

Chinese Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands from the 1970s to the Present

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on Dutch Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who have a long history in Dutch society, but still lack attention. Aiming to explore the uniqueness of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, the thesis considers the changing characteristics and social context of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands (especially Rotterdam and Amsterdam) from a historical perspective. It fills a research gap in this field by examining the motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs over a 50-year historical span. The research methodology combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitatively, it provides an up-to-date description of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands from 1970 to the present, including their demographic characteristics in a comparative view. At the micro-individual level, the thesis interviewed 10 Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who provide first-hand accounts of their entrepreneurial experiences and motivations at different times. Using the mixed embeddedness approach as the main theoretical framework, this thesis considers the interaction of factors affecting immigrant entrepreneurship including networks of immigrants, social context, and opportunity structures of changing times. Using this framework, this thesis can provide a nuanced understanding of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands within their social and historical context.

This thesis sheds light on the changing characteristics, sociocultural contexts, and motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, enriching the understanding of immigrant entrepreneurial dynamics. In addition, it highlights the importance of historical, comparative, and theoretical frameworks when investigating immigrant entrepreneurship. It opens avenues for future research on the specific challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and their long-term impact on the Chinese community and Dutch society.

KEYWORDS: Chinese immigrant, entrepreneurship, the Netherlands, mix embeddedness approach, motivation, life experience.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, immigration has transformed societies worldwide, leading to diverse, multicultural nations. Among the numerous immigrant populations, Chinese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands constitute a distinctive and fascinating group.¹ This thesis aims to elucidate their characteristics, experiences, and motivations, offering valuable insights into the world of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Much of the existing literature on immigrant entrepreneurs in Dutch society, especially quantitative research, has focused on groups such as mainstream Turkey and Morocco.² Research on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs still concentrates on the early aggregation of Chinese caterers since the 1970s and the impact on the Dutch catering landscape.³ Over time, second-generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs have gradually emerged in the research field, and there is now a gradual increase in the number of voices studying Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs.⁴ While the qualitative study of migrant entrepreneurs has been widely discussed as a particular case in the study of second-generation Chinese migrants, there is still a lack of in-depth research on the motivations of Chinese migrant entrepreneurs over a long historical span. In the Netherlands, and in particular in Rotterdam's Katendrecht,

1 Minghuan Li, *We Need Two Worlds : Chinese Immigrant Associations in a Western Society* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 27–52, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n197.6>.

2 B. Martinovic, F. van Tubergen, and I. Maas, 'Dynamics of Interethnic Contact: A Panel Study of Immigrants in the Netherlands', *European Sociological Review* 25, no. 3 (1 June 2009): 303–18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcn049>.

3 Masja Van Meeteren and Ellen Wiering, 'Labour Trafficking in Chinese Restaurants in the Netherlands and the Role of Dutch Immigration Policies. A Qualitative Analysis of Investigative Case Files', *Crime, Law and Social Change* 72, no. 1 (August 2019): 107–24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-019-09853-6>.

4 Pascal Beckers and Boris F. Blumberg, 'Immigrant Entrepreneurship on the Move: A Longitudinal Analysis of First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25, no. 7–8 (September 2013): 654–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.808270>.

following the footsteps of the first Chinese immigrants on the Europe continent in 1911, a historical perspective reveals that the structure, characteristics, and social context of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands have changed dramatically.⁵ Walking along the waterfront terrace in the Katendrecht, it is easy to spot the Rotterdam Migration Museum, which broke ground in 2020 on the conversion of the Fenix warehouse. Fenix is a testament to the history of immigration in Europe's ports, linking the past and present of Dutch society and inspiring people through the universal theme of 'immigration'.⁶ As Europe's largest port city, Rotterdam's large, mobile population has developed and shaped the city's unique social and public life. Amsterdam, the capital of the Netherlands, has also attracted a large number of Chinese immigrants to settle there, as has Rotterdam.⁷ With this in mind, in-depth research of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in these two cities seems worthwhile.

This thesis will update the quantitative description of the subject of the study - Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands from 1970 to the present including their age, gender, career, sector, educational background, etc. At the micro-personal level, the paper covers the personal experiences of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs from the 1970s to 2023 through interviews with 10 migrants. The oral history content of the entrepreneurs from different periods is used to qualitatively discuss their entrepreneurial motivation dynamics at different times. This thesis hopes to provide an evolving way of thinking about the subject and research outcomes, thereby filling a research gap in the field.

⁵ Peter Scholten, Maurice Crul, and Paul van de Laar, eds., *Coming to Terms with Superdiversity: The Case of Rotterdam*, IMISCOE Research Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96041-8>.

⁶ Baldwin, Eric . "MAD Breaks Ground on Museum of Migration in Rotterdam." ArchDaily, November 16, 2020. <https://www.archdaily.com/951476/mad-breaks-ground-on-museum-of-migration-in-rotterdam>.

⁷ AlleCijfers, "Migratie Uit China En Chinese Inwoners (Chinezen) in Nederland (Bijgewerkt 2023!)," AlleCijfers.nl, December 27, 2022, <https://allecijfers.nl/migratie-nationaliteiten-geboortelanden/china/>.

The main theoretical framework applied in this thesis is the mixed embeddedness approach, which examines the interplay of factors influencing immigrant entrepreneurship, including immigrant groups, the resources and social networks of immigrants, the wider socio-economic context, and the opportunity structure in changing eras.⁸ This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, incorporating not only their motivations and capabilities but also the social and historical context within which they operate. To delve into these topics, an extensive research methodology has been employed. This involved a literature review, data collection and collation from publicly available sources, analysis of governmental policies, and newspaper articles relevant to Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands.⁹ In addition, semi-structured interviews conducted by 10 Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs provide a first-hand account and unique perspective on the entrepreneurial journey of Chinese immigrants at different times.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of Chinese immigrant experiences and the factors underpinning their entrepreneurial success in the Netherlands. The findings reveal changing characteristics, socio-cultural backgrounds, and motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, thereby contributing to a richer understanding of the dynamics of immigrant entrepreneurship. Moreover, the thesis underscores the importance of considering historical, comparative, and theoretical frameworks when investigating immigrant entrepreneurship. The findings of this thesis shed light on the particular circumstances and challenges for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and discuss their motivations for starting their businesses in the face of different challenges at different times. Looking ahead, the thesis opens

⁸ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne Van Der Leun, and Jan Rath, 'Mixed Embeddedness: (In)Formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23, no. 2 (June 1999): 252–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00194>.

⁹ Mérove Isabelle Léontine Gijsberts, Willem Huijnk, and Ria Vogels, eds., *Chinese Nederlanders: van horeca naar hogeschool*, SCP-publicatie 2011–21 (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2011).

avenues for future inquiries into the specific challenges of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs across different industries and the long-term impact of their enterprises on both the Chinese community and Dutch society.

1.1 Literature Review

The Chinese provided labor in the global economic activity of the 20th century. In Europe, Chinese sailors gathered in Rotterdam and Amsterdam in the 1910s and Hamburg in the 1920s. Since the 1980s, new Chinese immigrants have played an important role in transnational capitalism, particularly in Europe with entrepreneurial immigrants from Zhejiang province.¹⁰ To this point, historians have increasingly focused on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. This section reviews the literature from a historical perspective and provides the basis for answering the research questions.

1.1.1 Chinese Immigrants from a Historical Perspective

As Europe's largest port city, Rotterdam's large transient population has developed and shaped the city's unique social and public life. In 2017 around 50.3% of Rotterdam's inhabitants were of immigrant background. The share of immigrants has increased significantly over the past 20 years with groups from Suriname (8%), Turkey (8%), and Morocco (7%) making up the majority of them. Since 1911, when Chinese immigrants landed in Katendrecht, the identity, occupational choices and social integration of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands have changed dramatically over the course of more than 100 years.¹¹ Rotterdam had a 'Chinatown' in the Katendrecht district since 1911, an artificial harbor peninsula on the south bank

¹⁰ Tiziana Caponio, Peter Scholten, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of the Governance of Migration and Diversity in Cities*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351108478>.28-54

¹¹ Peter Scholten, Maurice Crul, and Paul van de Laar, eds., *Coming to Terms with Superdiversity: The Case of Rotterdam*, IMISCOE Research Series (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-96041-8>.1-15

of the Maas River. The first Chinese immigrants settled here in 1911, most of the newcomers living in poor conditions and working in port jobs. During the global economic depression of 1929, many Chinese seamen fell into unemployment, and the unemployed Chinese were considered a burden on Rotterdam society and were not respected by other citizens. By the 1930s there were around 2,500 Chinese living in Katendrecht and local girls considered marrying Chinese entrepreneurs, such as Chinese restaurant operators, as an opportunity for upward mobility. This means that Chinese immigrants (especially entrepreneurs) gradually began to intermarry with the local population.¹² Most of the Chinese seafarers and some influential public figures who moved here during this period came from Bao'an in the Pearl River Delta, running boarding houses and restaurants. There were also sailors from Shanghai and Ningbo, and a group of Chinese merchants from Qingtian in Zhejiang who traveled all over Europe, selling goods such as porcelain.¹³ In the research of both Rint Sybesma and Charles Archambault, the diverse composition of the Chinese in the Netherlands in terms of language, migration history, and socio-economics is highlighted. The use and popularity of Mandarin is a good example of the diversity and change of Chinese immigrants. In the 1970s and early 1980s, almost no Chinese immigrants spoke Mandarin. Most Chinese immigrants come from Hong Kong, Macau, or Southeast Asian countries, where Cantonese and dialects such as Hakka are their first languages. This all changed in the late 90s to early 2000s, when immigration from Hong Kong decreased and immigration from mainland China started to increase dramatically. Not only do new immigrants speak Mandarin, but the prevalence of Mandarin in places such as Cantonese-speaking areas reflects the situation in China and the rising status of Mandarin, which is closely related to

¹² Scholten, Crul, and van de Laar.29-54

¹³ Vanessa Künnemann and Ruth Mayer, eds., *Chinatowns in a Transnational World: Myths and Realities of an Urban Phenomenon* (New York : London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011).45-61

China's growing importance. In many ways, this diversity reflects China's complex domestic history.¹⁴

In the 1930s, unemployed Chinese sailors sold homemade peanut biscuits on the streets of Rotterdam, and the small business quickly became a huge success.¹⁵ In the 1960s and 1970s, Chinese immigrants from China's Guangdong Province, Zhejiang Province, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia arrived in the Netherlands and concentrated on working in the Dutch catering industry which contributed to the rapid expansion of this industry during that period.¹⁶ By the 1970s Chinese restaurants were popping up all over the Netherlands, and Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs made their presence known to the Dutch people time and time again.¹⁷ After nearly half a century of flourishing Chinese restaurants in the Netherlands, they were in decline due to a decrease in demand and a lack of manpower, and the decline of immigrants from Hong Kong.¹⁸ With the opening up of mainland China in 1978, the Dutch Chinese restaurants were able to recruit staff from their native (mostly Fujianese) areas, and from this time

¹⁴ Rint Sybesma, Chinese in the Netherlands Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics, Ed. Rint Sybesma, Wolfgang Behr, Yueguo Gu, Zev Handel, C.-T. James Huang and James Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 456–62,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319059080_Chinese_in_the_Netherlands.

¹⁵ Vanessa Künnemann and Ruth Mayer, eds., Chinatowns in a Transnational World: Myths and Realities of an Urban Phenomenon (New York : London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2011). 45-61

¹⁶ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands: Corridor Report. (LU: Publications Office, 2015), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2870/803488>.

¹⁷ Caponio, Scholten, and Zapata-Barrero, The Routledge Handbook of the Governance of Migration and Diversity in Cities.

¹⁸ Mérove Gijsberts, Willem Huijnk, and Ria Vogels, Chinese Nederlanders. Van Horeca Naar Hogeschool (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2011), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306360018_Chinese_Nederlanders_Van_horeca_naar_hogeschool

onwards the typical immigrant was no longer the uneducated poor like sailors from backward areas.¹⁹

As more and more second-generation immigrants with better education and social integration decided to become entrepreneurs, there is also a growing number of research focusing on the differences and links between first-generation and second-generation immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. Katja Rušinović and Imiscoe pointed out that first-generation Chinese immigrants were the most active entrepreneurs among immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. They chose to become entrepreneurs almost twice as often as native Dutch people.²⁰ In addition to the high rate of entrepreneurship among Chinese first-generation immigrants, second-generation Chinese immigrants are also a special group in the study by Pascal Beckers and Boris F. Blumberg. The results of their study show that among immigrant entrepreneurs from a total of five ethnic groups, only second-generation Chinese entrepreneurs outperformed their parents in terms of profitability, with business survival rates comparable to those of the locals. This implies that the second generation of Chinese entrepreneurs had a stronger business performance. When the first generation of Chinese immigrants arrived in the Netherlands, most of them became self-employed and the second generation of Chinese immigrants did very well in the Dutch education system, even surpassing the locals in terms of educational and labor market achievements, and were on a par with the Dutch locals in terms of business success. Many second-generation Chinese immigrants have been able to start successful businesses in the service sector through high levels of education and

¹⁹ Rint Sybesma, *Chinese in the Netherlands in Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 456–62,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319059080_Chinese_in_the_Netherlands.

²⁰ Katja Rušinović and Imiscoe (Organization, *Dynamic Entrepreneurship: First and Second-Generation Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Dutch Cities* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, Cop, 2006), 9–36, 109–33.

training.²¹

1.1.2 Different Social and Immigrant Backgrounds

Chinatowns in a Transnational World, a study of Chinese immigrants, notes that since 1978, China has embarked on economic reforms that have relaxed strict controls on the movement of people.²² The composition of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands has evolved. In contrast to the wave of immigrants in the 1970s, the new Chinese immigrants, especially after the 2000s, are mainly from the People's Republic of China. In addition, the large number of legal immigrants is linked to the growth of students and highly skilled immigrants.²³

Since the late 1970s, globalization has advanced rapidly. The immigrants who arrived at that time, therefore, faced a changing environment.²⁴ The Netherlands, as a country with a rich multicultural tradition, has always struggled to balance multiculturalism with an 'immigrants' identity, and the Dutch government's attitudes and policies towards immigrants have been in a constant state of flux from 1970 to the present. María Bruquetas-Callejo et al. gave a great summary of the policy transformation in this period: In the 1970s, the Dutch government's attitude towards immigrants was relatively relaxed. At that time, the Dutch economy was in a blooming time, many industries with labor shortages brought in large numbers of workers from countries

²¹ Pascal Beckers and Boris F. Blumberg, "Immigrant Entrepreneurship on the Move: A Longitudinal Analysis of First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands," *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25, no. 7-8 (September 2013): 654–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.808270>.

²² Vanessa Künnemann and Ruth Mayer, *Chinatowns in a Transnational World* (Routledge, 2012), 45–

²³ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

²⁴ Robert C. Kloosterman, Katja Rusinovic, and David Yeboah, "Super-Diverse Migrants—Similar Trajectories? Ghanaian Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands Seen from a Mixed Embeddedness Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 6 (January 22, 2016): 913–32, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2015.1126091>.

such as Turkey and Morocco. The number of immigrants for family reunification (i.e., bringing the spouse and children of the resident family) also continued to grow until it peaked in the early 1980s. To facilitate the integration of these migrant workers, a policy known as 'multiculturalism' was introduced, which aimed to protect and respect the cultural and religious habits of immigrants, so that they could freely maintain their way of life and traditions. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, as the number of immigrants continued to grow, more and more social problems began to emerge. A declining economy cannot accommodate more immigrant workers, and low-skilled immigrants with higher unemployment rates have to take up more social benefits. Some immigrants formed isolated communities within Dutch society and had difficulty integrating into mainstream society. This triggered social tensions and caused the Dutch government to re-examine its immigrant integration policy. During this period, the Dutch government began to adopt a stricter immigration policy, requiring new immigrants to learn Dutch and to attend training courses on Dutch culture and values. As the Netherlands entered the 21st century, immigration policy was further adjusted in the context of the challenges of globalization and terrorism. The assassination of Dutch-born filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Moroccan Dutch in 2004 triggered social panic and a review of immigration policy. Since then, the Netherlands has intensified its scrutiny of immigrant backgrounds and strengthened the requirements for integration courses and Dutch language tests. During this period, the Dutch government also took measures to restrict immigration from non-European countries and introduced a series of projects aimed at promoting the integration of immigrants into mainstream society.²⁵

When it comes to social policy and its influence on immigrant entrepreneurship, some researchers have further proposed social policy support to encourage immigrant entrepreneurship. Robert C. Kloosterman and Joanne P. van Der Leun, in their study

²⁵ María Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 'Policymaking Related to Immigration and Integration. The Dutch Case.', n.d.

of start-ups in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, emphasize that city policies should help to maximize the positive impact of migrant entrepreneurs on their communities. For example, by providing better housing and extending the duration of residence of successful migrant entrepreneurs in these communities, the socio-economic benefits of the community can be expanded.²⁶ Ayda Eraydin, Tuna Tasan-Kok, and Jan Vranken examine the integration and contribution of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in Antwerp as an example to explore government recommendations: including that local and national governments should invest further in improving the capacity of social capital; and develop more integrated social policies to serve different groups. The government should develop new policies to promote the participation of immigrants with different cultural backgrounds in the economy, thus stimulating innovation and competition.²⁷

1.1.3 The Motivation for Immigrating Entrepreneurship

Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands present a strong motivation for self-employment and the pursuit of self-reliance. This is partly related to the motivation to move. Many Chinese arrive in the Netherlands with the ambition to start their own business. Usually, starting a business is the only way for immigrants to build successful careers. The lack of 'human capital' in the host country - education, working experience, and Dutch language skills - is a major obstacle for immigrants to find employment in the labor market. In addition, owning one's own business enjoys a high status in the Chinese community. Data on self-employment registered by the

²⁶ Robert C. Kloosterman and Joanne P. Van Der Leun, "Just for Starters: Commercial Gentrification by Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam Neighbourhoods," *Housing Studies* 14, no. 5 (September 1999): 659–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039982669>.

²⁷ Ayda Eraydin, Tuna Tasan-Kok, and Jan Vranken, "Diversity Matters: Immigrant Entrepreneurship and Contribution of Different Forms of Social Integration in Economic Performance of Cities," *European Planning Studies* 18, no. 4 (April 2010): 521–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654311003593556>.

Dutch Chamber of Commerce show that the proportion of Chinese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands is remarkably high (13.4%). This is almost twice as high as that of the native Dutch population (7.1%). Among the large immigrant groups, the proportion of self-employment is usually lower, especially among the Antilleans in the Netherlands (3.5%). Even among the Dutch Turks, who are known for their entrepreneurship, the proportion of self-employed people is much lower than among the Chinese (7.0%).²⁸

With a case study of Broadway Avenue in Wichita, Kansas, USA, Jay M. Price et al. demonstrates the unique business opportunity of immigrant entrepreneurs, or 'ethnic markets', showing that Chinese and Japanese immigrants developed an extensive tradition of business and entrepreneurship as the United States struggled through a decade of racial unrest. Chinese and Japanese home-based entrepreneurs in the region met the specific needs of their immigrant communities that could not be met by large local business networks. In addition, local Asian immigrants created networks and associations to provide capital and advocacy assistance. As a minority group, they have been able to carve out new niches and even thrive, while enduring some of the local racial struggles and tensions of power.²⁹

Research in the literature on the socio-cultural environment shows that discrimination plays a driving role among immigrant entrepreneurs. Robert C. Kloosterman & Joanne P. van Der Leun's research mentions that unemployment hits immigrants from non-industrialized countries (Turks, Moroccans, and, more recently, Iraq, Iran, etc.) hardest.³⁰ The study by Pascal Beckers and Boris F. Blumberg provides information

²⁸ Mérove Gijsberts, Willem Huijnk, and Ria Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders. Van Horeca Naar Hogeschool* (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2011), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306360018_Chinese_Nederlanders_Van_horeca_naar_hogeschool

²⁹ Jay M Price, Sue Abdinnour, and David T Hughes, "Del Norte Meets Little Saigon: Ethnic Entrepreneurship on Broadway Avenue in Wichita, Kansas, 1970–2015," *Enterprise & Society* 18, no. 3 (March 29, 2017): 632–77, <https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2016.76>.

³⁰ Robert C. Kloosterman and Joanne P. Van Der Leun, "Just for Starters: Commercial Gentrification

on the factors that influence the entrepreneurial intentions of young second-generation immigrants in the Netherlands and finds that, despite the socio-economic integration of these young people, the experience of discrimination in their entrepreneurial preferences is a significant factor. Young immigrants with a Muslim background are still discriminated against in Dutch society, especially in the labor market.³¹ Milan Jansen et al.'s study, exploring the determinants of entrepreneurship among immigrants from non-Western countries, provides a very interesting analytical perspective from a demographic point of view, while also pointing to discrimination as a driving factor: discrimination against immigrant clients may increase the demand for immigrant entrepreneurs (especially within sizeable ethnic enclaves). Conversely, discrimination in the entrepreneurial process can hurt immigrant entrepreneurship rates. Such discrimination may occur in the process of obtaining information from various institutions, applying for bank loans, negotiating prices with suppliers, etc.³² In addition to this, positive incentives for immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands have been identified in these studies on motivation, such as the attraction of developing new business ideas and the prospect of economic independence.

When discussing motivation, it is necessary to distinguish between first and second-generation Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands. This is because the background of upbringing and identity construction of these two generations may differ from that of first-generation immigrants. The results of Yidong Tao et al.'s analysis based on 12

by Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam Neighbourhoods,” *Housing Studies* 14, no. 5 (September 1999): 659–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039982669>.

³¹ Pascal Beckers and Boris F. Blumberg, “Immigrant Entrepreneurship on the Move: A Longitudinal Analysis of First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands,” *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25, no. 7-8 (September 2013): 654–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.808270>.

³² Milan Jansen et al., “Immigrant Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands Demographic Determinants of Entrepreneur- Ship of Immigrants from Non-Western Countries SCientific AnaLysis of Entrepreneurship and SMEs,” 2003, <https://ondernemerschap.panteia.nl/pdf-ez/h200304.pdf>.

interviews with second-generation Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands show that first-generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are mostly motivated by economic reasons, while second-generation entrepreneurs are attracted by social recognition, status, and ambition. As a result of growing up in the Netherlands, the educational background, Dutch proficiency and social integration of the second-generation immigrants are significantly better than their parents, and they are more diverse in industry choices than their parents. Second-generation immigrant entrepreneurs are gradually shifting from the restaurant industry to new sectors such as business-related professional services, information and communications technology, and creative industries. It also presents a tendency for individuals from small business-owning family backgrounds to follow in the footsteps of their parents. This study, which focuses on qualitative research, proposes a new research perspective on the motivations of immigrant entrepreneurship that distinguishes between generational differences and focuses on intergenerational influences. However, lacking further quantitative research to complement it, the study struggles to show the general group characteristics of second-generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs.³³

This thesis focuses on the transformation that happened to Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the past from a historical perspective. Considering the feasibility of the interviews, this research narrows the scope down to the research of Chinese immigrants from the 1970s to the present.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis aims to explore the demographic characteristics of Chinese entrepreneurs

³³ Yidong Tao, Caroline Essers, and Roos Pijpers, “Family and Identity: Intersectionality in the Lived Experiences of Second-Generation Entrepreneurs of Chinese Origin in the Netherlands,” *Journal of Small Business Management*, February 11, 2020, 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2019.1710014>.

in the Netherlands from the 1970s to the present and the motivations for entrepreneurial behavior in the face of a changing social context. It will address the following three research questions:

1. What are the changing demographic characteristics of Dutch Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs from the 1970s to the present?
2. What is the changing social context faced by Dutch Chinese immigrants like?
3. What motivated Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to start their business journey in the Netherlands from a historical perspective?

The thesis is structured as follows: the introduction chapter describes the research background and purpose, puts forward the research questions based on the literature review, and introduces the theoretical concepts and methodology. The literature review will discuss the existing research results on Chinese immigration in the Netherlands, including Chinese immigration from a historical perspective, changing social contexts, and entrepreneurial motivations. The mixed embeddedness approach will serve as the main theoretical framework of this thesis. The next three chapters in the main body respond to three research questions with a time frame from the 1970s to the present. Chapter 3 discusses the characteristics of Chinese immigrants and entrepreneurs in the Netherlands: education, age, gender, the industry of work, etc., in an attempt to present their evolution from 1970 to the present and a comparison with other major immigrant groups in the Netherlands. Chapter 4 discusses the social environment of the host country (the Netherlands) including changing economic, and social attitudes and policy conditions from a historical perspective. Chapter 5 discusses qualitatively, through interviews, the entrepreneurial motivations of the interviewees in terms of their personal experiences. Finally, chapter 6 concludes and discusses the limitations of this thesis and the implications for future research.

1.3 Theoretical Concepts

This section introduces the theoretical framework of this thesis, the mixed embeddedness approach that is widely accepted in academic discussions of immigration. The mixed embeddedness approach consists of three key components: the characteristics of immigrants, the dynamic social context, and the changing opportunity structures. This framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the entrepreneurial experience of Chinese migrants.

In 1990, Aldrich and Waldinger found a common theme in most studies on ethnic entrepreneurs: ethnic groups adapt to the resources provided by their environment, which vary greatly across different societies and periods. Drawing on contributions from researchers in various disciplines and employing multiple methodologies, they reviewed academic research on ethnic business development in their research '*Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship*'. They used a framework composed of three interacting components: opportunity structure, group characteristics, and strategies.³⁴ The opportunity structure encompasses market conditions for products or services targeting ethnic minorities, as well as the ease or difficulty for ethnic minorities to access business opportunities in the broader non-minority market. Group characteristics include reasons for migration, the cultural background of ethnic groups, their social networks, and government policies related to resource acquisition. Strategies are the outcomes of the interaction between the opportunity structure and group characteristics, representing how ethnic groups adapt to their environment. Their research highlights that ethnic groups often find themselves facing significantly different market conditions when there are changes in social structure. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics of market opportunities, as well as the cultural, social, and policy factors that shape the entrepreneurial behavior

³⁴ Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger, "Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship," *Annual Review of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (August 1990): 111–35, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.000551>.

of ethnic minority groups.³⁵

Figure 1.1 Research Framework by Aldrich and Waldinger (1990)



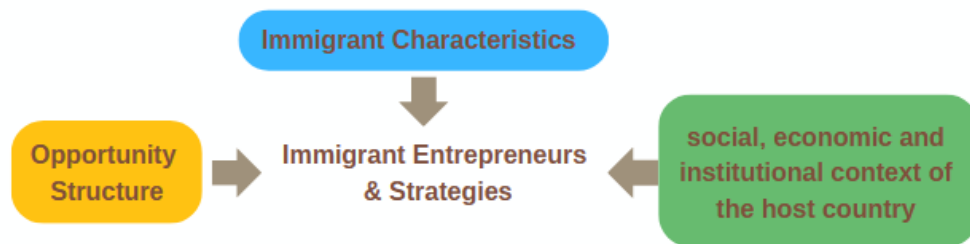
Source: Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger, “Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (August 1990): 111–35, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.000551>.

In 1999, three scholars from the Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden, Robert Kloosterman, Joanne van der Leun, and Jan Rath developed Aldrich and Waldinger's theoretical framework and propose a theory of ‘mixed embeddedness’ by discussing the role of immigrants in the informal economy in the Netherlands.³⁶ The mixed embeddedness approach has continued to develop and be widely accepted by the academic community in the following two decades, and this approach will be adopted as the theoretical structure of the body of this thesis.

³⁵ Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger, “Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (August 1990): 111–35, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.000551>.

³⁶ Robert Kloosterman, Joanne Van Der Leun, and Jan Rath, “Mixed Embeddedness: (In)Formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23, no. 2 (June 1999): 252–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00194>.

Figure 1.2 Mixed embeddedness approach



Source: Kloosterman, Robert C., Katja Rusinovic, and David Yeboah. “Super-Diverse Migrants—Similar Trajectories? Ghanaian Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands Seen from a Mixed Embeddedness Perspective.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 6 (January 22, 2016): 913–32.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2015.1126091>.

1.3.1 Characteristics of Immigrants

Changes in immigrant groups were astutely observed by Robert Kloosterman et al. in their research ‘*Mixed Embeddedness: (In)Formal Economic Activities and Immigrant Businesses in the Netherlands*’. It mentions a dramatic increase in immigration, especially immigrant entrepreneurship, and participation in the informal economy. The author focuses on the unemployment rate and educational background of immigrant groups, the distribution of immigrant entrepreneurs in terms of space and economic activity, and so on. The scholars Rocío Aliaga-Isla and Alex Rialp mention the importance of individual-level analysis as it helps us to understand the heterogeneity of immigrant communities and its impact on migrant entrepreneurship.³⁷

³⁷ Rocío Aliaga-Isla (Ph.D) and Alex Rialp (PhD), “Systematic Review of Immigrant Entrepreneurship Literature: Previous Findings and Ways Forward,” *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25, no. 9-10 (December 2013): 819–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.845694>.

The key factor of the ‘immigrant group’ in the mixed embeddedness approach will be discussed to answer the first research question: Who are they? Chinese migrants of different periods have different demographic characteristics. In addition to basic demographic characteristics such as education, age, gender, industry, Dutch proficiency, etc., this study employs a comparative research approach to examine Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in a horizontal comparison with entrepreneurs from other immigrant groups and a vertical comparison between first-generation and second-generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, aiming to explore the changes within this group and identify the characteristics specific to different periods.

1.3.2 The Dynamic Social Context

In the previous studies on immigrant enterprises, especially the research of the immigrant economy in the United States, the discussion started more from the immigrant group/ethnics.³⁸ In the research titled "*Matching opportunities with resources: A framework for analyzing (migrant) entrepreneurship from a mixed embeddedness perspective*," Robert Kloosterman suggested that when examining the opportunities and obstacles to entrepreneurship from a perspective focused on "group characteristics," it tends to overlook the significant impact of the wider socio-political and economic conditions of the host society. These conditions include factors such as laws, financial regulations, labor market standards, and how the host society perceives immigrants. Immigrants' entrepreneurial choices are influenced by the broader socio-political context. The mixed embeddedness model analyses the proportion of a given immigrant group involved in entrepreneurial activity as ‘an interaction between the group's opportunity structure and socio-economic-ethnic characteristics within the broader socio-political context of the host country’, i.e., immigrant entrepreneurs are understood within the local social, economic, and institutional context.³⁹

³⁸ Howard E Aldrich and Roger Waldinger, ‘Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship’, 2023.

³⁹ Robert C. Kloosterman, ‘Matching Opportunities with Resources: A Framework for Analysing

The theory of mixed embeddedness has been supplemented over time, further emphasizing the dynamics of the social environment. Robert C. Kloosterman and Jan Rath's 2018 publication emphasizes the change in the time dimension and points out that the decline of industry and the rise of the service sector first emerged in global cities, where the return of population growth, combined with a fundamental shift in the production system in developed cities, has changed the business environment.⁴⁰ Research question 2 of this thesis will discuss the impact of the changing social environment on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in terms of changing immigration policies, the economy of the host country, and the changing context of the home country.

1.3.3 The Changing Opportunity Structures

Waldinger emphasizes the importance of opportunity structure for the development of national enterprises. In his research *Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship* opportunity structure are interpreted as the conditions of ethnic markets, wider non-ethnic markets that are favorable to national enterprises, and the ease with which national enterprises can access business opportunities that depend to a large extent on the degree of inter-ethnic competition and policies.⁴¹ The mixed embeddedness approach highlights that the embeddedness of opportunity structures is not limited to the market economy, but is embedded in the broader national institutional, socio-economic, and cultural context. Robert C. Kloosterman suggests that opportunity structures are more dynamic than assumed by Waldinger and his

(Migrant) Entrepreneurship from a Mixed Embeddedness Perspective', *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 22, no. 1 (January 2010): 25–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985620903220488>

⁴⁰Robert C. Kloosterman and Jan Rath, 'Mixed Embeddedness Revisited: A Conclusion to the Symposium', *Sociologica* Vol 12 (14 December 2018): 103-114 Pages, <https://doi.org/10.6092/ISSN.1971-8853/8625>.

⁴¹ Kloosterman and Rath. Howard E. Aldrich and Roger Waldinger, "Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship," *Annual Review of Sociology* 16, no. 1 (August 1990): 111–35, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.000551>.

colleagues. Changes in opportunity structures can be driven by technological developments, developing global trading, and also by changes in regulatory frameworks or sociocultural practices. As the number of young, highly educated immigrants increase, and thus the social composition changes, the social and economic conditions of changing host countries generate demand for a variety of new types of services.⁴²

The third research question of this thesis will be addressed through qualitative discussions based on interviews and summaries of ten entrepreneurs with a coverage of 50 years since the 1970s. It will explore the entrepreneurial experiences and motivations of Chinese immigrants in different periods. It employs a mixed-embeddedness approach that emphasizes the (potential) role of social networks and social capital in shaping immigrants' entrepreneurial trajectories in a changing social context. This thesis aims to link immigrants with the opportunity structure at the micro level, while embedding the meso-level urban opportunity structure within the national institutional and regulatory background, thereby achieving deeper macro-level embeddedness.⁴³

By comparing multiple immigration theoretical models, Marina Dabić et al. provide a valuable summary: (1) research frameworks should be useful for discussing the impact of immigrant home country culture on entrepreneurial behavior, and (2) cultural context may provide immigrant entrepreneurs with different resource allocations than native entrepreneurs.⁴⁴ The review article '*Systematic Review of Immigrant Entrepreneurship Literature: Previous Findings and Ways Forward*' on immigrant entrepreneurship studies points to the applicability of the mixed embeddedness approach, especially for Dutch immigrants. The Mixed Embeddedness

⁴² Kloosterman and Rath, 'Mixed Embeddedness Revisited'.

⁴³ Kloosterman, 'Matching Opportunities with Resources'.

⁴⁴ Marina Dabić et al., 'Immigrant Entrepreneurship: A Review and Research Agenda', *Journal of Business Research* 113 (May 2020): 25–38, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.013>.

approach is tailored to the reality of immigrant entrepreneurship in the Netherlands, which advocates the integration of opportunity structures into the social context of the host country to understand immigrant entrepreneurship. The social contexts in which immigrant entrepreneurship develops vary considerably across time, so focusing on comparisons across contexts allows for a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.⁴⁵ The mixed embeddedness method is the theoretical approach that will be used in this thesis to organize the comparative study of literature and data, as well as to analyze and understand the life story of ten interviewees.

1.4 Sources and Methodology

The sources and methods of this thesis involve collecting data from official open databases (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS), existing analysis and literature, gathering firsthand policy information, and conducting interviews with ten Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs based in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. These interviews provide valuable insights into the real-life experiences and motivations of entrepreneurs, allowing for a nuanced analysis of the relationship between the identified theoretical framework and the practical context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship in the Netherlands.

The demographic research of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands draws on a literature review and the latest demographic data collected from Statistics Netherlands (CBS).⁴⁶ CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) is the Dutch statistical agency responsible for producing a wide range of statistical data on various social topics and making the results publicly available. CBS collects data from individuals and companies, which are processed into statistical data. CBS employs various

⁴⁵ Rocío Aliaga-Isla (PhD) and Alex Rialp (PhD), ‘Systematic Review of Immigrant Entrepreneurship Literature: Previous Findings and Ways Forward’, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 25, no. 9–10 (December 2013): 819–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08985626.2013.845694>.

⁴⁶ Statistics Netherlands, “Immigration,” Statistics Netherlands, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/visualisations/dashboard-population/population-dynamics/immigration>.

methods to collect this data, including surveys, conducted both digitally and occasionally through written or personal interactions. In recent decades, CBS has increasingly relied on existing registries, such as population registers or archives of chambers of commerce (Kamer van Koophandel, KVK), to gather data.⁴⁷ The original data from the database will be processed by the author, and displayed in the thesis intuitively and concisely, mainly as graphs and tables. It is important to note that, according to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), it will gradually adjust the statistics on immigration data to place more emphasis on a person's place of birth rather than the place of birth of their parents when discussing immigration and replace the old concepts such as the 'Western/non-Western immigrant'. The main category of 'Western/non-Western' will be replaced by categories based on continents and some countries with a specific immigration history within the Netherlands. From 2022 onwards, the new categories will be gradually implemented in statistics and publications.⁴⁸ In the description and analysis of quantitative data in chapter 2, this thesis will adopt a new definition to provide updated demographic characteristics of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands.

Another important source of data for this thesis is *Chinese Nederlanders*, which presents the characteristics of Chinese immigrants and the different major immigrant groups in the Netherlands from a comparative perspective. As the 5th biggest immigrant group in the Netherlands, the Chinese did not become a main research subject until *Chinese Nederlanders* came out. This is the first time that the Dutch Social and Cultural Office focused on the Chinese community one hundred years after the first Chinese arrived in the Netherlands in 1911. It is also the first survey of the

⁴⁷ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, "Dit Zijn Wij," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, June 12, 2023, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/over-ons/dit-zijn-wij>.

⁴⁸ Statistics Netherlands, "CBS Introducing New Population Classification by Origin," Statistics Netherlands, March 18, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2022/07/cbs-introducing-new-population-classification-by-origin>.

Chinese in the Netherlands based on a nationally representative sample. The survey covered all Chinese registered immigrants and their descendants from the People's Republic of China and Hong Kong throughout the Netherlands. In total, 1,000 Dutch Chinese over the age of 15 were surveyed. The results provided information on many topics including demographics, education, language, work, and social ties, and provided a very good perspective on the data for this research. There were also some unanswered issues in this study. For example, some issues that are invisible to the Sino-Dutch community such as intergenerational conflict within Chinese families.⁴⁹ This thesis will hopefully provide more insight into themes that are difficult to reveal in extensive research. This section of data and literature review is primarily concerned with immigrant characteristics and is mainly used to address the first research question: who are they? What kind of changes have Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs undergone in the past fifty years? The data and literature review provide insights into the historical evolution of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship and its demographic characteristics over the studied period.

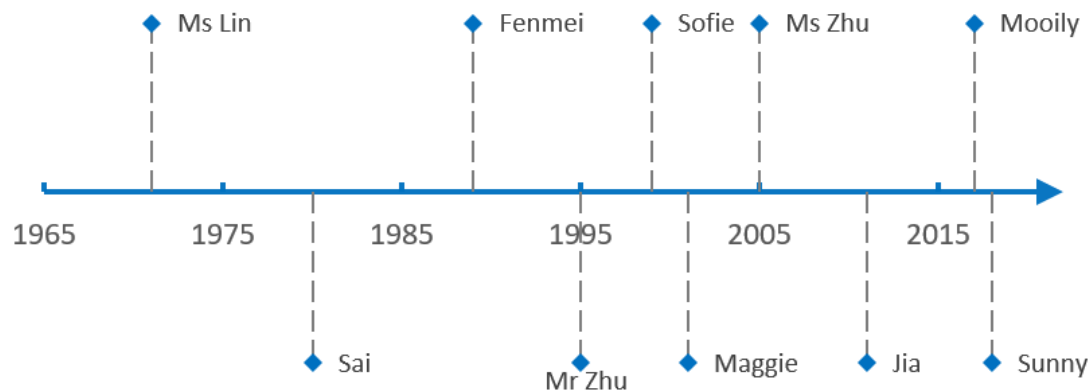
This thesis draws upon various sources to explore the social context of the host country, the Netherlands, about Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship. The literature review specifically focuses on three key aspects: (1) changing immigration policies in the Netherlands, (2) the evolving economic conditions of both the host and home countries, and (3) the shifting attitudes of Dutch people towards immigration. The literature review offers valuable insights into the social, economic, and policy dynamics shaping the immigrant entrepreneurship landscape in the Netherlands. In addition to the aforementioned sources, local official policies, policy analysis commentaries, and newspapers also provide valuable historical materials for this research.

⁴⁹ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.

As for the third research question, regarding the different entrepreneurial experiences and motivations of Chinese immigrants in history, this thesis will obtain first-hand oral historical materials through field interviews and discuss them in a qualitative method. Appendix 1 offers an outline of the open-ended interview questions.⁵⁰ It allowed the interviewees to express themselves freely, detailing their experiences of immigration about the subject matter. In addition, it allowed the interviewer(author) to ask exploratory questions to gain more in-depth insights. To keep the research answers relevant, the interviews were guided by three themes: i) the personal and family background of the interviewee, ii) personal immigration experience, and iii) professional and entrepreneurial experience and motivations. The semi-structured interview questions focused on the interviewees' background, reasons for starting a business and their business model, and perspectives on immigrant entrepreneurship. The selection of interview cases in chapter 5 refers to the third research question in this thesis, as far as possible, the changing characteristics of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs over time. A total of ten interviews were conducted, 8 of whom were female and 2 male; 2 were second-generation immigrants, and their arrival in the Netherlands was spread almost evenly over the fifty years from 1970 to 2020. The following figure shows the arrival time of the interviewees.

⁵⁰ Appendix I, Interview Outline

Figure 1.3 Timeline of Arrival of the Interviewees



Source: author

The interviewees were partly recruited at Verhalenhuis Belvédère. Verhalenhuis Belvédère is an old port of Rotterdam located in Katendrecht. Rotterdam is the place where the Chinese first set foot in Europe in 1911, and it has rich historical significance as the first Chinatown in European history.⁵¹ Verhalenhuis Belvédère has an important position in the immigrant community in the Netherlands. It is a public service cultural organization dedicated to collecting and disseminating historical traces of the Dutch community for a long time.⁵² Space101 in Verhalenhuis Belvédère is a small cultural center of a Chinese art gallery or "Chinese living room in the city", run by Verhalenhuis Belvédère in cooperation with Studio Zi, an offshoot of the historic Chinese community in the Netherlands run by Fenmei Hu.⁵³ Here, people can get a better understanding of Chinese culture in the Netherlands.

In Verhalenhuis Belvédère and Space101, the author found Fenmei, Sophia, and Mrs. Lin. Mrs. Lin introduced Sunny, who also works in the Chinese cultural circle, for an

⁵¹ Scholten, Crul, and van de Laar, *Coming to Terms with Superdiversity*.

⁵² "Belvédère, Verhalenhuis Rotterdam," Verhalenhuisrotterdam, accessed July 6, 2023, <https://verhalenhuisrotterdam.nl/>.

⁵³ "Belvédère, Verhalenhuis Rotterdam» Space 101," Space-101, accessed July 6, 2023, <https://verhalenhuisrotterdam.nl/space-101/>.

interview. The interview samples for door-to-door interviews are mainly from extensive information collection, combined with KVK and Google Maps, targeting Chinese restaurants currently in operation.⁵⁴ Through interviews, four restaurateurs participated and they are spread across different cities, two of them in towns around Amsterdam (the Zhu couple in Almere and the dumpling expert Maggie in Zaandam), and one is Rotterdam restaurateur Sai, a second-generation immigrant from Hong Kong. The last two respondents who arrived in the Netherlands in the past ten years chose to come to the Netherlands for education and I found them through an online promotion platform (Xiaohongshu), which they used to promote their business. Nine interviews were done offline and there was one video interview. The interview took place in Verhalenhuis Belvédère, Space101, a cafe, restaurant, or the home of the interviewee

Figure 1.4 Overview of Interviewees

Name	Type of Immigration	Gender	Industry	City
Ms. Lin	Family reunion	F	Catering / Shipping Service	Rotterdam
Sai	2nd Generation	M	Interior Design / Catering	Rotterdam
Fenmei	Family Reunion as a 2nd Generation	F	Culture and Communication	Rotterdam
Mr. Zhu	Work permit (GVVA)	M	Catering	Almere
Sofie	Family reunion	F	Art	Rotterdam
Maggie	Work permit (GVVA)	F	Catering	Zaandam
Ms. Zhu	Family reunion	F	Catering / Trading	Almere
Jia	Education	F	Advertising services	Rotterdam
Mooily	Education	F	Handicraft Workshops	Rotterdam
Sunny	Education	F	Culture and Communication	Spijkensisse

Source: author

Interviews are completed in Spring 2023. Using mixed qualitative and quantitative research methods is challenging because careful consideration is required when

⁵⁴ “Kamer van Koophandel,” KVK, accessed July 6, 2023, <https://www.kvk.nl/over-kvk/>.

designing methods, collecting data, and interpreting and integrating results. This thesis was designed to explore rather than generalize the findings to the entire Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, great attention will be paid to the representativeness of the sample during the interview process. The industries that the interviewees are engaged in are very representative in terms of time range. The interviewees of Chinese immigrants who arrived before 2000 all have experience in the catering industry and five of them still run their catering businesses, while the immigrants after the 21st century show diversity in their choice of entrepreneurial industries.

The limitations of interviews are that only a limited sample of interviewees can be obtained in a short time, and insufficient oral history records are available. To make up for the lack of interviewees, this thesis will extensively collect primary statistical data and compare and discuss it with historical data. The ten interviewees are far from enough to represent all the Chinese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. Considering the residential concentration of the target research objects, that is, most of them are concentrated in the big cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and The Haag, we believe that our sample provides valuable information. Plus, Rotterdam has a unique historical status as the home of the first China Town in mainland Europe. The selection of interviewees is representative to a certain extent and covers 2 interviewees as second-generation immigrants. What's more, interview answers are highly dependent on the personal experiences of the interviewees, which may also be biased and inaccurate. Interviews were used to support the findings of this study by adding the perspective of immigrants' experiences in different eras. Furthermore, this thesis takes a selective approach to the broad topic of migration, with interviews focusing on three key research questions: 'background', 'experience', and 'entrepreneurial motivation'.

The strength of this thesis is that it focuses more on Chinese immigrants, who have

long been neglected in the concept of 'Western or non-western migration', instead of the main immigrant groups in the Netherlands. It will also focus on entrepreneurs and their motivation. In addition to this, the interview language is a combination of Mandarin and English, which is a great advantage for reaching out to Chinese immigrants who are not fluent in Dutch or English. This thesis specifically targeting Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs will provide a more comprehensive understanding of this specific group. The focus on Chinese immigrants in comparison to mainstream Dutch immigrants when examining primary data also complements and develops the existing literature.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter discusses the literature and theory on Chinese immigration in the Netherlands and introduces the research methodology and data sources for this thesis. It starts with the literature on immigration history, then introduces the academic framework of mixed models, and introduces research methods and data sources for three different research questions. It introduces the widely accepted mixed embeddedness approach as the theoretical framework and emphasized the keyword 'change' in the development of the doctrine in the last 20 years.

Through interviews with typical immigrant entrepreneurs in the past 50 years, this thesis finds a method for in-depth research on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands to cover the research gaps on new immigrants after the 2000s. This thesis aims to explore, with the support of existing theoretical frameworks, to bridge these gaps. And compare the motivation and life experience of Chinese immigrants in different periods for starting a business in the changing social context of the Netherlands

Chapter 2. What are the Characteristics of Chinese Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands after the 1970s?

This chapter will start with an overview of Chinese immigrants increasing in the Netherlands over the past 100 years from a historical perspective, and describe the demographic characteristics of Chinese immigrants from a quantitative perspective. This chapter further discusses the development and changes vertically through the classification of first- and second-generation immigrants, to answer the first research question of this thesis: What are the changing demographic characteristics of Dutch Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs from the 1970s to the present?

2.1 Growth of Chinese Immigrants in the Netherlands

Chinese immigrants began in the early 20th century, with Chinese sailors appearing in the Netherlands in 1911. By 1920, Chinese people settled in Europe and started small-scale business activities. After World War II, Chinese communities began to develop around catering activities. Following the independence of former Dutch colonies such as Indonesia and Suriname, Chinese populations also arrived in the Netherlands. From the perspectives of language, immigration history, and socio-economic status, the Chinese are one of the oldest and most diverse minorities in the Netherlands. By the end of World War II, about 1500 Chinese were living in the Netherlands. In the years that followed, with the independence of Indonesia, several Chinese came to the Netherlands again. From the mid-sixties onwards, a migration flow of Chinese from China and Hong Kong started. Initially, they were predominantly men. In 1975 there was a peak of more than two thousand Chinese immigrants arriving. In the years that followed, the number of female immigrants brought in by family reunification grew rapidly. A Chinese man usually settles in the Netherlands first and gets married after he has been granted a living. His partner then settles in the Netherlands.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European

The increase that occurred at the end of the seventies has to do with a relaxed emigration policy in the People's Republic of China. In the course of the eighties, the branch from Hong Kong declined. At that time, the growth in the number of Chinese restaurants in the Netherlands had reached its limit. From the end of the 1980s, immigration from China increased considerably. In the period 1990-1997, nine thousand immigrants from China and less than a thousand from Hong Kong arrived in the Netherlands. The number of asylum immigrants was around 200 per year in that period. Some of the immigrants are family reunion immigrants.⁵⁶

2.2 Definition of Immigrant in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, belonging to immigrants depends on the individual's country of birth and that of their parents, not on nationality. CBS's definition of immigrants by 2022 reads: A first-generation immigrant is someone who was born abroad and immigrated to another country at the age of six or older to parents who were also born abroad. Their nationality can be the country of origin or the country of destination. Their descendants are called "second-generation immigrants".⁵⁷ Since this classification method is widely accepted in the academic field of immigration, based on the review of existing research results, this article will continue to use this classification method to describe first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants. In 2022, CBS adjusted its population classification methodology to focus less on immigrant backgrounds (Western/non-Western) and more on individuals and where their parents were born. The new classification is divided into two parts: Dutch

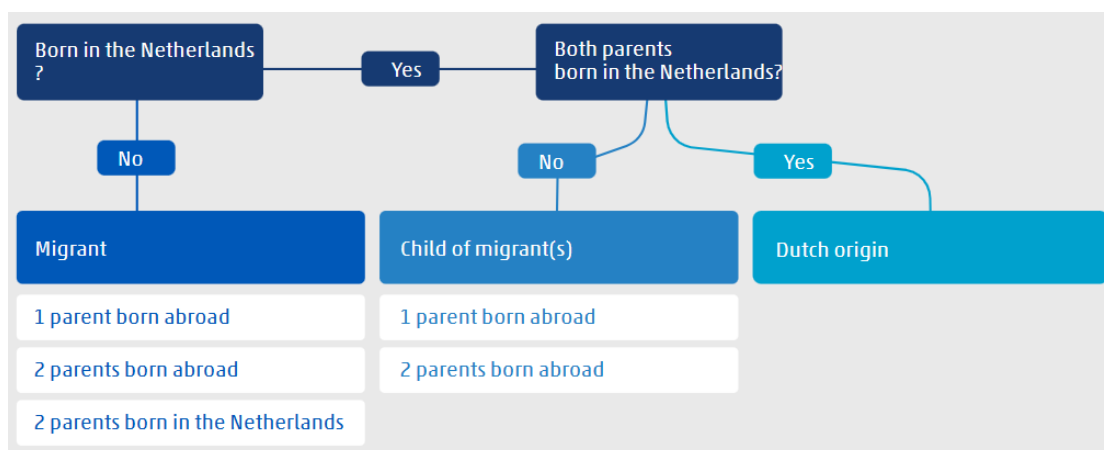
University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

⁵⁶ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, "Chinezen in Nederland," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, July 13, 1998, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/1998/29/chinezen-in-nederland>.

⁵⁷ Yidong Tao, Caroline Essers, and Roos Pijpers, 'Family and Identity: Intersectionality in the Lived Experiences of Second-Generation Entrepreneurs of Chinese Origin in the Netherlands', *Journal of Small Business Management* 59, no. 6 (2 November 2021): 1152–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472778.2019.1710014>.

birth and country of origin.⁵⁸ Residents born in the Netherlands will be classified according to the circumstances of their parents' birth abroad, which will gradually replace the concepts of first- and second-generation immigrants in statistical terms. Country of origin classifications will be based on continental and typical immigrant countries, and the old Western/non-Western immigrant background classification will be replaced by a classification based on continental and common immigrant countries.⁵⁹ This categorization will be used in describing the demographic characteristics of the updated immigrant groups in this paper.

Figure 2.1 Classification Born in the Netherlands



Source: CBS introduces new population classification by origin.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Statistics Netherlands, “Migration Background,” Statistics Netherlands, February 3, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/our-services/methods/definitions/migration-background>.

⁵⁹ Statistics Netherlands, “The New Classification: ‘Born in the Netherlands or Abroad’ and ‘Country of Origin,’” Statistics Netherlands, March 18, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/longread/statistische-trends/2022/new-classification-of-population-by-origin/4-the-new-classification-born-in-the-netherlands-or-abroad-and-country-of-origin->.

⁶⁰ ‘CBS Introduces New Population Classification by Origin’, 16 February 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2022/07/cbs-introduceert-nieuwe-indeling-bevolking-naar-herkomst>.

The new classification of origin includes four levels: Netherlands, Europe (excluding the Netherlands), Other Outer Europe further subdivided into Africa, Asia, America, and Oceania, and separate classic countries of immigration (Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Indonesia, and Dutch Caribbean), and individual countries. In the updated immigration classification, 2.5 million (14%) of the 17.5 million inhabitants are not born in the Netherlands as of 1st January 2021. Two-thirds of these people (1.6 million) have non-European origins. Among the traditional countries of immigration, the group born in Turkey (211,000) is the largest, followed by immigrants born in Suriname (178,000) or Morocco (173,000). In addition, the Netherlands also has a relatively large group of immigrants born in other Asian countries (497,000).⁶¹ Chinese immigrants belong to a subgroup of immigrants from Asia whose numbers are much lower than the mainstream immigrant groups in the Netherlands, so less research has focused on them for a long time.

2.3 Demographic Characteristics of Chinese Immigrants

The Chinese immigrants are relatively small in number, but show a stable increase trend in numbers, especially after 2000, increasing from 23,471 in 1996 to 84,453 in 2022, almost quadrupling in 25 years.⁶² Changes in Chinese immigrant groups have occurred in many aspects of demographic characteristics

2.3.1 Age, Gender, and Spatial Distribution

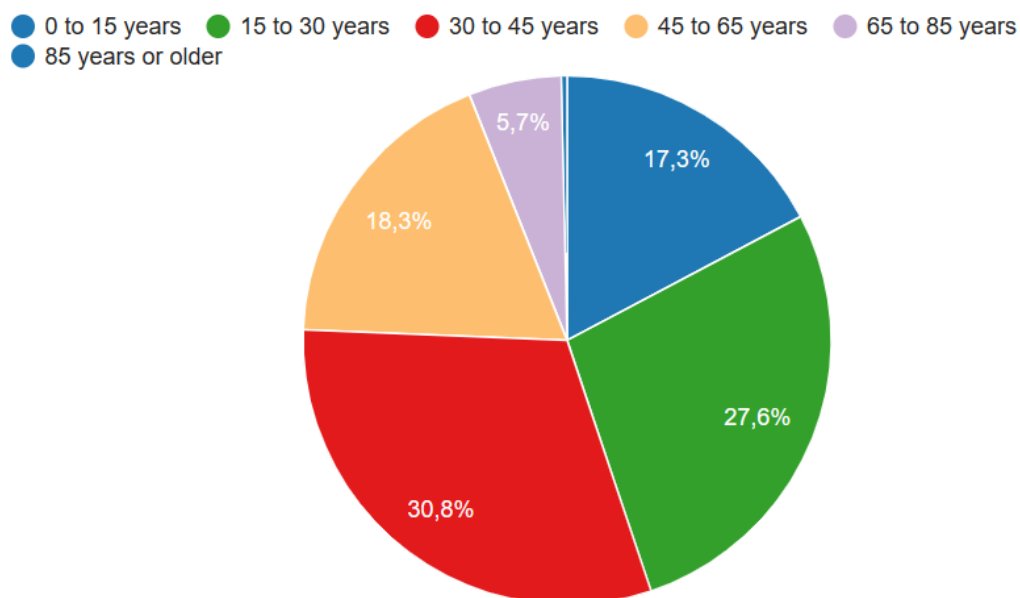
When it comes to the demographic characteristics of Chinese immigrants before 2000, the statistics of age show that more than a third of the Chinese were in their twenties

⁶¹ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, “4. De Nieuwe Indeling Naar Geboren in Nederland En Herkomstland,” Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, February 15, 2022, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/statistische-trends/2022/nieuwe-indeling-bevolking-naar-herkomst/4-de-nieuwe-indeling-naar-geboren-in-nederland-en-herkomstland>.

⁶² Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.

when they settled in the Netherlands. The average age was 21 years for people from Hong Kong and 26 years for people from mainland China. About a third of Chinese immigrants were under the age of 20. These differences correspond to the age structure of most immigrant groups in the Netherlands. By 2022, the age structure of China's migrant population will be characterized by a low proportion of people aged 45 and over. They make up 24% of the total, while the percentage of the total Dutch population of people aged 45 and over is 46.5%.⁶³

Figure 2.2 Distribution of age groups of immigrants from China in 2022



Source: Elaborated by the author based on data on the statistic

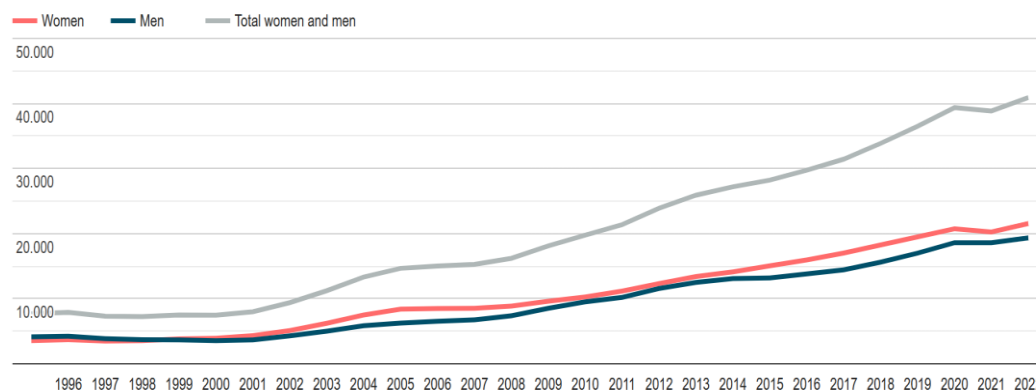
<https://allecijfers.nl/>

The sex ratio within the Chinese population is balanced. This is because many Chinese work in the hospitality industry, where the business is usually organized around the family. While the percentage of married couples in 1990 was higher than in the total population of the Netherlands, this difference disappeared in

⁶³ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, "Population Pyramid," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, February 3, 2023, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/visualisaties/dashboard-bevolking/bevolkingspiramide>.

1997. Two-thirds of married first-generation Chinese have a Chinese partner. About 10% have a partner born in the Netherlands, while a quarter have been born in another country. Nearly 10% of married couples do not live with their partner.⁶⁴ Since 2000, the number of female immigrants has begun to slightly outnumber the number of male immigrants, and the gap reaches 10.2% in 2022.⁶⁵

Figure 2.3: Residents with Chinese nationality⁶⁶



Source: <https://allecijfers.nl/>

Chinese immigrants are widely distributed in the Netherlands. Even in the most remote villages, Chinese immigrants can be seen working in local restaurants.⁶⁷ The concentration of Chinese in the four largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht) is obvious. In 2008, Mulder and Zorlu conducted research examining the settlement of Chinese immigrants who arrived in the

⁶⁴ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, “Chinezen in Nederland,” Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, July 13, 1998, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/1998/29/chinezen-in-nederland>.

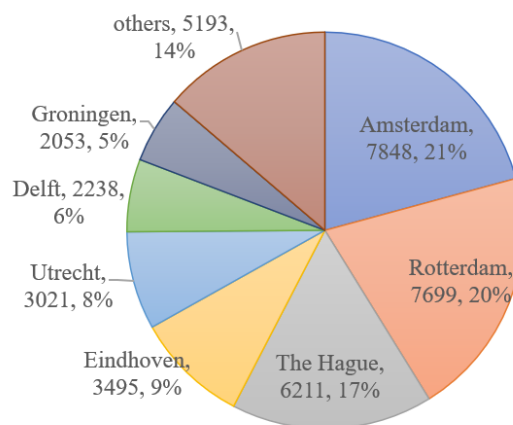
⁶⁵ “Migratie Uit China En Chinese Inwoners (Chinezen) in Nederland (Bijgewerkt 2023!),” AlleCijfers.nl, December 27, 2022, <https://allecijfers.nl/migratie-nationaliteiten-geboortelanden/china/>.

⁶⁶ “Migratie Uit China En Chinese Inwoners (Chinezen) in Nederland (Bijgewerkt 2023!),” AlleCijfers.nl, December 27, 2022, <https://allecijfers.nl/migratie-nationaliteiten-geboortelanden/china/>.

⁶⁷ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.

Netherlands in 1999. The research revealed that 30% of these immigrants chose the four largest cities, while the remaining 70% opted for other locations within the Netherlands.⁶⁸ Rotterdam is the most attractive place for Chinese immigrants, with the largest Chinese community in the Netherlands, while most other Chinese immigrants choose Amsterdam. When it comes to 2022, Chinese immigrants still mainly live in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. Chinese immigrants spread across these three major cities by 2022 at a rate of 58%. In the north and east of the Netherlands, the presence of Chinese is very low.⁶⁹

Figure 2.4: Regional distribution of Chinese immigrants⁷⁰



Source: Elaborated by the author based on data on the statistic <https://allecijfers.nl/>

2.3.2 Occupational Distribution and Educational Background

From the 1960s onwards, Chinese enclaves relatively concentrated in different sectors

⁶⁸ Aslan Zorlu and Clara H. Mulder, 'Initial and Subsequent Location Choices of Immigrants to the Netherlands', *Regional Studies* 42, no. 2 (March 2008): 245–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343400601145210>.

⁶⁹ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, "Chinezen in Nederland," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, July 13, 1998, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/1998/29/chinezen-in-nederland>.

⁷⁰ "Migratie Uit China En Chinese Inwoners (Chinezen) in Nederland (Bijgewerkt 2023!)," AlleCijfers.nl, December 27, 2022, <https://allecijfers.nl/migratie-nationaliteiten-geboortelanden/china/>.

were formed in Italy/France/Germany/Holland in Europe, and even in the United Kingdom, with the Chinese-Indonesian fusion cuisine of the Dutch Chinese catering industry epitomizing the Chinese enclave economy. The relatively low investment thresholds and skill requirements of the catering and takeaway economy, the employment of people of the same ethnicity, and the flexibility or even informality of employment arrangements have made Chinese restaurants competitive and able to adapt to the growing and decreasing supply of imported labor.⁷¹ Chinese immigrants who arrived in the Netherlands in the 1970s crowded the catering industry. Chinese enclaves in Europe grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s as China's reform and opening-up policies made it relatively easy for Chinese from mainland China to obtain passports and travel permits. Global connections expanded with transnational investments, transnational marriages, reunions of Chinese relatives, and Chinese students studying abroad. Gradually, transnational interactions have become institutionalized, allowing knowledge and information channels to be shared within the transnational communities of Chinese immigrants. Chinese immigrants engage in economic activities and occupations ranging from entrepreneurs, traders, and company employees to freelancers, academics, artists, those engaged in Chinese language teaching and cultural appreciation, and those selling services in various leisure industries.⁷²

In 2018, Chinese employees residing in the Netherlands were mainly employed in the accommodation and food services sector. Another large group (12.5%) was employed in the trade sector. Other sectors with a large number of Chinese employees include professional business services (9.2 %), manufacturing (6.7 %), and education

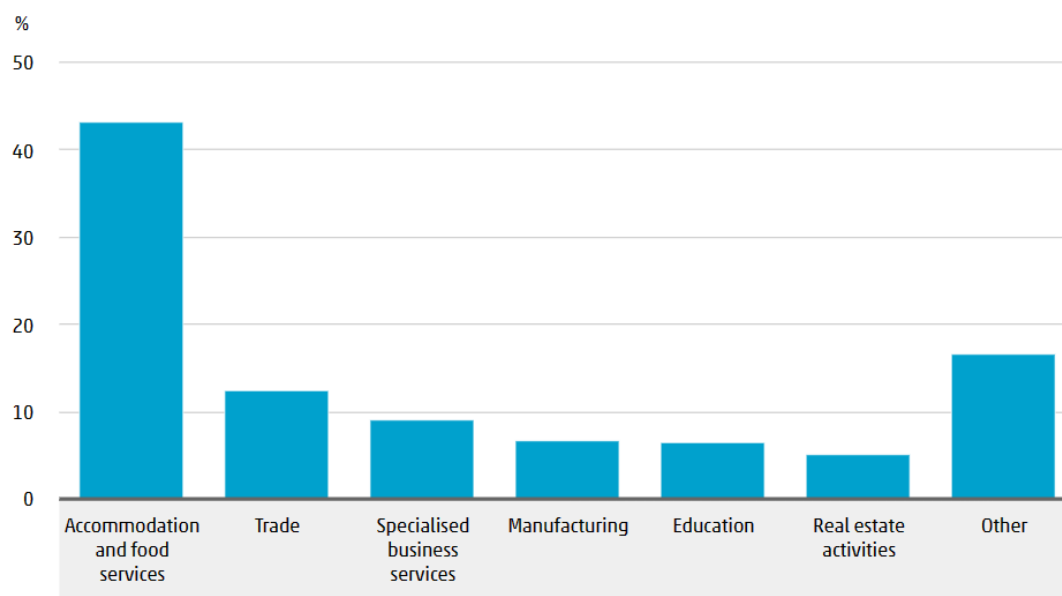
⁷¹ Chee-Beng Tan, ed., *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2013),

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203100387>.

⁷² Tan.141-156

(6.5 %).⁷³

Figure 2.5 Chinese employees in the Netherlands, by sector, 2018



Source: CBS, “Relatively Many Chinese Restaurant Workers and Students,” Statistics Netherlands, September 26, 2020, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2020/26/relatively-many-chinese-restaurant-workers-and-students>.

In recent years, the Chinese immigrant population has expanded dramatically, mainly due to immigrants from the People's Republic of China, half of these immigrants came to study in the Netherlands, that is, the number of "knowledge immigrants" has increased significantly. Part of the immigration was for work (including high-skilled immigration), and family immigration still played a role during this period.⁷⁴

The education level of Dutch Chinese immigrants is relatively high, but the average is still lower than that of Dutch natives. Because in addition to a quarter with higher

⁷³ Statistics Netherlands, “Relatively Many Chinese Restaurant Workers and Students,” Statistics Netherlands, September 26, 2020, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2020/26/relatively-many-chinese-restaurant-workers-and-students>.

⁷⁴ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.110-118

education qualifications, the same proportion has only completed primary education, which is much higher than that of Dutch natives (7%). These people came to the Netherlands mainly as labor immigrants before 2000, and no less than 35% of them have only completed primary education. Over time, the influx of more knowledgeable immigrants and the second generation of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands has increased the average educational background level of this group as a whole. The educational attainment of second-generation immigrants is particularly prominent. No fewer than 86% of Dutch-born second-generation immigrants (ages 20-35) have at least qualified at the upper secondary level, a higher proportion than native Dutch youth (81%). Chinese women in the Netherlands are better educated than men, which is not common among immigrant groups. This is mainly due to the presence of more women among knowledge immigrants.⁷⁵

2.4 Characteristics of Chinese Immigrants entrepreneurs from a Comparative Perspective

In the fifty years studied in this thesis, it is necessary to compare the Chinese immigrant group with the mainstream Dutch immigrant group (Morocco, Turkey, etc.), and the differences between the first- and second-generation immigrant groups cannot be ignored. This section will introduce the Turkish immigrant group background, and analyze the characteristics of Chinese entrepreneurs from the perspective of horizontal and vertical comparison.

During the period 1998-2008, the number of entrepreneurs from China increased by nearly 60% and the concentration of Chinese enterprises in the hotel and catering industry has declined from 77% to 66%. Several other departments also benefited, such as consulting, facilities, and personal services. One of the fastest growing in the retail industry. That percentage rose from 5 % to 9 %. This decade also saw the

⁷⁵ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels.180-190

survival rate of Chinese start-ups rise from 81% to 83%. Generally speaking, opportunities for national enterprises have been actively developed.

2.4.1 Horizontal Comparison of Chinese Immigrants with other major immigrant groups

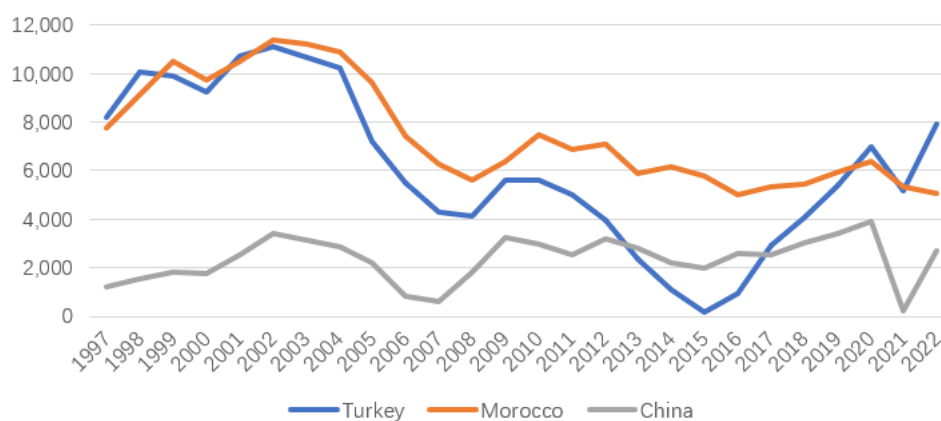
A large part of Turkish and Moroccan immigration to the Netherlands is linked to the policy of '*guest worker*' recruitment, which was encouraged by the agreements between the Dutch and Turkish/Morocco governments between 1964 and 1974 to meet the demand for intensive labor for the growing Dutch economy. Foreign labor recruitment officially stopped in 1975, and the number of Turkish and Morocco immigrants showed a fluctuating increase using other migration routes such as family reunification.⁷⁶

Here are some comparisons between the migratory flows from Turkey, Morocco, and China. Firstly, the evolution in terms of the number of immigrants from different countries shows opposite trends. In general, Turkish and Moroccan immigrants have been overwhelmingly dominant in terms of numbers and, until 2004, there has been a steady trend of growth, with 8,000-10,000 new immigrants each year. In contrast, Chinese immigrants were far behind the main immigrant countries during this period, both in terms of total numbers and rate of growth. This trend has changed since 2007. The number of new migrants from Morocco and Turkey entered relatively low levels from 2007 onwards. In the years 2012-2017, the total net increase in Chinese immigrants exceeded that of Turkey. It was only in 2018 that the number of migrants from Turkey rebounded and rose, returning to the levels of the early 21st century. In the last 25 years (see Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7) the number of Chinese immigrants has shown a relatively stable growth trend and an objective increase in terms of total population, from 23,471 in 1996 to 84,453 in 2022, almost quadrupling in 25 years.

⁷⁶ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

Students (educational immigrants) have been the mainstay of the recent growth in Chinese immigration, which could explain the rapid growth in Chinese immigration to the Netherlands in recent years.⁷⁷

Figure 2.6 Annual immigrant population from Turkey, Morocco, and China (1997-2022)



Source: CBS, the population data on migration, nationalities, and countries of birth

Compared with other ethnic groups, Chinese immigrants have a clear concentration in the restaurant industry while Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands have a more diverse range of occupations and business ventures. While some Turkish entrepreneurs have gained recognition for their entrepreneurial skills, the overall rate of self-employment is lower among Turkish compared to Chinese immigrants. Moroccan immigrants, on the other hand, have been active in various sectors, including construction, facility services, and consulting.⁷⁸ Language proficiency and educational qualifications have played a significant role in shaping the labor market participation of these immigrant communities. Chinese immigrants, who often face

⁷⁷ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*. pp 34.

⁷⁸ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

language barriers, have relied on their strong entrepreneurial spirit to overcome obstacles and establish successful businesses.⁷⁹ In comparison, Turkish and Moroccan immigrants have faced challenges related to educational attainment and language proficiency, which have hindered their access to a broader range of job opportunities.⁸⁰

The cultural factors and social networks within these immigrant communities have also influenced their experiences and integration into Dutch society. Chinese immigrants have shown a strong sense of solidarity and support within their community, often providing mutual assistance and cooperation in times of need. This may include interest-free loans, joint purchases, or helping each other out at peak times. Solidarity with each other can increase the chances of survival in difficult times.⁸¹ Unlike family ties in Chinese immigrants, Turkish and Moroccan immigrants have relied on their ethnic and religious communities to establish support networks, which have played a crucial role in their social integration.⁸² Furthermore, the income disparities among these immigrant groups reflect variations in their economic outcomes. Chinese entrepreneurs, with their concentrated presence in the hotel and catering industry (more than 2/3), have achieved relatively higher incomes compared to Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. However, it is essential to note that individual circumstances and the diverse range of occupations within each community contribute to income disparities.⁸³

⁷⁹ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.64-68

⁸⁰ Fatima el Bouk, Paul Vedder, and Yolanda te Poel, 'The Networking Behavior of Moroccan and Turkish Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Two Dutch Neighborhoods: The Role of Ethnic Density', *Ethnicities* 13, no. 6 (December 2013): 771–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796812471131>.

⁸¹ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.pp 90-97

⁸² European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

⁸³ Bouk, Vedder, and Poel, 'The Networking Behavior of Moroccan and Turkish Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Two Dutch Neighborhoods'.

Overall, the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands differ from those of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in terms of their occupational concentration, entrepreneurial drive, language proficiency, and social networks. Each community faces unique challenges and opportunities within Dutch society, contributing to the rich diversity that characterizes the multicultural landscape of the Netherlands.

2.4.2 Longitudinal Comparison: First- and Second-Generation Chinese Immigrants

The number of immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands has risen dramatically since the late 1980s. Non-Western immigrant entrepreneurs have seen the greatest increase compared to both native Dutch and Western immigrant entrepreneurs. The number of non-Western entrepreneurs in the Netherlands increased from 34,000 in 1999 to 44,700 in 2002, an increase of 31.5%. Among non-Western immigrant entrepreneurs, there is an important group - second-generation immigrants, defined according to the pre-2022 classification as those born in the Netherlands or arriving before the age of 6 and having at least one parent from a non-Western country.⁸⁴ In absolute terms, the largest group of second-generation immigrant entrepreneurs are from Turkey and Suriname. In August 2017, the Dutch Chinese population was 71,229, of which 30.76% were the second generation.⁸⁵

The second generation of these immigrants grew up in the Netherlands and shows an obvious diversity of sectors when entered the Dutch labor market compared with their parents' generation. Further investigations into the Chinese community in the Netherlands revealed that there are huge intergenerational differences among immigrant groups. Due to the low level of education and country-specific skills, the

84 Katja Rusinovic, "Transnational Embeddedness: Transnational Activities and Networks among First- and Second-Generation Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, no. 3 (February 8, 2008): 431–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830701880285>.

85 Tao, Essers, and Pijpers, 'Family and Identity'.

first generation of Chinese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands was mostly confined to low-margin industries.⁸⁶ In contrast, second-generation Chinese business activities were more diverse, which may indicate that their higher education and skill levels enabled many of them to enter more promising business markets.⁸⁷ Second-generation immigrants are mainly engaged in business-to-business or producer services. Such a distribution is more similar to native entrepreneurs in the Netherlands.⁸⁸ Beckers and Blumberg (2013) argue that “*the first generation of Chinese entrepreneurs has developed the niche market of Chinese restaurants to saturation point, forcing many second-generation Chinese entrepreneurs who did not take over the family business to start businesses in different fields*” Although catering is still the most important industry in the Dutch Chinese community today, the second generation entrepreneurs interviewed rejected the idea of running a traditional Chinese restaurant and instead pursued their own entrepreneurial goals. The strategy they use to “escape the kitchen” is “study hard.” Education helps them achieve upward social mobility.⁸⁹

The educational outcomes of second-generation Chinese immigrants demonstrate a relatively favorable performance within the education system. In comparison, Surinamese and Antillean immigrants and their children tend to face greater challenges in accessing primary education when compared to Chinese immigrants. Therefore, their access to higher education is also comparatively limited. On the other hand, second-generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants tend to exhibit lower levels of educational attainment while they may surpass Chinese immigrants in terms of basic education, a smaller proportion of them pursue higher education or academic paths.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Beckers and Blumberg, ‘Immigrant Entrepreneurship on the Move’.

⁸⁷ Tao, Essers, and Pijpers, ‘Family and Identity’.

⁸⁸ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, Chinese Nederlanders.

⁸⁹ Tao, Essers, and Pijpers, ‘Family and Identity’.

⁹⁰ Gijsberts, Huijnk, and Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders*.pp46-49

The mainstream immigrant groups in the Netherlands have great differences in their preferences for entrepreneurship, and this feature has also continued in the second generation. Figure 2.5 shows the population aged 15–65 with income from self-employment (excluding freelancers, and directors’ main shareholders) as a share of the population with employment income, including five major non-Western groups. The data in the figure is from 2004, which is the time when the children of Chinese immigrants who landed in the 1970s started working. Overall, self-employment remains higher among the native population (11.5%) than among non-Western immigrants (8.8% for first-generation vs. 4.5% for second-generation). It can be seen that self-employment is more popular among Turkish and Chinese immigrants than in the other three origin countries. Among them, Chinese immigrants, especially first-generation Chinese immigrants, show a strong tendency to start a business. More than half of Chinese immigrants choose to start a business. The second-generation Chinese immigrants (10.9%) also show a self-employment ratio comparable to that of locals.

Figure 2.7 Self-employment propensities per group in 2004 (in %) ⁹¹

Groups	Native	11.4
	Western	10.6
Non-Western	1 gen	9.5
	2 gen	5.0
Turkish	1 gen	13.3
	2 gen	6.1
Moroccan	1 gen	6.5
	2 gen	2.9
Surinamese	1 gen	5.4
	2 gen	4.4
Tantilllean	1 gen	3.3
	2 gen	5.5
Chinese	1 gen	53.1
	2 gen	10.9

⁹¹ Beckers and Blumberg, ‘Immigrant Entrepreneurship on the Move’.

Definitions: Western and non-Western and first- and second-generation migrants in Figure 2.5 based on definitions of the Netherlands Statistics Bureau.

Source: CBS, 2009

2.5 Conclusion

Over the past fifty years, Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands have undergone tremendous changes in terms of number, sex ratio, age structure, educational background, and occupational choices. Chinese entrepreneurship was once associated with traditional, low-skilled, and labor-intensive activities such as hotels and restaurants, where they were considered hard-working and closed-minded.⁹² Over the past few decades, immigrant entrepreneurship has grown to offer a wider range of industry options, such as trade business or producer services. Compared with the first generation, the second-generation Chinese in the Netherlands are very different in various aspects. They excel in education, develop and realize their entrepreneurial identity aspirations by using qualified education as a key achievement strategy, and find their place in the labor market.⁹³

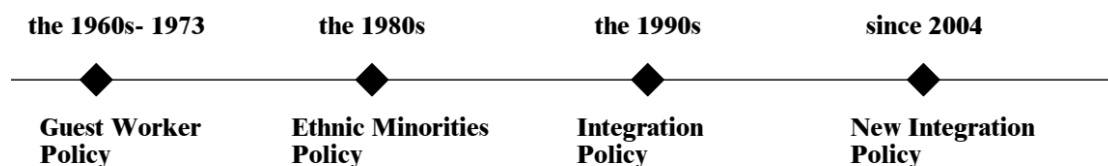
⁹²Tan, *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*.

⁹³ Tao, Essers, and Pijpers, 'Family and Identity'.

Chapter 3. What is the changing social context faced by Dutch Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs like?

The Netherlands has a long history of immigration. Over the past fifty years, the Dutch economic environment and immigration policy, as well as the government's attitude towards immigrants, have been changing a lot. Immigration policy in the Netherlands is characterized by discontinuity, with a new policy model being adopted approximately every decade. This thesis is based on the two reports on *Integration policy: Netherlands country report* and *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands: Corridor Report* and introduces the policy environment faced by immigrants in different periods. The immigration policy framework developed over time as follows:

Figure 3.1 Timeline of Dutch immigrant policies



Source: Author based on *Integration policy: Netherlands country report*

3.1 Policy on Immigrants

After the Second World War, the Netherlands saw a new wave of immigration. Several historical factors contributed to this: in the 1940s, more than 300,000 Dutch returned to the Netherlands after the independence of the Dutch colonies: the former Dutch East Indies, and in the 1960s the Dutch authorities implemented an immigration policy of 'guest worker'.⁹⁴ Workers from Italy, Spain, and later from Turkey and Morocco came to the country as temporary immigrants, and after the policy was stopped in 1973 a large number of immigrants were brought in through

⁹⁴ M. D. M. Bruquetas Callejo et al., "Policymaking Related to Immigration and Integration. The Dutch Case. Country Report on the Netherlands," *Dare.uva.nl*, 2007, <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=ffc3c3cd-d662-43fe-bc34-4bb04cb982d5.5-17>

family reunion policy and asylum policies.⁹⁵ Faced with the persistent problem of settling immigrants in the country, the Netherlands embarked on an explicitly 'diversity' oriented integration policy in the 1980s. This policy, known as the 'minority policy', was quite innovative in Europe. In the 1990s and early 2000s, this 'multicultural' approach evolved into a more assimilationist and integrative one.⁹⁶

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Netherlands did not consider itself a country of immigration. Immigrants were not regarded as permanent residents and no integration policy was implemented. This period also saw different views on immigration held by different government departments; for example, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment still considered immigration to be a temporary phenomenon, while the Ministry of Culture, Leisure and Social had become aware of the many contradictions between the idea of temporary residence and the reality of permanent settlement including family immigrants and the educational needs. Eventually, the Dutch government recognized the fact that many immigrants would stay in the Netherlands and public policy shifted towards an integration policy. With the migration flows associated with decolonization, guest worker policies, and later asylum seeking, the Netherlands gradually change into a country of immigration with more and more immigrants settling in the country.⁹⁷

The Dutch minority policy was formally implemented in 1983. The main focus was on groups that were socio-economically disadvantaged and considered to be ethnically or culturally different, and the groups defined as 'minorities' at the time

95 J. Doornik, *Immigration in the Netherlands: 1945 to Present*, Dare.uva.nl (EdinburghEdinburgh University Press, 2008), 361–65, <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=bb4e483e-8151-49f9-b1c9-7518d933095c>.

96 European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

97 J. Doornik, *Immigration in the Netherlands: 1945 to Present*, Dare.uva.nl (EdinburghEdinburgh University Press, 2008), 361–65, <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=bb4e483e-8151-49f9-b1c9-7518d933095c>.

included 14 groups such as Surinamese, Italians, and Turkish. This policy aimed at preventing nationality, ethnicity, or religion-based discrimination, enhancing foreign residents' political participation, and easing naturalization and dual nationality processes. It also established consultation structures for groups targeted by the "minority Policy", subsidized immigrant organizations, and focused on the labor market, education, and housing issues. However, these measures had limited effectiveness. It is worth noting that the minority policy has less impact on the Chinese, who are not recognized as a minority by the Dutch authorities.⁹⁸ The Chinese do not meet the conditions of 'disadvantaged immigrants' in terms of their income level. Therefore, policies and subsidies for disadvantaged immigrant groups do not include the Chinese.⁹⁹

From the 1980s onwards, the Dutch government gradually implemented stricter conditions for labor immigration. Through policies such as the Labor Act for Foreign Workers (1979) attempts were made to restrict low-skilled and irregular immigrants and to attract highly skilled workers. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the minority policy began to be criticized. It became clear that the policy's objectives were not being achieved in terms of labor market participation and educational attainment. Gradually a new discourse on integration emerged, focusing on individuals rather than specific groups. In the 1990s the Dutch government introduced stricter measures for family immigration, which further developed to the point where in 2005 non-Dutch family members who wanted to immigrate had to pass an integration test, which

98 Fenya Fischler, "Integration Policy : Netherlands Country Report," Cadmus.eui.eu, 2014, <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/32657>.

99 Sonia Gsir and Jérémy Mandin, Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands: Corridor Report, Publications Office of the European Union (LU: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015), <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/68e0fec6-e3ce-428f-ae14-a9fdb8fb6fed/language-en/format-PDF/source-search>.

examined their knowledge of the Dutch language and Dutch society.¹⁰⁰

At the beginning of the 21st century, the policy of integration shifted after a series of social events such as the murder of Dutch film-maker Theo Van Gogh by a young Dutch citizen with Moroccan background, which was interpreted by parts of the media and political discourse as a sign of the failure of Dutch integration policy. 2004 saw the introduction of a new integration policy. The main differences between this policy and the previous included the following elements: immigrant culture was seen more as a risk than as something positive, integration was seen as the responsibility of immigrants; in a sense, integration was seen as promoting cultural conformity between immigrants and the Dutch cultural norm rather than supporting immigrants' cultural diversity.¹⁰¹

3.2 Changing Economy Environment and Reception Attitudes

Net immigration to the Netherlands has been on the rise since the 1960s. In the 1960s, the Dutch economy was booming and employers looked abroad for employees who could fill vacancies. This was the economic background of the guest worker program in the 1960s. The number of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands has grown steadily under this policy. Initially, immigrant labor had a positive impact on income and economic growth in the Netherlands, as immigration reduced the relative scarcity of labor. But these positive outcomes depend largely on the assumption that immigrant workers' families won't follow with them. As stated in the last section, this assumption is unrealistic.¹⁰² By the end of the 1970s, the oil crisis was causing

¹⁰⁰ M. D. M. Bruquetas Callejo et al., "Policymaking Related to Immigration and Integration. The Dutch Case. Country Report on the Netherlands," *Dare.uva.nl*, 2007, <https://dare.uva.nl/search?identifier=ffc3c3cd-d662-43fe-bc34-4bb04cb982d5>.

¹⁰¹ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

¹⁰² H. J. Roodenburg, Rob Euwals, and H. J. M. ter Rele, *Immigration and the Dutch Economy* (The Hague: CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, 2003).

serious problems for the Dutch economy. Unemployment has skyrocketed, and workers across all industries have lost their jobs. Due to this economic crisis, the ‘guest policy’ stopped in 1973. However, due to the family reunion policy and the newly born second generation of immigrants, the number of immigrants continues to grow in the Netherlands. Because of the lack of job opportunities, they have to start relying on social welfare. The economic impact of immigration has turned negative. The recession has led to questions about the value of economic immigration. Public opinion supports the view that immigrants take jobs from natives and lower market wages.¹⁰³

Since the 1980s, successive Dutch governments have promoted self-employment, especially among immigrants, as an important part of their policy.¹⁰⁴ During this period, data on self-employment among immigrants in the Netherlands seem to confirm the success of these policies, with the number of companies run by immigrants from less developed countries rising from 14,162 in 1989 to 36,645 in 1999, an increase of 158%. The increase in immigrant entrepreneurship not only helped to reduce unemployment among immigrants from developing countries but also indirectly reduced immigrant unemployment by employing other immigrants, whom many immigrant companies tend to recruit. Judging from these figures, the trend of immigrant entrepreneurship in the Netherlands during this period presents a rather positive picture.¹⁰⁵

In the late 1980s, ethnic minority policy was poor in terms of socioeconomic effects,

¹⁰³ Roodenburg, Euwals, and Rele.

¹⁰⁴ Robert C. Kloosterman, ‘Creating Opportunities. Policies Aimed at Increasing Openings for Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands’, *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 15, no. 2 (January 2003): 167–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0898562032000075159>.

¹⁰⁵ Robert C. Kloosterman, “Creating Opportunities. Policies Aimed at Increasing Openings for Immigrant Entrepreneurs in the Netherlands,” *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 15, no. 2 (January 2003): 167–81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0898562032000075159>.

and the effect of the labor market were ineffective, manifested in persistently high unemployment and low labor market participation by immigrants. Some argue that a lax system for accessing benefits for immigrants will make them overly dependent on state welfare policies. In addition, the feasibility of the welfare state at that time was also questioned. Thus, the issues of immigration and integration and the need for welfare state austerity are brought together to generate a new policy perspective. ‘Building a more active welfare state under a freer system’ for immigrants means that they are encouraged to be ‘self-reliant’ and discuss their civil rights and duties as new citizens.¹⁰⁶ After the 1990s, the reception attitude has undergone major revisions in the integration policy. It introduces a new distribution of responsibility among the parties involved, starting with the responsibility of the immigrants themselves. Since 2007, new immigrants need to find and fund citizenship integration courses themselves, and only if they successfully pass the test, they are eligible for a refund of up to 70% of the training fee. In this scenario, local authorities abdicate many responsibilities.¹⁰⁷

Rafaela M. Dancygier and Michael J. Donnelly find that sectoral economies influence perceptions of immigration by examining survey data from European countries from 2002 to 2009. Individuals employed in growing sectors are more likely to support immigration than those employed in shrinking sectors. Furthermore, the economic environment matters, as economic sectors weaken support for immigration when economic conditions deteriorate and confidence in the economy declines.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ M. D. M. Bruquetas Callejo et al., “Policymaking Related to Immigration and Integration. The Dutch Case. Country Report on the Netherlands,” *Dare.uva.nl*, 2007,

¹⁰⁷ M. D. M. Bruquetas Callejo et al., “Policymaking Related to Immigration and Integration. The Dutch Case. Country Report on the Netherlands,” *Dare.uva.nl*, 2007,p21

¹⁰⁸ Rafaela M. Dancygier and Michael J. Donnelly, ‘Sectoral Economies, Economic Contexts, and Attitudes toward Immigration’, *The Journal of Politics* 75, no. 1 (January 2013): 17–35,

3.3 Conclusion

The rapidly changing economic environment, immigration policies, and reception attitudes are changing challenges for all immigrants arriving in the Netherlands. Chinese immigrants in different periods have overcome their difficulties through sector adjustments, community support, etc., and have also found opportunities for business development in different periods

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381612000849>.

Chapter 4. What motivated Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to start their business journey in the Netherlands from a historical perspective?

The motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands have seen a significant shift from the 1970s to the present day. Initially, the primary motivation was economic survival, but over time, this has evolved into a more intrinsic pursuit of personal and professional fulfillment. The entrepreneurial motivations of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands in different periods are closely related to the demographic characteristics and social context at the micro level, as well as the social conditions and opportunity structure at the macro level. This chapter will follow the narrative of the time axis, taking the author's interviews with ten immigrant entrepreneurs as cases, through their vivid life stories, analyzing their entrepreneurial motivations at different times. This chapter tries to present the interesting and nuanced interactions between Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and Dutch society in the past fifty years.

4.1 1970s to 1990s: Living for Money and Endless Work

According to the work of Kloosterman and Rath (2001) in their book "Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Venturing Abroad in the Age of Globalization", many immigrant entrepreneurs were motivated by the need to survive economically in their new host countries.¹⁰⁹ In the 1970s, many Chinese immigrants arrived in the Netherlands seeking better economic opportunities. They were primarily driven by the desire to improve their financial situation and provide a better life for their families. This was a common trend among immigrant entrepreneurs, not just from China, but also from

¹⁰⁹ Robert Kloosterman and Jan Rath, eds., *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Venturing Abroad in the Age of Globalization* (New York: Berg, 2003).

other countries such as Turkey.¹¹⁰ During this period, the Dutch policy was relatively tolerant towards immigrants, and the changes in the economic development of the Netherlands affected the operation of Chinese restaurants to a certain extent. The boom of the 1970s was followed by the saturation and collapse of the restaurant industry in the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹¹

Earning money and hard work are common themes when immigrants refer to this period. Each of the cases interviewed in this thesis, who arrived in the Netherlands before 2000, had experience in running a restaurant or snack bar. Fenmei, who currently working as an event manager in the Verhalenhuis Belvédère, has memories of helping out in their parents' restaurant after school since they were teenagers. She came to the Netherlands when she was 9 years old (1989), before that she lived in her hometown, the countryside of Wenzhou with her grandparents from the age of two to nine. Her parents, like many Wenzhou people from the same region, came to the Netherlands to make a living. And after settling down, they took over their two daughters and shortly afterward opened their first restaurant in North Holland. From the age of 13 until the age of 18 before leaving home for university, Fenmei's memories are full of hard work:

As a child, I got up in the morning, went to school, came back from school to the family restaurant for dinner, did my homework, and started working in the restaurant until it closed and started cleaning up and then finished my homework. Day after day. In the 1990s, it was a very typical Chinese restaurant -

¹¹⁰ European University Institute. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies. and European University Institute. Migration Policy Centre., *Turkish and Chinese Immigration on the Netherlands*.

¹¹¹ Van Meeteren and Wiering, 'Labour Trafficking in Chinese Restaurants in the Netherlands and the Role of Dutch Immigration Policies. A Qualitative Analysis of Investigative Case Files'.

all family members helped the family restaurant without any payment. I remember having a dress that I wore for about 6 or 7 years and living very frugally. When I was 17 years old, my mother got pregnant again so I had to look after the baby all day. The teenage -period was a really difficult time for me.¹¹²

At this stage, the Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands, especially the Wenzhou people who came to do the catering business, showed a strong bond of mutual support within the community. People from the same country rely entirely on earlier immigrant fellows (who are also bosses). National solidarity and friendship replace formal contracts and regulations: distant kinship, similar conditions, or speaking the same dialect form a tight bond within the group. A moral grid of shared purpose, altruism, sacrifice, and kinship compassion lends a strong sense of Chinese community.¹¹³ The experience of Mrs. Lin is a typical representative of immigrants in this period. Mrs. Lin and her husband were the first owners of Dim Sum, a famous restaurant in Rotterdam's Chinatown. Mrs Lin is the third generation of immigrants in her family, the first is Mrs Lin's grandfather, who went to France in the 1910s as a seaman and stayed there. When Mrs. Lin was about 10 years old, China was a communist country, and Chinese passports were not accepted by European countries then, so she went to Taiwan to change her passport and started studying in Germany. She later married her first husband and came to the Netherlands for a family reunion. In the winter of 1971, they came to Rotterdam and opened an Indonesian Chinese restaurant. Later, they opened several restaurants in Rotterdam and started to do shipping-related services in the 1990s. Mrs. Lin is a serial entrepreneur and the best spokesperson for the mutual help spirit of the Wenzhou people:

¹¹² Fenmei, Interview

¹¹³ Tan, *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*.

In the beginning, our restaurant staff were all relatives and friends from Wenzhou, such as my cousin's aunt and uncle's children, who came to work in the Netherlands, and I would like to help them settle in this new environment. They were all young, about twenty years old, and they could only help out in the restaurant. In this way, the number of employees in the restaurant gradually increased. Restaurants run by Wenzhou people can be seen passed down from generation to generation, not necessarily from father to son, but also from fellow villagers or distant relatives in the same village. At first, I also worked as a helper in a relative's restaurant. Later, when I grew up, I opened my restaurant and took care of the younger generation of relatives. In addition to the employment relationship, I sometimes treat employees as my children and ask them to return to the dormitory before noon, play the role of parents, and take responsibility.¹¹⁴

4.2 The 1990s to 2000s: Transformation and Exploration

However, over the decades, the motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs have evolved. While financial stability remains important, many are now driven by a desire for personal satisfaction. This shift can be attributed to several factors, including improved socio-economic conditions, increased educational attainment, and greater integration into Dutch society. During this period, China, as the home country of immigrants, underwent major changes. With China's economic system reform in the 1980s and 1990s and China's gradual entry into the global trade chain, more and more Chinese immigrants and even Chinese companies have reached complex international transactions through the advantages of supply chain resources.

¹¹⁴ Interview, Mrs. Lin

Sofie Xie was one of the earliest successful businesswomen in China after the reform and opening up policy in the 1980s in the trading sector. Despite without higher education, her artistic talent and desire for money help her rise to the top of the business world. From the 1980s to the 1990s, she ran a clothing business in Henan and Zhejiang, and an art business in Hong Kong and Wenzhou. For her, making money is very easy, as long as she uses her brain and puts in a little effort. "As long as I want, I can make money."¹¹⁵ In 1999, Sofie divorced her first husband and settled in the Netherlands with her second husband (from Wenzhou). In addition to marriage and family reunification, she also hopes that the Netherlands can provide a better educational environment for her daughter. After many attempts and explorations in the Netherlands, she devoted herself to art in the world at the age of 50, hoping to integrate and innovate the traditional Chinese painting techniques created by her grandfather and generate stronger cultural influence. At present, she is a signed painter of a mainstream gallery in the Netherlands. She also holds her solo exhibition in The Hague every year and is often invited to participate in art activities around the world.

In addition to the opportunities offered by changing times, Peter van Dole points out that cross-cultural experiences can improve an individual's ability to identify promising business ideas. Cross-cultural experiences can also spark creativity. Interacting with two or more cultural backgrounds can help immigrants combine different ideas, solutions, and client problems to create something entirely new.¹¹⁶ The identification of business opportunities across cultural backgrounds can be summarized as one of the motivations for immigrant entrepreneurship. As a second-generation immigrant, Fenmei's transnational cultural identity gave her the idea to

¹¹⁵ Interview, Sofie

¹¹⁶ Matthew J. Lindquist, Joeri Sol, and Mirjam Van Praag, "Why Do Entrepreneurial Parents Have Entrepreneurial Children?," *Journal of Labor Economics* 33, no. 2 (April 2015): 269–96, <https://doi.org/10.1086/678493>.

expand their art and culture career in Chinese immigration. Fenmei was an independent artist when she just graduated from university. After a year of exploration, she set up her foundation with the aim of building bridges between the Chinese and Dutch communities through cultural events and projects.

What I want to do is to do things that are beneficial to myself, to my network, to society, and the Chinese community. All income earned by all projects of the foundation is retained in the foundation. I can use this money for more projects. Although my foundation is currently closed, the things I do in the Verhalenhuis Belvédère are all the same, aiming at improving the awareness of Chinese culture in the Netherlands, or Rotterdam, and helping Chinese people learn more about art and Dutch culture.¹¹⁷

Family factors are also often mentioned by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the interview. Mr. Sai, a second-generation immigrant from Hong Kong, stopped the design studio that often required business trips, and chose to operate more local restaurant businesses to take care of his daughter.¹¹⁸ Fenmei stopped running the cultural foundation a few years ago because she got tired of the administration and quarterly tax declaration. Another reason for stopping is that she became a mother, and the busy schedule of the family left her no time to deal with the daily operations of the cultural foundation and instead engaged in projects and activities related to Chinese culture via Verhalenhuis Belvédère. She wants her daughter to know that it is manageable to be an independent woman, not to depend on a man, to run a family and a career she loves.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Interview, Fenmei

¹¹⁸ Interview, Sai

¹¹⁹ Interview, Fenmei

4.3 After the 21st Century: Self-realization

Jonathan Levie points out that although immigrants face some labor market disadvantages and resource disadvantages, they also have the advantage of perceptions of opportunity and attitudinal advantages. It can therefore be expected that immigrants are more inclined to engage in new business activities than residents.¹²⁰ During the process of interviews, it is clear that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs mention their idealistic motives. These entrepreneurs want to do something for their home country and/or family members. This is especially the case for those who entered the Netherlands as educational migrants after 2000 and ran a company after graduation. For these entrepreneurs, financial gain is not their main motivation. They usually have financial security from family or previous employment/career before starting a business and choose to start a business of their own accord rather than being forced to do so.¹²¹ Katja Rusinovic in the study *Dynamic Entrepreneurship* mentions that entrepreneurs who are highly educated, positively motivated to start a business, integrated into formal or mixed networks, and active in the mainstream market enjoy a higher labor market position and are highly integrated into Dutch society in terms of their embeddedness in both networks (mixed and formal networks) and markets (mainstream market). The study mainly points to second-generation migrants, but it is easy to observe that such characteristics are also consistent with educational immigrants.¹²² Mrs. Zhu mentioned family factors and a strong self-seeking orientation when it comes to entrepreneurial decisions in the

¹²⁰ Jonathan Levie, "Immigration, In-Migration, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom," *Small Business Economics* 28, no. 2-3 (January 5, 2007): 146–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11187-006-9013-2>.

¹²¹ Interview, Mooily

¹²² Katja Rušinović and Imiscoe (Organization, *Dynamic Entrepreneurship : First and Second-Generation Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Dutch Cities* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, Cop, 2006), 9–36, 109–33.

interviews:

My values are that women, especially Chinese women, need to be independent. Women can achieve financial independence. One of the reasons why I chose to start a business is that I hope my daughters can see my independence, and I hope they can have their careers and be independent.¹²³

Finding self-worth and pursuing it has always been the main motivation of Sofie's life story. An accident ten years ago kept her in bed for two months recovering. When she got sick, she started thinking: what do I do next?

I can't waste my time anymore, I should focus my time on one thing, I don't think I can stop drawing, I've always loved drawing, my husband says sometimes he can see me drawing with my eyes closed. When I close my eyes, my picture is unfettered and relaxed. Sometimes I don't look at the clock and I'm still excited until 5:00 am.¹²⁴

Mooily's career choice reflects the experience of an immigrant facing a disadvantage in the job market and a non-monetarily driven self-exploration in choosing to start a business. After completing a three-year Master's in Fine Arts in the Netherlands, Mooily found that although the Dutch art and culture industry was well developed, there were fewer opportunities for foreigners, so she turned to the job market demand to do marketing. At the end of 2022, she faced a departmental reorganization and often questioned the meaning of

¹²³ Interview, Mrs. Zhu

¹²⁴ Interview, Sofie Xie

her work. After deeper consideration, she chose to leave and start her own business. She chose to start a clay workshop at the beginning of 2023 because it was her long-standing hobby. She had been gathering with friends or staging her handicrafts at markets. So far, the craft workshops have brought more emotional value to Mooily than financial value:

Every time I finish a workshop, I get so much energy from it that I feel that the amount of money does not make so much sense to me. It's just a purely happy day, from the preparation to the end, the people I meet, the artworks they make, their personalities, their abilities in the field, etc. There is no part of the whole thing that is painful, which is quite rare. So even if it doesn't develop into my long-term career, it can still be my funny and enjoyable life experience.¹²⁵

Jia's entrepreneurial experience is a good example of a Chinese immigrant with a good education background developing a service-oriented start-up in response to changing market needs and pan-ethnic market needs. Jia came to the Netherlands when he was 17 and completed his bachelor's degree here. After undergraduate internship and graduation, she worked in a Chinese advertising media company in the Netherlands focused on online marketing. In 2018, Jia and her partners started operating a WeChat account that offered marketing services as a studio, targeting Chinese residents in the Netherlands. To expand the scope of business, her studio has gradually expanded its business scope to local network marketing such as Instagram and Facebook and further targeted European users. Currently, 70-80% of her clients are Chinese brands that want to expand their business in Europe. She helps them plan the brand's development in the target market and has always maintained a strong

¹²⁵ Interview, Mooily

business relationship with China.¹²⁶

4.4 conclusion

In conclusion, the motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands have evolved from being primarily money-oriented in the 1970s to a more intrinsic pursuit in the present day. The immigrants who arrived recently have better-educated backgrounds and economic conditions, which in turn provide them with more career and lifestyle choices. In the context of changing socio-economic conditions, technological development, and an increasingly globalized world, the risks, challenges, and original intentions of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are also constantly changing. The Chinese community, which once played an important role in the process of entrepreneurship, has gradually shrunk and become a meeting place for the older generation of Chinese immigrants. With the development of the times, the pursuit of self-worth by immigrant entrepreneurs has become evident, and economic/family factors have become one of the drivers of immigrant entrepreneurship that cannot be ignored.

¹²⁶ Interview, Jia

Chapter 5. Conclusion

Chinese immigrants have a long history in the Netherlands of over 100 years, and in terms of numbers, Chinese immigration has grown rapidly in recent times, with a significant increase in the number and proportion of educated immigrants.¹²⁷ Among the many immigrant groups in the Netherlands, Chinese immigration has its distinctive characteristics of the times. This thesis explored the characteristics, social context, and motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands from the 1970s to the present. The research aimed to gain a historical and comparative perspective on Chinese immigrants and understand their experiences within the context of the Netherlands.

To comprehend the experiences of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands, the theoretical framework of 'mixed embeddedness' was employed. This framework combined the changing characteristics and opportunity structure of immigrants within the developing social contexts and immigration policies in the Netherlands since the 1970s.

The findings indicate that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who arrived before 2000 mainly concentrated in the hotel and catering industry. These individuals displayed a strong drive for self-reliance and recognition of individual initiative, which propelled them toward entrepreneurial endeavors. Despite a general lack of higher education, mostly landing in restaurant labor roles, a strong sense of solidarity and support within the Chinese community played a significant role in their entrepreneurial pursuits and help them out. Chinese parents' emphasis on their children's education further contributed to the second-generation immigrant's motivation to establish

¹²⁷ Mérove Gijsberts, Willem Huijnk, and Ria Vogels, *Chinese Nederlanders. Van Horeca Naar Hogeschool* (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2011), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/306360018_Chinese_Nederlanders_Van_horeca_naar_hogeschool

successful businesses.

As time has progressed, particularly in the 21st century, Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands have exhibited higher average education levels. This, coupled with the Dutch society's evolving acceptance policy towards "integration", has created a conducive environment for these immigrants. The changing technological landscape and China's economic growth have further stimulated trade opportunities. The Netherlands' multicultural backdrop offers unique business prospects for these Chinese immigrants. They have successfully leveraged these opportunities to build prosperous careers in diverse sectors such as hospitality, culture, trade, and services.

In this context, Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs show a changing motivation to establish their businesses: personal aspirations like self-fulfillment, career autonomy, and familial considerations, such as the ambition to provide an improved life for their children, have also served as driving forces for these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to venture into business.

This thesis provides an in-depth analysis of the traits, societal context, and motivations of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands. The insights gained contribute to a more profound understanding of the Chinese immigrant experience and the factors that fuel entrepreneurial success. Moreover, the study underscores the significance of employing historical, comparative, and theoretical frameworks in the examination of immigrant entrepreneurship.

However, the limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size is not statistically representative, thus constraining the study's generalizability. As outlined in the methodology, the goal was to delve into the subject matter rather than extrapolate findings to the entire population. It should be considered The implications and societal ramifications of the research topic.

Investigating the historical aspects of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs can not only

offer fresh perspectives in the realm of minority entrepreneurship research but also facilitate a wider exploration of their entrepreneurial processes, including business decision-making and behavioral patterns. These decisions will undoubtedly exert a long-term influence on the Dutch economy. Future research could further investigate the unique challenges encountered by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs across various sectors and assess the long-term effects of their enterprises on both the Chinese community and the broader Dutch society. Additionally, an exploration of the intergenerational dynamics within Chinese immigrant families and their influence on entrepreneurial endeavors could yield valuable insights. Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the Netherlands enriches our knowledge of immigrant entrepreneurship and can guide the development of supportive policies and programs.

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Appendix

I. In-depth Interviews Guideline

Main topic: Chinese immigrants' experiences of entrepreneurship

Personal information	name, age, place of birth, gender and sexuality, and profession.
Family background	How many generations of immigrants you are? How long you have lived in the Netherlands? Immigration Path and experience since leaving China
Educational/working background	the level of education your family's views on the education working experience in China/NL
Work background	reasons for choosing to start your own business,
Entrepreneurship	The reason to start/stop why do you choose this industry? difficulties faced during the process (policy/market/economic/immigration background strength, etc.), plans for future career development

II. Transcription of 10 interviews

This section contains a summary of highlights from the transcriptions of the 10 interviewees. Mrs. Zhu and his husband were interviewed by the author together, so this appendix has a total of nine paragraphs. Please note that this is an approximation of the interview based on the full transcription and focus on the topic of this thesis. Some parts may not be the same as the original words but a summary of the real conversation.

1. Interviewee: Jia

Date: 17.03.2023

Location: Online

Interviewer: Welcome, Jia. Could you tell us when you first arrived in the

Netherlands?

Jia: Thank you. I arrived in the Netherlands in the summer of 2012, when I was not yet 18 years old.

Interviewer: That's quite young. Can you share a bit about your journey here in the Netherlands?

Jia: Certainly. I've been living in the Netherlands for over ten years now. I started with pre-undergraduate, language, and integration courses. I then completed my undergraduate and master's degrees, even during the epidemic. I transitioned from being a student to a working professional, and now I am into entrepreneurship.

Interviewer: That's quite a journey. You mentioned you did your bachelor's here. Can you share more about that experience?

Jia: Yes, I completed my bachelor's here when I was 17 years old. After my undergraduate studies, I did an internship and graduated. Then, I joined a Chinese company in the Netherlands and worked in content operations. My work was mainly related to content marketing, and I gained a broad understanding of the company's diverse business areas, including products, tourism, and more.

Interviewer: Interesting. And now you're into entrepreneurship. Can you tell us more about that?

Jia: Yes, in 2016, a friend and I launched a WeChat public website. It was quite a change, but we were excited to venture into this new territory.

Interviewer: That's quite a switch from working in a company to starting your venture. Can you tell us about the transition?

Jia: Well, we started the WeChat public website in 2016 without any initial entrepreneurial ideas. I simply liked to write and share. Being a young Chinese person in the Netherlands, I wanted to be an observer and a sharer. At that time, WeChat was still in its infancy in the Netherlands, and I was one of the early adopters.

Interviewer: And in 2018, you decided to turn this into a business?

Jia: Yes, in 2018, my partners and I started to operate a WeChat official account as a

studio, targeting local Chinese residents. We didn't want to compete with my former company, so we also expanded to manage Instagram accounts and other social media platforms like Facebook that target European users. It was a learning experience, realizing that resources and endorsements were very important during this journey.

Interviewer: Can you share more about your clients?

Jia: Currently, 70-80% of our clients are from China. We help them plan the development of their brands in the target market while maintaining strong commercial connections with China.

Interviewer: What was your family's reaction when you decided to start your own business?

Jia: My family, especially my mother, didn't initially encourage me to start a business. They hoped I could have an easier life rather than working so hard to start my own business. However, I still chose to become an entrepreneur. It was not because of their business background, but because they were very versatile. My father worked for a media company and was also a university professor. He emphasized the importance of living life to the fullest, and that knowledge and personal life should take priority over work.

Interviewer: That's a unique perspective. Were there any challenges you faced when starting your business?

Jia: Registering a company was not that complicated. The major challenge I faced was my poor math skills. In the beginning, I didn't have a proper system for organizing invoices, and I didn't realize the importance of backing up all the data for tax reporting purposes. This made the process of monthly and quarterly tax reporting very tedious. I was fined twice due to tax issues in the early stages of my business. This issue is particularly complex due to the lack of awareness of tax compliance in China and the complexity of cross-border business.

Interviewer: Did being Chinese present any difficulties in your entrepreneurship journey?

Jia: I did not encounter any difficulties in entrepreneurship because I am Chinese. On the contrary, being Chinese has brought me some convenience and advantages. For example, I can quickly find Chinese people to complete filming services at a lower budget. But it also means I need to spend more energy on the quality control of the work. We tend to use long-term cooperative photographers and hope to cultivate in 1-2 specific industries for a long time, leveraging our strengths.

Interviewer: Can you share any instances of discrimination you may have faced?

Jia: In the beginning, I was a bit timid in the Netherlands, especially when I first arrived and lived in a small village near Germany. I was underage at the time. When I rode my bike on the road, teenagers and even younger kids would throw stones at me. I was often bullied by these bad kids. So, at first, I felt a bit scared, but after starting my own business, I forced myself to become a little more courageous.

Interviewer: That's quite inspiring. Thank you for sharing your journey with us, Jia.

Any final thoughts or advice you'd like to give to budding entrepreneurs?

Jia: I'd say, it's crucial to have a basic understanding of company law, tax law, and tax reporting when starting a business. Also, it's important to pay attention to detail, especially when it comes to organizing invoices and backing up data for tax reporting purposes. These may seem like small things, but they can have a significant impact on your business. And lastly, don't let the fear of challenges or difficulties stop you from pursuing your passion.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time, Jia. It was a pleasure to hear about your journey.

2. Interviewee: Mrs. Lin

Date: 21.03.2023

Location: Verhalenhuis Belvédère

Interviewer: Can you please share your story, including your migration experiences, and the challenges you faced when starting your businesses?

Mrs. Lin: I came to the Netherlands because I got married. I had many relatives in

Germany - uncles, cousins, and aunts are in the Netherlands, so I was introduced to someone here. Initially, I was in Germany where there were fewer Chinese people. Most of our fellow villagers from Wenzhou were in the Netherlands, and through this introduction, I met someone here. We opened a small restaurant with 16 small tables. We started with a Chinese restaurant that was suitable for local Chinese production.

Interviewer: When was this?

Mrs. Lin: 1969 and the restaurant from 1971

Mrs. Lin: Yes, in the 1940s, many soldiers came back from the war. They found Dutch food too boring, so they liked to eat some Asian food. They could only find Asian food in Chinese restaurants. We hired an Indonesian cook who came to our restaurant to cook two meals a week, cooking Indonesian food. We also sold a variety of Asian food.

Interviewer: So, why many Chinese people chose to open restaurants when they came here?

Mrs. Lin: Because you don't need to have trained as a chef to open a restaurant. And for those of us who were born and raised here, we wouldn't choose to listen to the older Chinese immigrants. We could only cook Chinese food.

Interviewer: So, when you came here, you had already graduated from university?

Mrs. Lin: No, I didn't graduate from university. I came out in 1964, in Macao, and then I handled some identity cards and passports. But by 1975, we could apply directly and give it to our younger brothers and sisters, and those relatives and friends could directly use our own country's passport.

Interviewer: This has quite a historical background.

Mrs. Lin: Yes, it wasn't easy to come out at that time. Generally, you had to apply. I am the third generation. The first generation was my grandfather. He was a sailor and went to France with his ship in the 1930s. He stayed in France and applied for my father to come out. My father came to France, did not like life in France, and then came to the Netherlands.

Interviewer: Are you more or less familiar with the business of opening a restaurant?

Mrs. Lin: Yes, we started our own business, but it was also very tiring. By the winter of 1971, we came to Rotterdam. We not only opened a restaurant, but we also opened a building in the city center, and there was a coffee shop. We started a new Indonesian and Chinese restaurant there.

Interviewer: Can you share your experience transitioning from running a restaurant to getting into shipping?

Mrs. Lin: After running the restaurant for a few years, we got introduced to shipping by a fellow villager. He told us about Russia, which has the world's largest port. This information intrigued us because China was purchasing many second-hand goods at the time. So, we started shipping, and by 1975, the parent company came over. We partnered with the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO).

Interviewer: I see, so you started a collaboration.

Mrs. Lin: Yes, and we kept running the restaurant because we had many relatives and friends. A lot of the kids from our relatives were brought over because they were young and life was hard. They had good positions in the city, so we took one from each family and brought them over here.

Interviewer: So, is everyone started from the restaurant?

Mrs. Lin: Yes, when they came out, they were all in their twenties. Some had just graduated from junior high school. Apart from relatives, we also applied for many villagers to come over, which was difficult because China was not very open then. But if you help one person out, he can take care of his family, and later he can bring his brothers and sisters over. This way, we helped a lot, one generation after another.

Interviewer: It's like when you first came out, you went to a relative's restaurant to help, and then when you grew up, you opened a restaurant and could take care of the children of your relatives.

Mrs. Lin: Yes, at that time, it was hard to find workers. In 1969, very few people could come out. Therefore, we hired many young people from Singapore who had

British nationality. They came to the Netherlands because they did not want to join the military. We hired these people to help because we could communicate with them. Some of them were overseas Chinese from Wenzhou. We could speak the hometown dialect.

Interviewer: Can you tell us more about how your shipping business grew and the challenges you faced?

Mrs. Lin: When we first started in the shipping business, it was challenging because China was not very open at that time. We had to navigate a lot of red tape to get our business off the ground. However, we were persistent and managed to establish good relations with the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO).

Interviewer: Thank you for your sharing!

3. Interviewee: Maggie

Date: 27/04/2023 (King's Day)

Location: Hogeweg 33, Amsterdam (Open market of King's Day)

Interviewer: Could you tell us about your life and your dumpling business here in the Netherlands?

Maggie: I live in de Zaan with my Dutch husband and our three children. I come from Guangdong in Southern China but also lived in Beijing, so I have a deep understanding of different Chinese cuisines. When I moved to the Netherlands in 2011, I found the food culture here to be very different from China's, and I missed my home food, especially dumplings. That's why I started cooking dumplings at home.

Interviewer: How has your dumpling business evolved over the years?

Maggie: Through lots of practice, trial, and error, and my understanding of food, I've developed my unique dumpling flavor. My customers, including dumpling "experts" from mainland China and Taiwan, have helped me refine my dumplings over time. Now, I mainly operate a takeaway service where customers can order through email, phone, or our website. I also work with PS in food service for nationwide delivery of frozen dumplings and zongzi (sticky rice dumplings). I participate in offline markets

and events as well. For example, King's Day at the end of April is probably the busiest time of the year for us. We prepare a month in advance, and on the day, we start at 7 AM and head to Hogeweg 33 in Amsterdam. We usually make over a thousand euros in the busy morning alone. I participate in 2-3 offline markets each month, where my ready-made dumplings are widely welcomed by food lovers.

Interviewer: How has your work been recognized and received by the community?

Maggie: People increasingly call me the Dumpling Lady or Dumpling Master. Over the 20 years that I've been making dumplings, I've used them as a medium to promote Chinese food culture in the Netherlands. Since 2010, with the rise of the internet age, I've been invited to contribute to online magazines and food magazines for dumpling recipes. I've also participated in video interviews for the program Binnenste Buiten, demonstrating the traditional Chinese way of making dumplings. On my website, I also introduce the historical origins and traditional culture behind Chinese foods like dumplings and zongzi.

4. Interviewee: Fenmei Hu

Date: 21/03/2023

Location: Verhalenhuis Belvédère

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your journey to the Netherlands and your early life here?

Fenmei: I came to the Netherlands when I was 9 years old, in 1989. Before that, I lived with my grandparents in my hometown and remember the beautiful landscape and delicious food of the Wenzhou countryside from the age of two to nine. My parents, like many Wenzhou people from the same region, came to the Netherlands to work. After settling down, they brought over my sister and me and opened their first restaurant in North Holland.

Interviewer: What was your life like growing up in the restaurant environment?

Fenmei: Our life revolved around the restaurant. We lived above the restaurant in a fishing village in the north, where there were few foreigners. My daily routine was to

go to school, come back to the family restaurant for dinner, do my homework, and start working in the restaurant. I would work until the restaurant closed, start cleaning up, and then do more homework. This was a typical life of a Chinese restaurant family during the 1990s. We lived very frugally; I remember wearing the same dress for about 6 or 7 years.

Interviewer: How did your family's restaurant business over time?

Fenmei: Things changed when my older sister left home to live her life, and the restaurant faced more competition in our little village. It became difficult to keep the restaurant going. My mother got pregnant again, and I had to look after the baby all day when I was 17. That was a really difficult time for me.

Interviewer: How did your education fit into all of this?

Fenmei: Despite the challenges, I was determined to finish school. I told my parents that I wanted to go to university and study. I needed to complete my education.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your parents' views on education and careers?

Fenmei: My mother believed that if I wanted to study, I had to choose a profession that would bring me social status. She asked if I could become a doctor or a lawyer, but I knew those weren't for me. She didn't know about many other professions. When I chose to pursue art, my mother thought I was giving up my future. She feared I would end up as a wandering artist painting by the canals.

Interviewer: How about their views on marriage?

Fenmei: My mother thought I could stop studying at 16, and she would find a husband for me. In their hometown of Wenzhou, parents typically decide whom you marry, usually someone from the same village or region. My parents were very traditional; they even believed that modern people from Guangdong or Hong Kong were not good marriage partners because they might have had rich love histories and premarital sexual experiences.

Interviewer: Could you talk about the challenges you faced in your business?

Fenmei: As a small organization, it was challenging to secure funding from the

government. I had to devise project plans and request subsidies, which involved a lot of paperwork and navigating bureaucratic systems. It was so exhausting that I decided to stop because I wanted to create, not just manage. Also, the necessity of filing a tax return every quarter in the Netherlands was another hassle I didn't enjoy.

Interviewer: What made you decide to stop running the business?

Fenmei: Another reason I stopped was that I became a mother and didn't have time for it anymore. I wanted a more relaxed life and to be economically independent. I wanted to set an example for my daughter that as an independent woman, you don't need to rely on a man and can balance family and a career you love. So, in 2019, I joined Verhalenhuis Belvédère to work on Chinese cultural projects and activities.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about the reason behind starting your own business?

Fenmei: I had a very supportive husband. When I graduated, we didn't have children yet. He assured me that I didn't have to worry about making money because he could provide for us. Even so, he didn't understand what I was doing all day. I explained that as an artist, it's not just about making a painting. I had to go out, meet people, and build a network. Despite this, he still supported my choices and covered the family's expenses. But because he did, I could develop myself, be free, and do what I wanted to do.

Interviewer: How did your business evolve?

Fenmei: What I wanted to do was beneficial for me, for my network, for the community, and the Chinese community. After I graduated, I gave myself a year to find out what I wanted to do. I worked in a high school for six months, but I didn't like the teenagers; they were so rude. Then I went to a shop that sold art supplies and learned more about the materials I was using. Then I went to work in a gallery because I wanted to gain more knowledge about how to sell art.

Interviewer: Could you explain more about the foundation you set up?

Fenmei: My sister suggested I set up a foundation. She said if I wanted to continue doing things with culture and community, I could do that through a foundation. I

could ask for subsidies from the government or do new projects and my projects. My foundation has achieved building bridges between the Chinese and Dutch communities with cultural activities and projects. Everything that is earned through the projects goes to the foundation, so it stays in the foundation too. I can use the money for more projects. The foundation's projects aim to raise awareness of Chinese culture among the locals and to help the Chinese learn more about art and Dutch culture.

5. Interviewee: Mrs. & Mr. Zhu

Location: Suju BBQ, Almere

Date:28/04/2023

Interviewer: How about your journey to the Netherlands?

Mr. Zhu: I immigrated from Wenzhou to the Netherlands in the 90s. Like many of my fellow countrymen from Wenzhou, I chose the path of becoming a chef, owning a restaurant, and then investing in other restaurants. However, unlike many others who had come to the Netherlands in the 70s, I received little support from my relatives and ethnic community in my early years here.

Interviewer: How did your personal life evolve over the years?

Mr. Zhu: After a few years of struggle in a foreign land, I went back to Wenzhou in the 2000s where I found my current wife. We got married, and I brought her back to the Netherlands. We now have two daughters and live in Almere, where we're both busy running our new Korean restaurant.

Interviewer: Can you describe the staffing of your restaurant?

Mr. Zhu: Unlike the older generation of Wenzhou restaurant owners, our restaurant employs a more diverse and localized staff. The kitchen staff, and the chefs, are mostly Chinese from Guangdong, but the bar staff, and the servers, are mostly locally-born individuals with immigrant backgrounds. They're young, and many of them are part-time students.

Interviewer: How do you and your wife approach running the business?

Mrs. Zhu: While my husband and I share a similar background of being from Wenzhou, we have distinct thoughts about our business operations. I am one of the shareholders of our restaurant, SujuBBQ. Although I'm new to the restaurant business, having previously run a mother-and-baby and restaurant-related trade business for over a decade, I'm an avid learner. I'm highly passionate about exploring new markets and opportunities, and I continue to pursue further education.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about your personality and how it has influenced your approach to business?

Mrs. Zhu: As the only child in my family, I've always had my ideas and opinions on things. When I work, I aim to create more value for my employer. I enjoy taking charge and solving problems myself. As time goes by, I've become more resilient and am no longer afraid of challenges.

Interviewer: How has the era you grew up in influenced your business?

Mrs. Zhu: In my era, e-commerce has already emerged. As a Wenzhou person, we all enjoy doing business, whether it's e-commerce or international trade. Although I am a woman, in this era there is no longer a huge distinction between men and women. I believe the world is very kind to women, allowing them to use their brains to explore their markets.

Interviewer: Could you tell us about the reasons for starting your own business and your business strategy?

Mrs. Zhu: I believe in the saying, "People regard food as their prime necessity." I don't expect the restaurant to be extremely profitable, but as long as it's run well, it can meet basic life needs. Even in a poor economy, people still need to eat. When the pandemic came, dine-in services might have transformed into take-away. During the pandemic, my trade business suddenly disappeared. Before that, I had seized a wave of dividends in the trade field. Now, I hope to find a steady rhythm in the restaurant business. Sometimes, I also want to travel and see the wide world.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on your plan for scaling your restaurant business?

Mrs. Zhu: I believe that if a company or business wants to scale up, the founder cannot do everything by themselves. Everyone has areas they excel, and for the rest, you need to hire others. So, I aim to use the next six months to get the restaurant on track, then delegate the daily operations to a reliable manager, allowing it to run as a stable cash cow.

Interviewer: Could you share your thoughts on the role of women in society and business?

Mrs. Zhu: Today's society is not like the old patriarchal era - women can do business. Female economic and ideological independence is not detrimental to men, but only beneficial. With the ability to support myself, I can better help my family. Women with the ability to care for themselves and their families can support their households even if men lose their earning power. If a woman is just a housewife and cannot contribute financially, the family is at risk of collapsing in the face of societal turmoil.

Interviewer: What are your thoughts on the spirit of independence?

Mrs. Zhu: I believe the spirit is transferable. People die, but the spirit can be passed on. I believe that we women, especially Chinese women, need this spirit. The history of China has been dominated by patriarchy, but I believe women can be completely self-reliant. Today's society presents great opportunities. Progress in society does not depend solely on men or women; it relies on your vision and your understanding of the economy. Economic independence, personal independence, and the possibility of discarding the marriage system after a few generations can all be achieved. To a large extent, the marriage system is a shackle on women. Men often overlook the sacrifices and contributions women make for the family and children under this system.

Interviewer: How would you like your spirit to be passed on, particularly to your daughters?

Mrs. Zhu: I strongly believe that spirit can be passed on. People pass away, but their spirits live on. I think women, especially Chinese women, need this kind of spirit. China's history has been dominated by male chauvinism, so women must learn to

depend completely on themselves. The opportunities in today's world are plentiful, and society's progress doesn't solely depend on women or men. Women can carve out their paths by understanding the economy and achieving financial independence. With economic and personal independence, it's conceivable that the institution of marriage could be reformed or even abolished in future generations, as it has often acted as a significant shackle for women. Men often fail to recognize the sacrifices and contributions that women make to their families and children under the current marriage system.

Interviewer: What hopes do you have for your daughters?

Mrs. Zhu: I hope my daughters can see my independence and acceptance, and that they'll follow in my footsteps to build their careers and be independent too.

6. Interviewee: Sai

Location: Neptune Restaurant in Rotterdam

Date:12/05/2023

Interviewer: Can you please introduce a bit of your background? When your parents came here, did they also choose to be chefs or start their restaurant immediately?

Sai: Yes, my father worked as an electrician for a few years, and then after that, he worked in a restaurant, and so did my mom. They saved a lot of money to start their own business as a restaurant.

Interviewer: Were you born in Rotterdam?

Sai: Yes, I was born in Rotterdam in 1979. The restaurant where my parents worked is closed now. This restaurant is run by me. I bought it from my parents eight years ago.

Interviewer: So, you're a new boss?

Sai: Yes, not new, but yeah, a new face for my customers.

Interviewer: Was starting a restaurant the beginning of your career or did you do something different?

Sai: I was an interior designer. We made furniture. That's why the interior design here

is very special. But the schedule with the restaurant is more convenient for me. I can see my daughter and family more often. When I did the other job, I had to travel a lot from Milan to Paris for design fairs. It wasn't balanced with my wife's work because she worked in an office. So partly because of personal interest and also for family reasons, I chose to run a restaurant.

Interviewer: How long have you been running a restaurant?

Sai: I started running a restaurant after the first year my daughter was born, around 2013. It's not a very long time but still about ten years.

Interviewer: May I ask about your parents' attitude about your education and career choice? Did they want you to get well-educated and do some very decent job?

Sai: They always wanted me to be a dentist. They asked me quite often, once a month, "Are you ready to be a dentist?" when I was young. But then I chose to learn the design of my interest.

Interviewer: It's a very uncommon story. Most of the Chinese people I interviewed came here to make a living and chose hardworking jobs. They saved money to start their business. But for you, you had a choice. You chose to stay in the restaurant business.

Sai: Yes, I kind of like it, you know, working with people around me.

Interviewer: Are there a lot of difficulties in running a restaurant or starting your business?

Sai: I think the most common problem we had was the corona and the price went up and the war with Ukraine. So this is recent several years and before that, yeah it was okay running because we were here for almost 35 years and still in the family. So yes, I'm quite normalized. I know how it works.

Interviewer: So, you know how it works means you know how the restaurant works or how to start a business in the Netherlands or both. For example, have you ever helped in your parents' restaurant when you were a teenager or before?

Sai: Yes, I always helped out. Even if I had other jobs, I always came back at five

o'clock. So, no matter what I did, I always did everything for the restaurant even when I was young.

Interviewer: And before you started this restaurant as an interior designer, did you start your own company or you worked for others?

Sai: I started for other designers in Holland, well-known designers. After that, we opened our design studio and made things from wood. And I also specialized in porcelain. I worked for almost two years in Jingdezhen, and that was a good experience.

Interviewer: So, do you still have a kind of connection with China, no matter Mainland China or Hong Kong or you are more here in China?

Sai: I'm more local here. Yeah, when I worked in China, it was interesting. They built a village for Western people. So even in China, they treated me like a European person. But now I have friends outside the ceramic village, more local ones. The way we live and the way they live is very different. They live in houses that are not in very good condition, they are more hospitable.

Interviewer: Because some of the parents in that generation still think that, okay, you must be a dentist, to be a lawyer and marry Chinese people, or they're kind of open-minded with marriage part, I don't know because that was my decision and I had a lot.

Sai: Yes, I always helped out. Even if I had other jobs, I always came back at five o'clock. So, no matter what I did, I always did everything for the restaurant even when I was young. I worked for other designers in Holland, well-known designers. After that, we opened our design studio and made things from wood.

Interviewer: Do you still have a connection with China or Hong Kong?

Sai: I'm more local here. When I worked in China, they built a village for Western people. But now I have friends outside the ceramic village, more local ones. The way we live and the way they live is very different. They live in houses that are not in very good condition, they are more hospitable.

Interviewer: May I ask your parents about their attitude about your marriage?

Sai: That was my decision. I had a lot of Dutch girlfriends, and Japanese so you're also open-minded for a little overwhelming. Yeah, except for the Japanese when my grandparents are still alive, they were very happy with the Japanese I can understand.

Interviewer: For the staff in your kitchen, are most of them Hong Kong or Chinese or both or Chinese or Hong Kong?

Sai: Yes, I always helped out. Even if I had other jobs, I always came back at five o'clock. So, no matter what I did, I always did everything for the restaurant even when I was young. I worked for other designers in Holland, well-known designers. After that, we opened our design studio and made things from wood.

Interviewer: Is this like you prefer in this way or is it like a personal preference?

Sai: Yes, I see, because I also meet a lot of Chinese restaurants here. And for the kitchen part, of course, more Chinese or Cantonese, but for the front part then they only can speak Mandarin.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time and all the help here

7. Interviewee: Mooily

Location: Rotterdam

Time: 03/05/2023

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation today. Could you please introduce your background and what led you to pursue clay handcrafting as a business?

Interviewee: Of course. I arrived in the Netherlands for Art Master's several years ago after my bachelor's in China focused on architecture. After graduating in 2020, I chose to work in marketing instead of the Art industry because it's difficult for a foreigner to find a job in Art here. I quit my job this spring and diving into clay handcrafting which already is a long-standing hobby of mine. I've always enjoyed creating things with my hands, and in the past, I would attend gatherings with friends or set up booths at markets to showcase my handcrafted pieces. However, due to career and personal factors, I felt the need to give myself more time and space to explore this passion. So, at the beginning of this year, I started a workshop

as a home studio and began promoting and operating it. Currently, the workshop caters to many Chinese customers, and I'm still in the process of considering various directions for its growth in these initial stages.

Interviewer: That's fascinating. What are your goals for the workshop in the short term and long term?

Interviewee: In the short term, my goal is to achieve a stable side job that balances my time, hobbies, and financial income within the next five years. I don't rule out the possibility of turning it into a full-time job eventually, but at this stage, I haven't explored a mature business model yet. Right now, the emotional value of the handcrafted workshop to me is greater than its financial value. It's a rare opportunity for me to engage in something that brings me so much joy. If it can develop into a career, it would be a very interesting experience.

Interviewer: It's wonderful to hear that you find such joy in handcrafting. Can you elaborate on what specifically brings you joy in this craft?

Interviewee: Handcrafting itself brings me great joy. Every time I finish a workshop, the energy I receive from it makes me feel that earning money is not the most important thing for me. Simply engaging in this craft can make me happy for an entire day. From the preparation to the completion of each workshop, every encounter with people, the things they create, and their unique personalities make each experience different and exciting. I never feel tired after it's all over, and everyone who participates in the workshop is reluctant to leave until the very end.

Interviewer: That sounds like a truly fulfilling experience. Have you encountered any challenges or concerns along the way?

Interviewee: Yes, there have been challenges. Perhaps my expectations for the workshop are too high, especially considering that it only started at the beginning of this year. However, I feel a sense of urgency because I don't know how long I'll be able to do this, and I want to achieve as much as I can in this limited time. I have many requirements and expectations of myself. Even though I haven't burned out

from my day job, engaging in something that brings me so much joy has thrown me off balance. It feels like I may never be 100% satisfied with what I'm doing, which makes me feel like I'm letting myself, my work, and my boss down. It's a different experience from being an initiator and the final responsible person. Additionally, since everything I face is unknown, the mental pressure is immense, and it feels like the cost of my silence is increasing every day.

Interviewer: It's understandable to have such concerns, especially when pursuing a new venture. How do you deal with the pressure and uncertainty?

Interviewee: I have a vague sense of direction about what I need to do during each period, and I constantly question myself. If I don't do this, then what else should I do? Is it better than what I should have done? These are the questions that bother me. The challenge lies not only in the business itself but also in mindset adjustment and self-awareness. I feel that many entrepreneurs around me set themselves up with a lot of obstacles. Some may think that what they're doing isn't enough or that they should conform to more traditional norms. As someone who wants to start a business in this generation, I truly believe that there isn't a real financial crisis and that entrepreneurship fulfills at least three levels of higher-order needs. However, finding the right path to success, exploring and satisfying oneself, is incredibly difficult.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your insights and experiences with us. Your passion for handcrafting and the challenges you face are driving you forward in your journey. We wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Interviewee: Thank you for having me. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss my journey and the joys and challenges that come with it.

8. Interviewee: Sofie Xie

Location: Sofie's home in Rotterdam

Time: 24/03/2023

Interviewer: Thank you for inviting me here to your home office, Sofie. Could you

please share with us your background and how you ventured into the world of art and painting?

Sofie: Sure. Before coming to the Netherlands, I was already involved in business and had established myself as one of the earliest businesswomen in China in the 1980s. However, as my faith strengthened, I felt that the dishonesty and concealment involved in business dealings conflicted with my conscience. So, I decided to follow my interests and artistic passions. During the 1980s to 1990s, I operated clothing trades in Henan and Zhejiang, as well as conducted art businesses in Hong Kong and Wenzhou. But eventually, I turned to operating a photography studio and played the piano part-time. This lifestyle reduced the pressure in my heart, and I felt freer. Making money was an easy thing for me; as long as I used my brain and put in some effort, I could make money if I wanted to.

Interviewer: That's quite an interesting journey. How did your life and career evolve after you settled in the Netherlands?

Sofie: When I first arrived in the Netherlands in 1999 with my second husband, I felt lost as I left behind my social and artistic life in China. I felt like the "old me" was gone, and I had nothing, not even my voice, which had become soft. Despite the challenges, I was eager to have an independent career, so I chose to run a snack bar. However, I faced bullying from a neighboring bar that secretly used my water supply but refused to admit it. Running the snack bar in the Netherlands turned out to be the hardest time of my life, even compared to the physical demands of my past experiences.

I ran the snack bar with my younger brother, and my daughter would come over on weekends to help out. She had to take a three-hour train ride every Friday night. However, after three years, I sold the snack bar because I felt that the hard-earned money wasn't meaningful to me. The daily exposure to the smell of oil and the wounds on my hands made me realize that I didn't want to continue down that path. It was more exhausting than doing business in China.

Interviewer: It sounds like a challenging experience indeed. How did you find your way back to your artistic passions?

Sofie: A few years later, my daughter took me on a trip and introduced me to a local friend's summer garden. I fell in love with the place and decided to buy a garden in the suburbs of Rotterdam. Gardening and connecting with nature became my solace, bringing me inner peace. I started singing and dancing in my garden, and time flew by. When my friends learned about my love for art, they introduced me to a Chinese community organization in Rotterdam that taught cooking, singing, and dancing. They asked me to be a teacher, and the choir I led developed well, eventually representing the Netherlands in music concerts. With the healing power of nature and community, my life gradually became more colorful.

Interviewer: That's wonderful to hear how you found solace in nature and community. How did you transition into pursuing painting as your main artistic focus?

Sofie: About ten years ago, I had an accident that left me bedridden for two months. During that time, I reflected on what I should do next since I couldn't dance anymore due to my back injury. After much contemplation, I realized that I couldn't waste any more time and decided to focus on what was truly meaningful to me. I recognized that I was getting older and wanted to pursue my passion for painting. I started preparing for art exhibitions, and now I participate in joint exhibitions and have my exhibitions every year, gradually building my reputation in the art world.

Interviewer: It's impressive to hear about your journey as an artist. Can you share any unique aspects of your artistic process?

Sofie: When I draw, sometimes I do it with my eyes closed. Drawing with closed eyes is liberating and relaxing because the absence of sight allows for more freedom in the composition. Surprisingly, the things I draw with my eyes closed often turn out to be more dynamic. I have been focused on drawing for more than 12 years. I used to draw until 2 in the morning every day. My best creative time is usually after 11 pm, and sometimes I get so engrossed in my work that I don't realize it's already 5:00 am. I'm

in the zone while drawing, and even if I smell burnt food from the kitchen, it doesn't distract me. My daughter asks me to go to bed early, but I follow my heart. After all, I tell her that Song Meiling stayed up late and she lived to be over 100 years old.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing your incredible journey with us, Sofie. It's truly inspiring to see how you've overcome challenges and found fulfillment through art. We wish you continued success in your artistic endeavors.

Sofie: I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my story, and I hope it inspires others to pursue their passions and find joy in their lives.

9. Interviewee: Sunny

Location: Sunny's home in Rotterdam

Time:23/04/2023

Interviewer: Could you please tell us about your educational background and what you are currently pursuing?

Sunny: After completing my high school education in both China and Singapore, I decided to pursue my undergraduate studies in the Netherlands. Now, I am graduating with a master's degree and actively seeking employment in the field of data analysis.

Interviewer: That's great to hear. In addition to your studies, you have also been involved in managing Chinese costume clubs and organizing tea events. Can you share more about that?

Sunny: Certainly. I established a sole proprietorship to facilitate the activities of Chinese costume clubs, such as collaborating with Dutch museums and organizing Chinese costume walks. I also partner with Belvédère to host events that promote Chinese culture. It all started as a fun community for hobbyists, but to my surprise, it gained significant interest and attracted hundreds of people. As the community grew, I began organizing events, managing a public WeChat account, and receiving sponsorships from businesses. Although there may be potential for commercialization in the future, currently, there is no pressure to do so.

Interviewer: That sounds like a wonderful initiative. What is your approach and

perspective toward managing the community?

Sunny: For me, the community's primary focus is on hobbies, and making money is secondary. I care more about spreading culture and ensuring that community members find joy in participating in the activities. Despite facing competition and opposition from local peers in the cultural industry due to the limited market size for Chinese people in the Netherlands, I maintain a peaceful attitude. In my opinion, making tea is a process of cultivating the mind. If we emphasize intense commercial competition, it makes me uncomfortable. Making tea should rely on honesty and integrity.

Interviewer: That's a refreshing perspective. How do you see the importance of integrating into the Netherlands and mastering the local language?

Sunny: Initially, I didn't think it was necessary to integrate or master the local language, but now I realize its importance. From a job-seeking perspective, I hesitate to interview companies with many Dutch employees because I can foresee feeling uncomfortable in the office. Another reason is the cultural events I organize. Many people who enjoy Chinese culture are elderly and typically have limited English skills. I believe that learning some basic Dutch would make them feel more comfortable when communicating with me. Furthermore, through organizing these events, I have met many interesting Dutch people, which motivates me to learn the language.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that perspective. Have you encountered any challenges or uncomfortable situations in your professional experiences?

Sunny: Yes, there was a particular experience that bothered me for a long time. I was interning at a small company where everyone else was Dutch and older than me. They didn't include me in their activities because they had to speak English when I was around. For example, one of my colleagues had a birthday celebration, and I only found out about it the next day when my boss gave me a piece of cake. I felt hurt, especially as I was about to leave the internship soon. Around the same time, a new colleague started working there who was black and also spoke only English. But the

office was much friendlier to him than they were to me. One day, an older colleague made a joke about me when offering me fruit, and the older ladies in the office just laughed and didn't defend me. It was an uncomfortable situation, but I think it's quite common in Dutch offices. My boss told the older colleague not to make such jokes around young Asian women, but I still felt that I didn't want to work at a very local company due to cultural differences and possible discrimination.

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that personal experience, Sunny. It's important to address these issues and promote inclusivity in the workplace. We appreciate your insights, and we wish you the best in your future endeavors.

Sunny: Thank you for having the chance to discuss these topics. It's crucial to raise awareness and foster a more inclusive environment. I hope my experiences can contribute to that.