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The cosmopolitan imaginary and flexible identities of global city-regions: articulating new cultural identities in Taipei and Shanghai

Tsung-yi Michelle HUANG

ABSTRACT *Given the broad consensus among academic geographers that a new matrix of global city-regions is on the rise, this paper attempts to show how urban linkage has become not only a social reality that produces various cosmopolitan identities but a discursive framework for the formulation and articulation of these identities so as to reproduce the urban networks. With a particular emphasis on the 'imaginary of identity' and its problems, I will explore Taipei-Shanghai as a global city-region first by examining the ideology inherent in the discourse of the so-called 'New Shanghai People' (xin shanghai ren), a popular discourse which has recently emerged to represent the identity of transmigrants. The second part of the paper will analyze several representative cultural texts including Wang Wen-hua's bestsellers in Shanghai, The Protein Girl, its sequel The Protein Girl II, and Chen-pin's bestsellers in Taipei, a series of non-fiction works on how to survive and succeed in Shanghai. Situating these texts in the context of the Taipei-Shanghai linkage, I will critique the imagination of the cosmopolitan identity, enabled by the material conditions of the urban network, and further lay bare not just the intricate connections between the new geopolitical regionalism and cultural narrative of Chinese transmigrants but the intense contradictions between the flexible accumulation of capital and the production of 'flexible citizenship' in Aihwa Ong's terms.*

KEYWORDS: Global city-region, Taipei-Shanghai link, transnational cultural identities, everyday urbanism, Chinese transmigrants

Identity, let us be clear about it, is a 'hotly contested concept.' Whenever you hear that word, you can be sure that there is a battle going on. A battlefield is identity's natural home. Identity comes to life only in the tumult of battle; it falls asleep and silent the moment the noise of the battle dies down. (Bauman 2004: 77)

Cultural identity is in itself a fluid concept. Cultural identity is more than just belonging. It also entails strategic use of cultural resources, texts, and messages to construct transportable identities. (Keane 2001)

During recent years urban geographers have identified the emergence of the global city-region as a more inclusive way to address the relationship between globalization and cities. Instead of pursuing the function and morphology of individual first-tier global cities like London, New York or Tokyo, researchers today believe that terms like 'region,' 'network,' and 'linkage' are better geographical scales as well as better analytical concepts by which to map the changing geography of globalization, which more than ever depends on cities and inter-city linkage. For example, John Friedman calls the global city-region 'a new form of urban landscape' (Friedmann 2001: 123). Allen J. Scott defines it as 'a new regionalism' (Scott 2001: 1). For Sir Peter Hall, this 'precursor of a new scale of urban organization' is 'networked externally on a global scale and internally over thousands of kilometers' (Hall 2001: 74). Given the broad consensus among academic geographers that a new matrix of

global city-regions is on the rise, this paper attempts to show how urban linkage has become not only a social reality that produces various cosmopolitan identities but a discursive framework for the formulation and articulation of these identities so as to reproduce the urban networks.¹

To put my analysis of the global urban network of transnational Chinese in perspective, it is necessary to explain the term 'flexible identities.' What I attempt to inquire into is the complexity of articulating the imaginary dimensions of identities in the context of global city-regions and ways to 'make legible the tension between citizenship as a formal legal status and as *a normative project or an aspiration*' (Sassen 2002b: 9, emphasis mine). In this essay, the term 'flexible identities' locates the problematic of the rising claims of cultural citizenship in the global city-regions. As Saskia Sassen persistently reminds us, 'the global city is reconfigured as a partly denationalized space that enables a partial reinvention of citizenship' (Sassen 2002b: 6). Inspired by Sassen, I propose to see how the flexible accumulation of global urban linkage invites the transnational subjects to identify themselves as the empowered users with the utmost mobility and flexibility, yet in reality the global city-region does not guarantee flexible identities or inclusive cultural recognition. The capitalist logic of the global city-regions that tends to centralize resources and divide the urban space into the glamour zone and the war zone as Sassen describes (Sassen 1998: xxxiii) has also predetermined and polarized the identity construction for migrants of various kinds.

Aihwa Ong's 'flexible citizenship' is one of the keywords today to grasp the new identities of the transnational subjects and the claims they make. Based on her research on transnational Chinese managers and professionals, Ong coins the term 'flexible citizenship' to refer to:

the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. In their quest to accumulate capital and social prestige in the global arena, subjects emphasize, and are regulated by, practices favoring flexibility, mobility, and repositioning in relation to markets, governments and cultural regimes. (Ong 1999: 6)

For Ong, flexible citizenship brought about by the international division of labor should be understood as a result of negotiations rather than as a spatial practice engineered by a borderless world: '...whereas international managers and professionals may be adept at strategies of economic accumulation, positioning, and maneuver, they do not operate in free-flowing circumstances, but in environments controlled and shaped by nation-states and capital markets' (Ong 1999:112).

As powerful as Ong's 'flexible citizenship' is in its explanatory capacity, I would hasten to add that we should understand such a term in a broad context of the global regime of flexible accumulation. According to David Harvey, in contrast to Fordism, flexible accumulation

rests on flexibility with respect to labour processes, labour markets, products, and patterns of consumption. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and, above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation. It has entrained rapid shifts in the patterning of uneven development... (Harvey 1990: 147)

Harvey argues that flexible accumulation in the capitalist world has also given rise to 'a new round of time-space compression': '...the time horizons of both private and public decision-making have shrunk, while satellite communication and declining transport costs have made it increasingly possible to spread those decisions immediately over an ever wider and variegated space' (Harvey 1990: 147).

Drawing on Harvey's notion of flexible accumulation, I consider it necessary to extend the meanings of flexible citizenship. Flexible accumulation brings about various kinds of imaginary identities, which can be called 'flexible identities.' In this sense, Ong's 'flexible citizens' is one among many flexible identities such as 'cosmopolitan urbanites,' 'citizen of the world,' 'the global elite,' and 'the professional managerial class,' just to name a few.

Having defined the 'flexible identities,' in the first part of the essay, I critique the discourse of 'New Shanghainese' (*xin shanghai ren*), a dominant flexible identity in the global city-region of Taipei and Shanghai. The ensuing interpretation of Wang Wen-hua's bestsellers in Shanghai, *The Protein Girl* and its sequel *The Protein Girl II* exemplifies how 'flexibility' becomes a lifestyle highly eroticized and fetishized in Wang's novels. Then I seek to tease out Taiwanese businesspeople's identity imagination in Shanghai by exploring not only the lingering myth of 'common language, culture and ethnic origin' but also those self-articulating labels of *taishang* in Chen Pin's non-fiction, the *Marching to Shanghai* series, to explain the intense contradictions between the flexible accumulation of capital and the production of flexible citizens. It is important to note that in my analysis of *taishangs* nation-state is not the site or institution to embed citizenship or identities. Although it is undeniable that *taishang* (Taiwanese business people) identity formation is entangled with national imagination and the political relationships between Taiwan and China, the complexity of transnational subjects' cultural identities should not be confined by nationalism, particularly when we deal with transnational migrants in global city-regions, where people's identity imagination hinges more upon cities and intra-urban relationship than nation-states.²

The Taipei-Shanghai link and the East Asian global city-regions

One way to contextualize the new identities brought about by the contemporary Taipei-Shanghai link is to see how the geographical scale of 'global city-region' is translated into various cultural forms. In other words, if we treat Shanghai and Taipei as merely 'two East Asian cities' rather than a global city-region, the significant socio-economic context of East Asian regionalism will be obscured.³ To be specific, the contemporary Taipei-Shanghai link in response to globalization may be more precisely articulated if we start with the historical development of East Asian global city-regions. During the past two decades, East Asian countries' development follows a pattern that tends to replace the 'space of places' with a 'space of flows,' in Manuel Castells' words (Castells 1993: 368). For such a 'space of flows' to function in the global nexus of capital accumulation, nation-states integrate and cooperate with each other to form economic zones. As Samuel S. Kim argues, 'In East Asia, the framework of regionalism and regionalization is most salient in the economic realm' (Kim 2004: 40). For Yue-man Yeung, 'inner globalization,' based on intraregional economic cooperation, is what characterizes Asia Pacific in the age of globalization: 'even more striking [than the cooperation between TNCs and host countries] is the emergence of subregional zones of economic cooperation in Asia over the past two decades, where participating economies possess varied factor endowments and resource strengths' (Yeung 2000: 12, emphasis added). Economic ties based on intra-regional networking in East Asia have become increasingly dominant in the present global age, as Yeung observes: 'For this region, intraregional investment and financial flows represent the fastest-growing share of the region's exchange.' In fact, statistics show that 'intraregional trade now constitutes about 43 percent of the region's total, compared with 33 percent in the 1980s' (Yeung 2000: 17).

East Asia's intensifying networking across national borders is clear from the emergence of global city-regions as part of a new regionalism. Of the various forms of East Asian global city-regions, two stand out as being particularly significant.⁴ One is the 'growth triangle,' a sub-regional economic zone developed since the 1980s. Representative examples include the Southern China Growth Triangle (Hong Kong, Taiwan, Guangdong and Fujian), the JSR

Growth Triangle (Johor, Singapore, and Indonesia's Riau Island) and the Yellow Sea Regional Cooperation Zone (China, South Korea and Japan).⁵ According to Hsiao Hsin-Huang, the late 1980s witnessed rapid expansion of multilateral cooperation in the Asia Pacific area. Compared with the first three developmental stages, this wave of regionalization in the form of growth triangles 'mostly rests on the inner transnational, trans-regional linkage of capital, skills, human resources and markets' (Hsiao 1997: 5).

Another distinctive form of East Asian intraregional inter-city networking is the linkage between ethnic Chinese cities. Such linkage typically embraces cities of the 'Two Coasts and Three Regions' (Greater China) and sometimes extends to include Singapore. For example, recent years have seen the proliferation of urban and cultural narratives, which, in juxtaposing two or three ethnic Chinese cities, provide the organizational rhetoric for joint ventures of all kinds: Shanghai and Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taipei, Shanghai and Tokyo all suggest a 'tale of two cities,' (*shuangchengji*)⁶ while Taipei-Hong Kong-Shanghai or Taipei-Hong Kong-Beijing can be a 'tale of three cities' (*sanchengji*).⁷ Ethnic linkage also serves as the basis for economic regionalism, as we see with the above-mentioned Southern China Growth Triangle or the newly proposed Golden Triangles (*huangjin sanjiao*) of Silicon Valley-Taipei-Shanghai and Tokyo-Taipei-Shanghai.⁸

Thus, Taipei and Shanghai can be seen as a representative example of East Asian global city-region in two senses. On the one hand, they both belong to the ethnic Chinese urban network (cities of Two Coasts and Three Regions). At the same time, they are the command-and-control nodal points of such Growth Triangles as Tokyo-Taipei-Shanghai, Taipei-Hong Kong-Shanghai, and Yangtz River Delta-Pearl River Delta-Taiwan.

For scholars like S. Gordon Redding and John Gray, the ethnic Chinese linkage accounts for East Asian countries' miraculous economic growth since the 1970s. The fundamental principle of the East Asian economy, they argue, is to prioritize family ties and interpersonal relationships over individualism, a 'Chinese capitalism' deeply rooted in Confucian ethics (Redding 1990; Gray 1998). Redding and Gray are insightful in pointing out the significance of ethnic networks for the East Asian economy, yet their account of 'Chinese capitalism' requires rigorous revision to remain theoretically valid and analytically useful. For one thing, in order to examine ethnic Chinese economic networks today, the geographical context of global city-regions should be placed in the foreground, given that contemporary global capitalism relies on urban nodes and city linkage for flexible accumulation. In other words, the intra-urban relationships within ethnic Chinese global city-regions in East Asia designate a strategic site for comprehending ethnic identity in relation to the logic of global zoning. Second, rather than assume a homogeneous Chinese culture and overlook local differences, as Redding and Gray do, I suggest we focus on the tensions between and among ethnic Chinese cities brought about by the constant negotiations between various geographical scales of the local and the demands of regional integration in the service of global capitalism.⁹

The cosmopolitan narrative of 'New Shanghainese': an ideology of capitalist reterritorialization

To tease out the implications of such complicated intraregional negotiations, we could first look at how the cultural identity of ethnic Chinese is re-constructed to meet the needs of capitalist geographical reorganization. As Harvey argues, an effective strategy for coping with time-space compression is to 'intervene actively in the production of volatility' by producing imagery and sign systems to shape the market's volatility for one's own purposes (Harvey 1990: 287). The widely disseminated image of the 'New Shanghainese' exemplifies how the urban discourse of intraregional economic linkage produces a cultural identity that may facilitate the reterritorialization of capitalism. As the latest addition to the various names for the rising elite in China, which include 'the new rich' (*xinfu*), 'the middle-class' (*zhongchan*),

'the white collar' (*bailing*), 'the successful people' (*chenggong renshi*), and 'the international freeman' (*IF zu*), 'New Shanghainese' best captures the collective identity of the large number of migrants who settled in Shanghai because of recent global capital flows.¹⁰

Central to the 'New Shanghainese' discourse is a cosmopolitan spirit of universal hospitality. That is, 'New Shanghainese' is construed, at the present global age, as an inclusive identity for those who were not born or raised in Shanghai but migrated to the city for various reasons. It is not surprising to see such a narrative of cosmopolitanism reiterate Old Shanghai culture as its authoritative roots. The history of Shanghai as a treaty port after the first Opium War at the end of the 19th century made the city a melting-pot culture, and more importantly, the prototype of a contemporary 'global city.' As the legitimate heir of Old Shanghai culture, New Shanghai today has revived its cosmopolitan spirit to welcome foreign cultures and people as an ocean embraces all rivers (*haina baichuan*). Shanghai scholar Wan Zengwei observes that 'Old Shanghai cosmopolitanism indeed lends new Shanghai a tolerant and open-minded climate' (Wan 2003: 131). This cosmopolitan culture, the core value of the New Shanghainese discourse, has been invoked from time to time as the common ground between Shanghai's past, present, and future.

The grandiose and fancy rhetoric of the New Shanghainese, persuasive to many, could be dangerous because its 'universal' cosmopolitan ideals too easily create an illusion of consensus, thus causing its ideological uses to go unquestioned. For one thing, a largely ignored fact about New Shanghainese is that this identity was born in the context of the international division of labor brought about by the globalization of capital, that is, it was prescribed by the ideology of global capitalism. The identity of New Shanghainese is an image, a sign system produced for the expanding new class of global city-regions, and particularly for its professional managerial elite.¹¹ The assumption of class hierarchy permeates most discussions of New Shanghainese. For example, in a report entitled 'New Shanghainese, New Legends,' *Yazhou Zhoukan* defines New Shanghainese as 'China's new elite generation. Not born or raised in Shanghai, they cannot speak Shanghainese. Yet it is these New Shanghainese that will take charge of the city's future' (Jiang 2002: 26). In a special issue on the cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan, *Global Views Monthly* makes New Shanghainese an identity for Taiwanese to claim in Shanghai: 'The economic boom in new Shanghai is transforming Taiwanese entrepreneurs into New Shanghainese. Top investors, middle-class businesspeople, and overseas returnees all find themselves drawn to Shanghai' (Cheng 2003a: 101). Ethnic Chinese elite from Hong Kong, Macao, and other parts of the world might also be New Shanghainese. Huang Ju, ex-leader of the Shanghai Municipal People's Government, once said in an interview that the 'New Shanghainese are 'Citizens of the World' (*shijie ren*) and also Chinese (*zhonghua ren*)' (quoted in Xiong 2003: 121). This juxtaposition shows an ambitious attempt to invite Chinese elites from all over the world to identify themselves as New Shanghainese and call Shanghai 'my city.' The assumptions underlying the concept of New Shanghainese suggest that this cultural identity has been produced so that global capitalism can form its linkage between the center of capital (Shanghai) and the multiple local points (Hong Kong and Macao, among others).

The New Shanghainese discourse actually abstracts the local dimensions and complicated histories of translocal/transnational capital and population flows mobilized by the matrix of global linkages. Migratory workers have to cope with a constellation of concrete issues both at the macro and micro levels: these include the shifting political relations among participants, negotiations of transnational citizenship, variegated modes of labor control, different corporate management styles, and the details of an individual's everyday life functioning. For example, for those non-locals who live and work in Shanghai, what kind of resident status do they claim and what problems might they encounter without work permits or *Lanyin hukou*?¹² What rights are they entitled to and what obligations must

they fulfill? Do they have adequate access to resources and opportunities? In other words, how are their economic rights and general civil rights defined?

As grand as it sounds, the discourse of the New Shanghainese, essentially the cultural representation of global elites, bypasses the fact that the production of cosmopolitan identity involves complex negotiations within and among a nested hierarchy of spatial scales and government regimes.¹³ For instance, one distinctive characteristic of Shanghai's global-city campaign is the intervention of the state. The central and local governments not only supervise and monitor the reconstruction of the cityscape but also keep a short leash on the population of Shanghai (Chan 1996). Seen in this light, New Shanghainese, a presumably ideal collective identity articulating a seamless network across different scales (urban, national, regional, global), ironically becomes a highly localized and parochial signifier accessible only to the privileged class – provincialism in cosmopolitanism's clothing.

Now we can better understand why the discourse of the New Shanghainese is often laced with nostalgia.¹⁴ Old Shanghai culture as a form of collective symbolic capital is conjured up for a specific ideological purpose – to serve as the cultural-historical foundation for the imagining, by the non-local service class, of a local identity. Given that New Shanghai declares itself as a global city reliving its glamorous past, the dominant city-users of the globalized Shanghai, investors and other members of the professional class, logically become the designated agents for passing on the legacy of Old Shanghai's cosmopolitan mentality. In other words, the underlying appeal of 'New Shanghainese' lies less in the continuity between Old and New Shanghai than in the open and flexible image of global city-users, a portable identity with which those mobile cosmopolitan subjects may readily represent themselves. The need to articulate their 'position' in the city thus accounts for a recurring motif of the discourse of the New Shanghainese, that of the 'citizen of the world': this is a theme succinctly summarized by Huang Ju, as mentioned earlier, and by Yang Guorong: 'The new Shanghainese are more than Shanghainese. They are indeed citizens of the world' (Yang 2003: 127). Shanghai's cosmopolitan past, evoked as collective memory, actually functions as 'collective instruction' for the city, an instruction on how to join the global club.¹⁵

The production of New Shanghainese discourse exemplifies what Harvey means by manipulating sign systems to cope with the ephemeral market of globalization. According to Harvey, 'corporations, governments, political and intellectual leaders, all value a stable (though dynamic) image as part of their aura of authority and power' (Harvey 1990: 288). The production of an image of stable power proves to be a challenging task 'because the continuity and stability of the image have to be retained while stressing the adaptability, flexibility, and dynamism of whoever or whatever is being imaged' (Harvey 1990: 288). Harvey's argument further makes clear why the concept of 'New Shanghainese' has been so quickly disseminated – the official narratives of global Shanghai require an identity that foregrounds both stability, and more significantly flexibility, they require a strategy for interpellating migratory workers under the banner of cosmopolitanism, regardless of their many differences.

Taipei's popular culture and transnational cultural identity in Shanghai

Looking at the ideology of the New Shanghainese discourse, I hope to show that to fully grasp the implications of the formulation of transnational identity in the age of globalization is to come to terms with the powerful connection between capital flows and local cultures, to take into consideration a capitalist geography that entails the linkage of multiple locals orchestrated on various scales. Here we could borrow Caren Kaplan's discussions of transnational subjects to ground our analyses of the cross-cultural intersections between Taipei and Shanghai in a larger framework of global complexity. Identifying travel as the dominant

trope of technologies of mobility and location, Kaplan argues for the need to see travel and transnational subject in a new light: 'a notion of travel as an expanded field in transnationality produces differently linked subjects. ... [A] theorization of travel as a Foucauldian field with diverse points in tension with one another or *even as a continuum with an origin and a discrete itinerary of sites rather than as the older binary of this versus that may engender more plural subjects*' (Kaplan 2002: 41, emphasis added).

Like Kaplan, geographer Laurence J.C. Ma brings into focus complicated routes of global traveling: 'the patterns of spatial interaction today are multidirectional, based on multiple centers of origin and destination' (Ma 2003: 19). Tracing the changing paths of contemporary Chinese migration, which redraws the map of the transnational flow of capital and people, Ma points out that instead of there being a 'simple connection between a sending place in Guangdong or Fujian and a paired destination place in Southeast Asia before the 1960s,' nations in Southeast Asia that once attracted millions of Chinese immigrants have witnessed a significant trend toward 're-migration' since the 1980s, when Taiwan and Hong Kong loomed large as centers of the Chinese diaspora: 'Globalization of production and the fear of Chinese rule have made Hong Kong and Taiwan major actors in Chinese transmigration, substantially involved in the sending and receiving of transmigrants. The Chinese mainland is no longer the sole homeland of the Chinese abroad ...' (Ma 2003: 19).¹⁶

Reading the influx of Taiwanese into Shanghai during recent years in the context of Kaplan's and Ma's observations on transnational 'people flow,' I argue that today Taipei/Taiwan is not only an 'endpoint' that exports capital and human resources to Shanghai, but also a center that produces the image and sign system of Chineseness in global city-regions. Today it is estimated that more than 300,000 *taishang* and 5000 Taiwanese firms are based in Shanghai. The human resources and capital flow to Shanghai from Taipei/Taiwan also bring about a proliferation of new cultural forms.

In the following discussion, I will examine Wang Wen-hua's and Chen Pin's works as two representative literary expressions of the 'transnational subject.' My interpretation seeks to demonstrate that Wang's urban love stories may be seen as a cultural form that replicates the pedagogy of global city-regions, one which prescribes a professional managerial class as the ideal users of the city and the model for cosmopolitan life. On the other hand, Chen-pin's guides to the pursuit of one's Shanghai dream open a window through which to glimpse the tensions, the contradictions brought about by the lower middle class's yearning for New Shanghainese flexible citizenship.

The Protein Girl: the pedagogy of global city-regions and the erotic writing of New Shanghainese

The Taiwanese writer Wang Wen-hua is now famous in Shanghai. Since its publication in 2000, *The Protein Girl* has attracted a great number of readers in the cross-strait market.¹⁷ Wang's popularity in Shanghai inspired the editor of *Global Views Monthly*, Cheng Chang-yu, to claim that 'if Shanghai is a city that belongs to Bajin, Eileen Chang, Pai Hsien-yung, now we have to update the list to include Wang Wen-hua and Jimmy' (Cheng 2003b: 161). The phenomenal success of Wang Wen-hua's and Jimmy's works, then, raises the question as to why novelists and artists from Taipei become adept at telling stories of Shanghai?¹⁸ Many cultural critics believe that Wang's (as well as Jimmy's) acclaim has much to do with the rise of the petit bourgeois culture in Shanghai. For example, L.P. Yao, the general editor of *Yazhou Zhoukan* comments:

The wide consumption of Wang Wen-hua's writings in mainland China is indicative of the absence of urban novels in this country. In the past decade, unprecedented urban changes in cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shenzhen have not been fully reflected in China's contemporary literature. The subject matter of many novels has not caught up with

the changing times; thus, *The Protein Girl* gets the chance to step into the secret garden and steal the hearts of one hundred million petit bourgeois (Yao 2003: 4).

While it is true that Taipei and Shanghai significantly share a gentrified urban space and middle-class mentality, I nonetheless feel that such a facile focus on class affinities will only deflect our attention away from the larger historical/spatial context in which this Shanghai-Taipei cultural connection is embedded. Rather than reducing the phenomenon of Wang Wen-hua to the simple fact of shared petit bourgeois values, I propose to situate his works in the historical context of an intensifying process of cultural translation as well as in the more specific spatial context of global city-regions.

Wang's overnight fame can be partly attributed to the fact that traditional Chinese characters used in Taiwan can be easily converted on the computer to simplified ones, allowing cross-strait publishers to reduce the time and cost of publication. Thus the urban culture represented in Wang's novels has been highly accessible to Shanghai readers, who can quickly understand, identify with, and appropriate Wang's images and vocabulary celebrating the bright lights and the big cities. Furthermore, Wang has created a slick Chinese writing style to translate the Western urban language of eroticism, which easily impresses his readers. As David Wang observes, Wang's chic urban stories, written in a style similar to the 'scholar and beauty novels' (*caizi jiaren*) of the Ching dynasty, pleasantly surprise the reader with their nuanced portrayal of big city life and love-starved modern urbanites with rhymes and beats' (Wang, D. 2002). Sher-shiueh Li also praises Wang's 'original use of diction, particularly his witty conceits and plotting' (Li 2002). The journalist Chen Yixin loves Wang for his 'bitingly funny stories and smart, sophisticated rhetoric' (Chen 2004).

The target readers of the novels, members of the white-collar class in Shanghai are no less enthusiastic. For example, Yao Wei, from the Asian Development International Transportation Corporation in Shanghai, says: 'We love *The Protein Girl* because Wang seems to turn people in real life into types and caricatures effortlessly with refreshing, sensual expressions and images – the novel is a funny and witty page-turner' (Wu 2003: 17). Indeed, besides those punchline-like one-liners, Wang's writing is filled with Chinese couplets and rhymes deployed in a frivolous tone, translating colloquial English expressions concerned with relationships and dating. For instance, '*gaoweixiu nuzi*' is a jocular translation for 'high-maintenance women.' Other instances include lady killer (*shunu shashou*), the L word (*L nagezi*), feel horny (*ganjue youjiao*), and sugar daddy (*tang baba*).

Neither Wang's smart appropriation of the glib *Sex-and-the-City* style nor the easy conversion between simplified and traditional Chinese characters, however, can sufficiently explain the cross-strait popularity of *The Protein Girl*. The crucial reason for Wang's popularity lies in his successful translation into Chinese of a kind of urban culture upheld as the ideal lifestyle for everyone today – the culture of the professional managerial class, who claim for themselves 'the urban glamour zone' of the global city as Sassen puts it (Sassen 1998: xxxiii).¹⁹ According to Sassen, a distinguishing characteristic of global cities like New York, London, and Tokyo is the rapid expansion of two groups of city-users – the service class (professional managerial class) on the one hand, and the underprivileged new immigrants and low-skill laborers on the other. The coexistence of these two classes of course manifests a great social inequality and 'spatial apartheid' – while the underclass is marginalized into the 'urban war zone,' the privileged and powerful elite has every right to occupy the 'urban glamour zone.' Specifically, for the professional managerial class, an ideal city would satisfy every need of frequent travelers, be it state-of-the-art infrastructure (airports and highway), luxurious places to live and do business (five-star hotels, landmark office buildings), or hip places around town for some R&R (trendy restaurants, bars) (Sassen 1998: xxxiii). As capital-driven globalization has continued to advance at an unprecedented speed and scale since the 1980s, the urban space catering to the needs of the professional managerial class has

increasingly become the 'urban glamour zone' that every city in the world seeks to copy ('Manhattanize'), and these highly-mobile 'flexible citizens,' tend to represent the dominant and most legitimate 'users' of the city, and their fancy lifestyle the model of success.

The identity of the global elite finds exemplary representations of itself in Wang's novels. The 'wolf men,' those most powerful of 'lady killers,' for instance, embody the global elite: based in Taipei, these border-crossing financial experts have offices in the landmark buildings of urban glamour zones; they frequent trendy places in the town, freely display their name-brand luxuries, and make themselves at home in global cities all over the world (Wang 2000: 10–11). Wang's protagonists' lifestyle also resembles that of the professional managerial class. For example, in the first volume, the male protagonist imagines, in his first-person narrative, his female friend Jia-jia visiting New York for a meeting. The way he pictures her suggests a 'global romance,' made up of such signifiers as New York City, stock markets, parachuting in Fiji, and high-tech communication (Wang 2000: 237).²⁰ Likewise, in *The Protein Girl II*, Paulina's suggestion that Jia-jia should fly to New York the very next day to for a date with her boyfriend is a similar global fantasy:

To find a guy for marriage is easy, but to have him travel to New York with you is just the opposite. *The sense of beauty is only for those love birds holding hands and walking on the orange-juice-like Upper West Side, having breakfast together at Tiffany's, and seeing Truffaut's Jules and Jim in Greenwich Village.* (Wang, W. 2002: 161, emphasis original)

In fact, throughout the novel, despite their seemingly endless dating dilemmas, the female protagonists Paulina and Jia-jia are nothing less than mobile hedonists leading a charmed life. They can just pack up and fly to New York any time they want. When in Taipei, sporting the latest Prada or Birkin handbag, they show up in trendy hangouts like Fnac, California Fitness Center, Room 18, Eslite Bookstore, and all the fancy restaurants. At home all they seem to ever do is use ADSL and log on to ICQ for the latest man-hunting tactics.

Representing Taipei urbanites as the subjects and objects of carnal desire à la *Sex and the City*, Wang proposes for his readers a pedagogy which defines the privileged global elite as a universal model for everyone in the city and their sexual escapades as stories to be passed down. Yet, clearly the popularity of this cultural model in Shanghai has to be embedded in the historical context of Shanghai being a global city in the making. *The Protein Girl* series was launched in the city at just the right time. Given the great speed of their own city's urban redevelopment in the 1990s, Shanghai readers could easily identify with the glittering metropolitan life portrayed in Wang's novels, seeing it as something tangible, just the kind of urban life that could be theirs in the near future. Now that Shanghai is eager to make its entry into the world as the most prominent global city of the 21st century, it seems reasonable for its inhabitants to look for the corresponding new identities. Wang's novels of the global Chinese elite and their lifestyle are consonant with Shanghai people's desire for a new class identity, and also with the official promotion of Shanghai's 'reglobalization,' a campaign encouraging Shanghainese to retrieve the city's old glory from the 1930s and become reconnected with the world.²¹

The process of cultural learning is further facilitated by Taipei as a spatial interface between Shanghai and such generic global cities such as New York or London. This mediation is made possible by the tension between these two cities – Taipei is culturally closer to Shanghai than most of the other cities in the world outside of China. At the same time, Taipei may be the most unfamiliar city to Shanghainese due to the decades-old severance of political ties between China and Taiwan. This paradox works miracles for Wang's novels of transnational fantasy. On the one hand, his fictional representation of Taipei's urban culture allows the reader in Shanghai to imagine occupying a similar position, one where he/she can imagine being 'at home in the world,' connecting here-and-now to other world-famous global cities. Or, to put it more precisely, because Taipei and Shanghai are both Chinese

cities, their assumed similarity helps Shanghai readers to imagine the Manhattanization of their city's future by first grasping the image of a 'twenty-first-century Taipei modern,' as Sher-shiueh Li (Li 2002) puts it.

On the other hand, while the fashionable hangouts in Wang's novel may be just around the corner for middle-class Taipei residents, for many Shanghai readers who know little about Taipei, Fnac, California Fitness Center or Room 18 might be nothing more than empty signs. This sense of unfamiliarity with the novels' specific setting could make for an exoticism that adds spice to Wang's work. More importantly, these empty signs also drive the reader to focus primarily on the main characters' colorful lifestyles, replacing these place names with those of Shanghai's own hip places. Such a reading strategy enables Shanghai readers to envision the transnational identity of a cultural 'cyborg' – that is, they may imagine themselves to be 'protein girls' or 'wolves' in Shanghai. In this way, readers in Shanghai can connect themselves with multiple localities (Taipei–Shanghai–New York), and through imagining the various forms of consumption (of places, products, sex), they can reconstruct their own transnational identities with little social/material cost.

With his dazzling skyscrapers, five-star hotels, and stylish leisure spaces of the urban glamour zone, Wang transplants the cultural identity of the global service class in the fertile ground of East Asian metropolises which aspire to be transformed into global cities of the future. What he has composed is an airy 'deterritorializing fantasy,' a volatile mixture of flirty banter and sweet nothings metamorphosed into a common cultural sign-system for consumption by urbanites in both Taipei and Shanghai. Wang not only describes but prescribes the professional managerial elite as the privileged and legitimate class of transnational agents, made possible by the linkage of global city-regions for flexible accumulation.²²

Taiwanese businesspeople versus New Shanghainese: ongoing negotiation of transnational flexible citizenship

In contrast to 'the global Chinese elite as New Shanghainese' portrayed in Wang's novels, I now intend to examine a different cultural expression of transnational identity. The Taiwanese businesspeople in Shanghai, as represented in a few non-fictional cultural texts published in Taipei roughly between 2000 and 2003, form the subjects of another case study, one which can illustrate the ruptures between transnational subjects and flexible citizenship.

As mentioned earlier, more than 300,000 *taishang* and 5,000 Taiwanese firms are based in Shanghai at present. However, the term *taishang* has yet to be defined. The indecision arises from the lack of cross-strait consensus as to who could be rightly dubbed as a '*taishang*.' As waves of Taiwanese pour into Shanghai, a 'Shanghai fever' has hit Taipei's publishing industry in force, as seen in the proliferation of survival guides. The popularity of these 'how-to' manuals not only reflects the needs of those who aim to increase their competitiveness in Shanghai, but also paints a rosy prospect for middle-class Taiwanese wishing to emigrate and invest. Analyzing the cultural experience represented in these non-fiction works, I hope to first clarify the problems one may face in venturing to Shanghai to create a 'Chinese common market' because of the putative business opportunities and the convenience of ethnic and linguistic ties. I will also attempt to elucidate the ambivalent nature of flexible citizenship in a global city-region such as Taipei-Shanghai.

In Taiwan the term 'Chinese common market' is based on the presupposition that Taiwan and mainland China are only a narrow strait apart, and share the same language, culture and ethnic origins. According to some leading capitalists, such proximity on multiple levels should foster cooperation, bringing about a win-win situation. Sayling Wen of Inventec Corporation once expressed his hope that both sides could 'work together to construct the strongest Chinese common market ever' (Wen 2003: 166). Jeffrey Koo, chairman of the Chinese National Association of Industry and Commerce, says that '[f]or Taiwan

businesspeople, China's competitive edge lies in its language, culture, distance, labor and land cost. The comparative advantage of the similarities of language and culture as well as their flexibility and experience should set Taiwan enterprises on the right track to success in their foreign investment ventures in China' (Koo 2002). Enthusiastic about a complete opening up of business collaboration across the strait, Wang Yung-ching, one of the most influential businessmen in Taiwan, pushes the rhetoric further by claiming that 'Taiwan and mainland China speak the same language and share the same ethnic origin. To be frank, China is ours, and Taiwan, theirs' (Lin 2004: 111).²³

The strong predilection for the discourse of one culture and race is displayed not only by these prominent capitalists but also by quite a few voices from academia and the media. Lawrence J. Brahm, a political economist and lawyer, maintains that 'compared with the Western companies, Taiwan entrepreneurs have a better chance to succeed in China because of their common ethnic origin and culture' (Chen 2002). Li-hsing Ho and Chen-kuo Lee, scholars of business management, observe that 'cheap labor, geographical proximity and the common language/ethnic advantage speed up the *taishang's* investment in China' (Ho and Lee 2000). Chou Yi-heng and Hsu Ming-yi, economic geographers, also propose the developmental model of the golden triangle, Tokyo–Taipei–Shanghai, by recourse to the same rhetoric: 'in the future Japanese business could draw on the *taishang's* experience and their competitive edge in sharing the same culture and race to initiate joint ventures with Chinese business or launch into the Chinese market' (Chou and Hsu 2001). Local newspaper editorials drum up support with no less vigor. For example, in 2002 one editorial in the *United Daily News* claimed that 'Taiwan and China, sharing the same language and origin, are separated merely by a strait, and in no way can their economic ties be severed' (*United Daily News* 2002). In 2004 another editorial in the *China Times* pointed out that 'After its rise as a global economic power, China's influence has been far and wide. Ties of common language and culture should give Taiwanese enterprises a strategic and competitive advantage in China's market' (*China Times* 2004).

Rapid economic development and a common linguistic and cultural background have become the primary incentives for Taiwanese investors to expand or transfer their production bases to China. I would argue that such a discourse of 'common language, culture, and ethnic origin' is very much the product of negotiation between transnational subjects and the institutional mechanism of a regional economic network. Thus it should be noted that while the Taiwanese and Shanghaiese are similar in many ways, they are by no means identical. Without the protection of citizenship, Taiwanese businesspeople in Shanghai have to negotiate with the national/local government on the one hand and the local community/network on the other.

The various forms of tension entailed by this reality then, can be explored via the wide array of Shanghai survival guides mostly published in Taipei between 2000 and 2003. Among these publications, Chen Pin's *Migrating to Shanghai* series is exemplary and carries a particular cultural significance. Writing from his personal experiences as a veteran Taiwanese businessman in Shanghai who became 'New Shanghaiese,' Chen aimed his books at the middle-class Taiwanese capable of establishing firms and exploiting business opportunities in China.²⁴ His Shanghai know-how series, which features immigrating to Shanghai, living and doing business there, and getting to know the local people, received wide acclaim and quickly became a bestseller when it hit local bookstores.

The following discussion employs Chen's Shanghai series as a case in point to reveal the fault lines and contradictions inherent in the formative process of transnational cultural identity. I would explain that, unlike leading Taiwanese business tycoons like Wang Yung-ching or Jeffrey Koo, the transnational identities of middle-class Taiwanese businesspeople in Shanghai are from the outset predetermined by the gap, embedded in global urban linkages, between the powerful professional managerial class and the underprivileged

migrant population/foreign laborers. That is, these transnational cultural identities are often polarized. By bringing the labor hierarchy into play, then, I hope to show that expressions of transnational cultural identity/identities are class-inflected.

The popularity of Chen's books first suggests the possibility of rethinking the validity of the postulate of a common cultural heritage. Chen claims the main purpose of his writings is to show Taiwanese readers that the key to success in Shanghai lies in changing their patterns of behavior and modes of thinking (Chen 2001: 9). Interestingly, if those who espouse the same language and race as a reliable guarantee are right, the *taishang* should have no trouble transferring their bases to Shanghai at a time when the red carpets are rolled out for them. Why would they need to make a great effort to change the way they think and act? If shared language and race can really be their magic wand, then why do so many Taiwanese readers still need know-how guides and find Chen's *Migrating to Shanghai* tremendously helpful? Is it possible a reality check quickly shows that the 'niche' of similarities neither entitles Taiwanese in Shanghai to well-established cultural identities nor guarantees any easy communication with Shanghai people?

Chen himself has scrutinized at length the popular fallacy of overrating the similarities of language and culture, which tend to veil the differences between Taipei and Shanghai. Contrary to common belief, the same linguistic and cultural background proves to be more of an obstacle than an aid to the Taiwanese who wish to successfully establish a foothold in Shanghai and become assimilated into the local community. This could result from the Taiwanese newcomers' high hopes for what they have in common with the locals and their tendency to underestimate the differences. Chen argues that many *taishang* are so overconfident that their common language and culture will assure easy communication and interpersonal relations, which will in turn necessarily lead to successful expansion of their business (Chen 2000b: 93). That is, a common cultural heritage has mistakenly led the Taiwanese to believe that the Taipei-Shanghai relationship is in every way like the Taipei-Kaohsiung one. Yet this ignores the fact that decades of separation following political severance in 1949 have given rise to huge economic, social and value differences between Taiwan and the mainland. Chen thus warns the reader: 'Mainland China cannot be understood with Taiwanese common sense' (Chen 2000b: 212). In other words, '[d]espite the similarities of language and race, Chinese and Taiwanese have drastically different modes of thinking' (Chen 2000a: 255, Chen 2000b: 178).²⁵

While Chen's observations based on his first-hand experience contribute to debunking the myth of 'common language, culture and ethnic origin,' he fails to show the reader the larger-scale problem here. The true danger of banking on 'same language, same race' as the *taishang*'s ticket to ride, I argue, lies in the paradoxical nature of cross-border collaborations in global city-regions – the economic flow caused by urban linkage may be diverse in nature, but it does not guarantee inclusive recognition and equal treatment of diverse cultural identities. In the network of linked cities, the city that wields most economic power usually plays the pivotal role in the formation of cultural identities. Take the 'how-to' manuals mentioned above for example. For many people today to be a member of the mobile class now means the ability to stake the claim at a certain core city – in this case, becoming the New Shanghainese. As described in Chen's books, the key to success is for the investor to leave behind one's homeland experiences and do as the Shanghainese do. However, while those *taishang* who make a name in Shanghai may well call themselves New Shanghainese, for local people they are still known as *taishang* or Taiwanese rather than New Shanghainese.²⁶ In other words, Taiwanese businesspeople in Shanghai have hardly any cultural label or representation besides *taishang* and Taiwanese.

In addition to the problem of 'common language, culture and ethnic origin,' another factor that contributes to the difficulty of constructing a positive identity for *taishang* is their mentality along with their sometimes indecent or even unlawful management style, as seen

in some of those who went to Guangdong and Fujian in the early 1990s. For example, Chen repeatedly warns *taishangs* of the danger of 'new rich Taiwanese mentality' (Chen 2000b: 133–135, Chen 2003: 37–38). Ong's field trip to Xiamen in 1993 also shows that 'although people welcome the Taiwanese investments and free-spending ways, they think that these huaqiao tend to exploit their women, create corruption, and intensify unequal relations in the province across lines of gender, class, and nationality' (Ong 1999: 47). *Taishang* in Shanghai do not necessarily bear the same defamatory image, yet this prevalent idea of Taiwanese easily sabotages any positive identity representation of *taishang*.²⁷

At this point, it is reasonable to inquire: as Shanghai becomes ever more globalized, why are *taishang* still facing the pressure of integrating into local society? Are not New Shanghainese the cosmopolitan ideal of citizens of the world, whose Shanghai-style tradition of extending a welcoming hand to all has been passed down and reached its apotheosis after the global city campaign in the 1990s? Is it possible for the Taiwanese to become New Shanghainese and keep their Taiwanese origin at the same time? These questions are raised to highlight not so much Taiwan's subjectivity as the cultural articulation of transnational people flow, which is often associated with such positive terms of globalization as borderlessness, openness, de-centeredness and flexibility, but actually always involves hierarchy and politics of exclusion.

Interestingly, according to Chen, as Taiwanese flock to Shanghai, they themselves create various labels for different identities, classified according to economic and social status. Some examples of the labels include small- and medium-level Taiwanese business owners (*xiao taishang*), Taiwanese managers or staff posted in China (*taigan*), Taiwanese who choose to stay in the mainland despite career setbacks (*zhongyou yizu* or *tailiu*), Taiwanese laborers working in China (*tailao*), Taiwanese housewives (*taima*), female dependents of prominent *taishang* (*xianxian meidaizi*), and female dependents of unsuccessful *taishang* (*genben meidaizi*), and so on. These labels, seemingly simple colloquial expressions, register the self-description of those Taiwanese living in Shanghai, the self-articulation of their own transnational identities, identities which are multiple as a consequence of the international division of labor.²⁸

These self-articulating labels, unrecognized by the official account of the Shanghai-Taipei link, indicate how the industrial network of global city-regions shapes transnational cultural identities. As suggested by Sassen's findings on global cities discussed earlier, the hierarchization of manpower tends to polarize cultural identity. The two ends of the spectrum, top-notch business professionals and new/illegal immigrants and foreign laborers doing 3D jobs (jobs that are dirty, dangerous, and difficult), thus become two most readily recognizable subject-positions for transnational migrants. This split cultural identity of global city-regions helps us understand the zero-sum game implied by these self-affixing labels – Chen describes in his books that the winners in Shanghai are those who have earned a lot of US dollars and managed to acquire a respectable reputation among their fellow Taiwanese, while the losers are those who end up becoming cheap laborers (*tailao*) or urban drifters (*tailiu*) (Chen 2003: 182–183). Such duality of winner and loser in fact derives from the polarized logic of identity formation of global-city regions – one is either a member of the global elite or of the underclass. To succeed in Shanghai the *taishang* must possess substantial financial resources and professional skills, given that they lack civil rights in the mainland, and their legitimate interests are yet to be clearly defined. Failing to establish a foothold, Taiwanese in Shanghai easily slip down the class ladder and thereby become laborers in a foreign land, not so different from the Thais and Filipinos working in Taiwan.

Now the only identity they can cling to is the one that indicates their Taiwanese origin, where 'Taiwanese' now becomes a pejorative term suggesting no upward mobility. Associated with the underclass in the international pool of divided (that is, class-ranked) labor, *tai* here takes on derogatory, deprecatory implications. The prefix *tai* is thus Janus-faced. On the one hand, it simply refers to the place of origin (Taiwanese) within the

larger framework of an assumed 'common cultural heritage.' On the other hand, it also indicates the 'otherness' of those who have failed to surmount the obstacles and become transnational elites.

To be more specific, the terms *tailao*, *zhongyou yizu*, and *tailiu* refer to the Taiwanese businesspeople and employees who have decided to stay in the mainland despite business failures and career setbacks. It is noteworthy that *taishang* have found it quite easy to conjure up these names to describe their circumstances since a translocal network of urban linkages for flexible accumulation of capital is already in existence, as demonstrated by the hybridity of languages. This also points to the fact that Taiwan is both the supplier and receiver of the international personnel flow. Thus the term Taiwanese laborer (*tailao*) shares a similar linguistic structure with the term *tailao* ('tai' means 'Thai') and Filipino servants (*feiyong*).²⁹ Here Taiwan's own experience with the international division of labor has contributed to the coinage of terms in such a way that foreign workers from countries like Thailand and the Philippines have become the mirror image of the Taiwanese in Shanghai. Likewise the second term, *zhongyou yizu* with its two shades of meaning, originates from the social reality of global people flow. On the one hand, *zhongyou* is a homophone for the abbreviation of the Chinese Petroleum Corporation in Taiwan. According to Chen, many *taishang* made a mockery of themselves by referring to C.W. Chen, the former president of the company. The label manifests *taishang*'s identification with C.W. Chen: 'Taiwan businesspeople felt for Chen's pain of being a pawn in the corporation, and therefore coined the term in 2002' (Chen 2003: 35). At the same time, *zhongyou* is also an abbreviation of 'drifters in China' (*zhongguo youmin*). In this sense, the term echoes *tailiu*, meaning 'floating migrants' (*liumin*), which points to an acute social problem facing China as a consequence of the uneven development of globalization and thus widening class divisions during recent years.

By the same token, the terms *xianxian meidaizi* (a rich idle woman) and *genben meidaizi* (a woman who cannot afford to do anything) fall into the binary class structure predetermined by the international division of labor. The former refers to wives of global urban elites, traveling to and fro across the Taiwan Strait and around the world for their vacation rather than for business or familial responsibilities. The latter designates those who do not have much to do in Shanghai because of their lack of social and financial resources. The two terms are also the products of language hybridity unique to Taiwan. While terms like *tailao* and *zhongyou yizu* originate from the corresponding class structure in Taiwan, *xianxian meidaizi* and *genben meidaizi* take their shape by mixing Taiwanese (Hokan) with Japanese rather than with either Mandarin or Shanghainese. Such coinage accentuates the influence of the Japanese language in Taiwan, ever since the end of the colonial period, it has been borrowed to express novel Taiwanese ideas.³⁰ Again, in a sense this practice calls into question the validity of 'sharing a common language and culture.' To the Shanghainese, who are ethnic Chinese, the term *meidaizi* does not mean anything until it is translated. The hybridity seen in these labels suggests the socio-historical complexity involved in identity formation.

Also significant is the relation between the *meidaizi* and the diaspora experience of women.³¹ The complex relationship between the division of labor and the construction of transnational identity rests on gender differences as well as class hierarchy. As James Clifford argues, diaspora has long been regarded as an experience exclusive to men: '[d]iasporic experiences are always gendered. But there is a tendency for theoretical accounts of diasporas and diaspora culture to hide this fact, to talk of travel and displacement in unmarked ways, thus normalizing male experiences' (Clifford 1994: 313). As the division of labor reaches a global scale, the number of women immigrating or working in foreign lands has increased enormously. In Chen's works, *meidaizi* has become an exclusive term for Taiwanese women in the mainland. Yet, although its referent nowadays includes de facto not only the female dependants of *taishang*, but also business women and female staff working in China, the term is still mainly reserved for the wives, whose social standing is determined

by their husbands' achievements. Similarly, the term *taima* (*ma* means mother) implies 'wives of *taishang*,' who stay in Shanghai to take care of their children. Confined to the roles of wives and mothers, Taiwanese women in Shanghai currently do not have available identity labels to account for their diverse array of experiences beyond the domestic sphere.³² Seen in this light, the 'self' in the 'self-articulation' of Taiwanese in Shanghai exemplified by these labels is a mere façade. Under the guise of a homogeneous entity, it conceals a complex multiplicity of both class and gender differences that still require rigorous interpretation.

Conclusion

The labor regimes of globalization produce plural transnational subjects that require cultural articulation and recognition. To expose and challenge the assumptions underlying the production and representation of their cultural identities, we have to explore the politics of presence and absence whose manipulations conceal the contradictions between flexible accumulation of global capital and flexible citizenship in the geographical context of global-city regions. *The Protein Girl* series exemplifies the mobility of capital in a global network, entertaining its readers with vignettes of a sexy professional managerial elite, urban glamour zones and barely existent national borders. On the other hand Chen's works, written as a pedagogical tool for Taiwanese, open up important questions about the social tensions produced within and across various geographical scales. Situating these texts in the context of the Taipei-Shanghai linkage, I analyze the imagination of the flexible identities, enabled by the material conditions of the urban network, and further lay bare the intricate connections between the new geopolitical regionalism and cultural narrative of transnational Chinese. Juxtaposing Wang's novels and Chen's survival guides, I have tried to bring to light the complexity of articulating and constructing transnational identities in the contemporary context of global city-regions.

Notes

1. See Allen J. Scott (2001) *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy* and Saskia Sassen's (2002a) *Global Networks, Linked Cities*. According to Scott, global city-regions generally take one of the three following forms: 'the basic figure of a central metropolitan area with a hinterland,' 'conurbations, spatially overlapping or converging urban areas,' and 'alliances of geographically distinct but proximate urban centers' (Scott 2001: 4).
2. See Sassen (2002b) and Holston and Appadurai (1996). For research on (Shanghai) *taishang*'s identity formation in relation to nation-states and Taiwan subjectivity, see Geng (2002) and Wang Horng-luen (2005).
3. The author thanks the reviewer for his/her question.
4. According to Kim, the most influential East Asian regional organization is likely to be the ASEAN+3, which refers to the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the NEA-3, China, Japan, and South Korea (Kim 2004: 10). Kim argues that 'the center of gravity for economic regionalism has already shifted away from the US-dominated APEC toward ASEAN+3' (Kim 2004: 13).
5. The center of the Yellow Sea Regional Cooperation Zone is the Chinese Bohai Sea Rim, which embraces the two municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin, and the three provinces of Hebei, Liaoning, and Shandong (Friedmann 2001: 131).
6. For discussions of contemporary Hong Kong and Shanghai as a tale of two cities, see Ackbar Abbas (2000) 'Cosmopolitan Descriptions: Shanghai and Hong Kong,' and Tsung-yi Michelle Huang (2005) 'Mutual Gazing and Self-Writing: Revisiting the Tale of Hong Kong and Shanghai as Global City-Regions.'
7. For example, two joint projects on 'two coasts and three regions' in the publishing and film industry have been launched since 2001: one is a series of novella collections entitled 'Tale of Three Cities: Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taipei,' edited respectively by Wang Anyi, David Der-wei Wang and Xu Zidong. The other is Jiao Hsiung-ping's six-film project entitled 'Tales of Three Cities.' The project recruited directors from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China to tell stories about the urban changes in Taipei, Hong Kong and Beijing.

8. Chou Yi-heng and Hsu Ming-yi proposed to develop Taiwan-centered Double Golden Triangles, namely, Silicon Valley–Taipei–Shanghai and Tokyo–Taipei–Shanghai.
9. For a detailed analysis of the relationship between East Asian Chinese regionalism and nation-state sovereignty, see Ong's (2004) 'The Chinese Axis: Zoning Technologies and Variegated Sovereignty.' Ong argues that 'Greater China' is 'a state-driven strategy to integrate economically disarticulated political entities as a detour toward eventual political integration' (Ong 2004:70).
10. For the collective identity of the rich in China, see Shi Lei (2004).
11. For discussions of the two expanding classes of global cities, see Sassen (1998).
12. Based on his findings, Xiong Yuezhi, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, translates 'New Shanghainese' into 'Blueprint residents' (*lanyin hukou*): in 1994 the Pudong local government developed the Blue-Cover Residence Card (*Lanyin Hukou*) so that 'those who came to Shanghai could become Shanghainese.... the *Lanyin hukou*, in other words, is the local version of investor immigrants and skilled immigrants' (Xiong 2003: 119–120). In the year 2000 only 30,000 of the 3,530,000 non-local permanent residents in Shanghai were granted the status of 'Blueprint resident.'
13. Although the rural migrant workers in Shanghai is not the case study of this paper, it is instructive to point out that the seemingly open-door-cosmopolitan identity of New Shanghainese is in fact a privilege for the chosen few – mainly the elite migrants such as translocal/transnational investors and the professional managerial class. The fact that those non-locals who are denied this identity of New Shanghainese (e.g. the large number of low-class migrant workers) greatly outnumber those who stay inside the gate of the glorious global city indicates that this cultural construct is a far cry from the democratic spirit it purports to embody.
14. I have argued elsewhere that two common rules can be found in the rhetoric of urban planning as seen in the contemporary East Asian global city campaign. One is an arduous attempt to look for an ideal other, that is, a role-model such as London or New York as a blueprint for redevelopment. The other is to look back and find a historical era of the city that rationalizes the global city formation as a continuation of the old glories. That is, the nostalgic narratives of Old Shanghai are informed by the projected self-image of the global city.
15. I borrow the term 'collective instruction' from Susan Sontag (2003: 85).
16. Ma explains that such 'remigration' registers 'a development that has expanded the area extent of the Chinese diaspora, created new paths of transnational circulation of people and capital, and contributed to the diaspora's social heterogeneity' (Ma 2003: 19).
17. See Wang's official website; <http://www.readingtimes.com.tw/authors/tomwang/promote/cn.htm>.
18. Jimmy Liao is a renowned illustrator from Taipei, 'whose illustrated books with simple stories about people coping in the modern urban world have become hot sellers in Taipei, Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Singapore' (*Taipei Times* 2003). His picture books, including *Sound of Colors* and *Turn Left, Turn Right*, have been adapted into films, TV dramas and plays in Hong Kong and China.
19. With an MBA degree from Stanford, Wang himself once was a member of the professional managerial class.
20. Addressing himself in the second-person, the narrator describes his romantic longing in detail:

She [Jia-jia] would make an in-flight call on her way to New York while you are talking to your boss about the price-earning ratio of Cisco System's stocks. She would be telling you that she is flying over Fiji, where you two had a sweet time together. Then you have no choice but to tell your boss that you have to take this call. You think of how you two will be parasailing high in the sky over the small island of Fiji. Blown by the wind, your parachute flies so close to hers that you can give her a quick kiss. Then the parachutes become entangled. So you two just fall into the ocean together to feed the fish. You figure she would fax you a piece of blank paper with tiny words on the lower right corner, 'me in New York without you' and you would fax her back from your office a piece of black paper, saying 'broad daylight in Taipei without you' (Wang 2000: 237).

21. In addition, the mass media's circulation of Shanghai people's homegrown cultural identities produced in response to globalization, such as 'the international freeman,' 'the white-collar lady' (*bailing liren*), and particularly 'the successful people,' serve as precursors that help Shanghai readers to identify with Wang's global urban elite in Taipei.
22. In other words, Wang's cross-strait popularity resulted from Shanghai readers' identification with the ideal users of the global city (-regions) and the geographical fantasy of being at home in the world through transnational urban linkage. The underlying contradiction inherent in this new cultural imagination lies in its annihilation of all kinds of differences among the cities, socio-political, material, and cultural. At the same time, when the global elite are projected as the legitimate users of the urban glamour zone, other social classes and urban realities are often hidden from sight. The 'urban reality' one

- sees is nothing more than a phantasmagoria of global brand name products, a space for consumption. The author thanks the reviewer for the question he/she raises here.
23. Wang Yung-ching has said in public quite a few times that he opposes the government's 'go slow' policy toward investment in China: 'In the face of the unstoppable mainland heat, Taiwan simply can't run against the global trend of opening up the mainland market'. ... 'Taiwan's people should calmly accept the 'one China' principle, and from this position of equality, both sides can cooperate and enjoy long-lasting mutual benefits' (Lin 2004: 111).
 24. According to a special report in *Asiaweek* in 2001, 'Chen is in such demand in Taipei that business associations have to wait for weeks to get him to speak' (*Asiaweek* 2001).
 25. Jin Bi, a Taiwanese sociologist in Shanghai, has also repeatedly reminded her readers to avoid the pitfalls of 'same language, same ethnic origin': 'More often than not Taiwanese businesspeople are deceived by the rhetoric of 'same language, same ethnic origin,' assuming that there will be no problem of communicating with Shanghai people. Yet in reality speaking the same language certainly doesn't mean we share the same sets of values' (Jin 2001: 220).
 26. In contrast to *Global Views Monthly's* special issue, which calls Taiwanese in Shanghai New Shanghainese as mentioned earlier, in *New Shanghainese*, a collection of essays articulating the new cultural identity of Shanghai people in the age of globalization, no authors define Taiwanese in Shanghai as New Shanghainese (Shanghai Zendai Institute 2003).
 27. I thank the reviewer for bringing my attention to Ong's observation.
 28. See Chen for *xiao taishang* (Chen 2003: 75), *zhongyou yizu* (Chen 2003: 30, 35), *xianxian meidaizi* and *genben meidaizi* (Chen 2003:16–29), and also for *tailao* (Chen 2001: 10, 128–42). For *tailiu* see Tan (2004: 194–203).
 29. The word *tailiu* was coined by *The Business Weekly* in 2001.
 30. Two recent examples are 'tatsu-jin' (*daren*) and 'kuso' (*egao*). The former means 'connoisseur' and the latter, originally referring to human excrement, now usually designates a subculture that defies mainstream values.
 31. The meanings of diaspora here deviate from the word's traditional association with exile. As Ong explains, 'diaspora politics describe not an already existing social phenomenon, but rather a social category called into being by newly empowered transnational subjects' (Ong 2003: 88). To be precise, my use follows those of Khachig Tölölian and James Clifford. As Clifford maintains, 'flexible accumulation requires massive transnational flows of capital and labor—depending on, and producing, diasporic populations' (Clifford 1994: 311). *Taishang* in Shanghai could be seen as such diasporic population, one of 'the exemplary communities of the transnational moment' in Tölölian's terms (qtd. in Clifford 1994: 303), communities born at the current transnational moment of flexible accumulation and the rise of global city-regions. I also employ *taishang's* case to illustrate the complicated diaspora consciousness produced in response to the variegated experience of migration, including displacement, assimilation, or syncretism, just to name a few. My analysis of the self-articulating labels of *taishang* helps elucidate how 'it [diaspora] is about feeling global' (Clifford 1994: 312).
 32. For Taiwanese women in Shanghai, see Ji (2003).

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Special terms

bailing 自僱

bailing liren 自僱麗人

caizi jiaren 才子佳人
chenggong renshi 成功人士
daren 達人
egao 惡搞
feiyong 菲佣
ganjue youjiao 感覺有角
gaoweixiu nuzi 高維修女子
genben meidaizi 根本美代子
haina baichuan 海納百川
huangjin sanjiao 黃金三角
IF zu IF 族
L nagezi L 那個字
lanyin houkou 藍印戶口
liumin 流民
sanchengji 三城記
shijie ren 世界人
shuangchengji 雙城記
shunu shashou 淑女殺手
taigan 台幹
tailao 台勞
tailao 幸勞
tailiu 台流
taima 台媽
tang baba 糖爸爸
xianxian meidaizi 閒閒美代子
xiao taishang 小白筒
xin shanghai ren 新上海人
xinfu 新寓
zhongchan 中產
zhongguo youmin 中國遊民
zhonghua ren 中華人
zhongyou yizu 中遊一族

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