC, les perspectives s'offrant aux demandeurs d'asile chinois et aux migrants réguliers et irréguliers arrivant au Danemark au titre du regroupement familial étaient cependant encore relativement limitées dans les années 90 en comparaison de la situation dans les pays d'Europe méridionale, centrale et orientale. L'analyse que fait l'auteur des données danoises en matière d'immigration chinoise donne à penser que les destinations que choisissent les émigrants chinois portés par la vague de mondialisation en cours, répondent davantage à des considérations liées aux marchés du travail et des capitaux qu'à l'attraction présumée qu'exercerait un Etat providence européen tel que le Danemark sur la base d'avantages sociaux.

#### CANALES DE INGRESO Y DESTINOS PREFERIDOS: POR QUÉ LOS INMIGRANTES CHINOS ELUDEN DINAMARCA

A medida que se difundía la globalización en los años noventa, y especialmente desde principios del milenio, los Estados europeos reclamaron con insistencia el derecho a afirmar su soberanía al reglamentar la migración a nivel individual (OCDE, 2001: 76-81). Los partidos políticos han tenido éxito al apoyar las declaraciones políticas pertinentes exclusivamente a la migración. Por ejemplo, la reciente legislación de Dinamarca restringe las categorías de personas que reúnen los requisitos para ser refugiados a la "Convención sobre el estatuto de refugiados" satisfaciendo únicamente los criterios internacionales más estrechos esbozados en dicha Convención. Los derechos civiles de los solicitantes de asilo se restringen al prohibir el matrimonio mientras se están examinando sus solicitudes. A fin de limitar la reunificación familiar entre los inmigrantes, el Gobierno de Dinamarca actualmente ha prohibido incluso que los inmigrantes con un estatus de residente permanente y ciudadanía danesa traigan al país a cónyuges menores de 24 años de edad que no sean de nacionalidad danesa.

Estos intentos para su aplicación en las fronteras y para el control de inmigración han sido descritos por algunos críticos como los empeños de los miembros de la Unión Europea de construir una "Europa Fortaleza" en contra de los inmigrantes provenientes de países en desarrollo. Las decisiones políticas y la puesta en práctica de diversas medidas, que van desde las huellas digitales al control por radar, han corroborado estas percepciones, ello no obstante, este artículo demostrará que es particularmente fácil entrar a un país altamente controlado como Dinamarca desde un país pobre como la República Popular de China. Los políticos quizás quieran dar la impresión de que están controlando la movilidad internacional al lanzar toda una serie de leyes anti-inmigración, pero a pesar del embargo sobre la inmigración de principios de los años setenta, todos los países de la Unión Europea

han recibido millones de inmigrantes y permiten o aceptan mayormente inmigrantes de todo tipo para que residan y trabajen dentro de sus fronteras (Boeri et al., 2002). La inmigración desde países en desarrollo no está distribuida de manera equilibrada en la Unión Europea, es más, se encamina hacia destinos específicos. Este artículo tratará de explicar la dirección de las corrientes chinas de inmigración a Europa, en respuesta a la demanda de mano de obra, y no como una consecuencia de las brechas en las disposiciones jurídicas o de bienestar social del país.

Al analizar los datos históricos y demográficos de los chinos provenientes de la República Popular de China en Dinamarca, el autor intenta demostrar que a pesar de que Dinamarca es uno de los países europeos con una de las tasas más bajas de rechazo de solicitantes de asilo de la República Popular de China, la cantidad de solicitantes de asilo chinos y de migrantes regulares e irregulares que llegan gracias a la reunificación familiar ha sido limitada en los años noventa en comparación a la de los países de Europa Meridional, Central y Oriental. El análisis de los datos daneses sobre la migración china deja entrever que los destinos relacionados con la globalización de la migración china dependen más de los mercados laborales y de capitales que de la atracción de los beneficios sociales que ofrecen los estados benefactores europeos como Dinamarca.