

Tactical Identity China Taiwan

Tactical Identity of The New Wave of Taiwanese Migrants in China - research project by Ai Ke

We are happy to inform that a new research project, financed from the National Centre of Science (Preludium), will be held in the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology! It is a project by Ai Ke (supervised by prof. [Jacek Żukowski](#)): *Tactical Identity of The New Wave of Taiwanese Migrants in China?* (No DEC-2023/49/N/HS3/00238).

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China and Taiwan have a history of political dispute and tension over more than 70 years, resulting in the formation of different national identities due to their separation and distinct social, cultural, and political developments. The proposed research project focuses on the new wave of Taiwanese migrants in China, who identify as ethno-national Taiwanese and face challenges in negotiating their national and cultural identity in their everyday lives. This group of migrants shares cultural and ethnic features with the host society but encounters difficulties in adaptation due to China's growing nationalism over the sovereignty of Taiwan, as well as evolving identity formation and changing political situations across the Taiwan Strait. However, this also provides the research group with an unprecedented opportunity for daily contact with local Chinese, while for the researcher it enables observation of how the migrants negotiate their national identity through everyday tactics. This unique position between foreign and kin, suspicious and similar, offers insights into the negotiation of identity and the experiences of Taiwanese migrants in China, shedding light on the subtle impact of ChinaTaiwan politics on their daily lives.

The research project aims to investigate how Taiwanese migrants in China negotiate their national and cultural identity, as well as how they respond tactically and emotionally to the challenges they face. The research questions include:

1. How does the Taiwanese identity of the migrant group change in their transnational lives, at both individual and group levels?



2. How do the migrants negotiate their Taiwanese identity in their everyday lives when it is denied in the host country's mainstream politics?
3. What role does the Taiwan Mandarin accent play in their daily encounters with local Chinese?
4. What challenges do they face in everyday life, and how do they tackle them?
5. What are the migrants' reactions to the dissonance between the declarative inclusion of every person sharing Chinese identity into the Chinese society and the actual practice?

The proposed project fills a gap in the existing research on Taiwanese migration to China, focusing on the younger generation of migrants born after the 1980s. The project contributes to the field of migration studies by examining the negotiability of cultural and national identity in the micro-level experiences of Taiwanese migrants. Additionally, it explores the impact of language accent on the visibility of their ethno-national identity and investigates the tactics they employ to navigate the complex political landscape.

The research project involves developing a theoretical framework through grounded theory approach, where theories and concepts are developed in close dialogue with the collected data and are thus closely tied to realworld experiences and observations. The approach requires the researcher to conduct substantive ethnographic fieldwork among Taiwanese migrants in major cities of China (Beijing, Shanghai) and Taiwan. The project also includes a study of social media and film.

The proposed research project on the tactical identity of the new wave of Taiwanese migrants in China will contribute to migration studies and expand the understanding of transnational experiences and identity work in a highly politicized context. By exploring the negotiation of national and cultural identity, the project will challenge existing notions of home/abroad dichotomy and provides insights into the complexity of transnational/trans-local identity construction. The project's findings have the potential to reformulate the definitions of transnationalism and thus give ground for the re-evaluation of the previous research in the field of migration and identity studies.

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